

**Rejuvenating Investigative Journalism
at Nonprofit News Organisations
in South Korea and the United Kingdom**

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I commemorate this research journey with gratitude towards many others.

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Abstract

This research aims to provide insights into the journalistic practices and challenges of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. In its review of pertinent scholarship, combining the chaos and control paradigm and the hierarchy of influences model is shown to be helpful to explore issues and concerns influencing news production externally and internally. As an overarching framework, the former relates to the challenges and opportunities of investigative journalism in terms of newsrooms' funding models. The latter specifically proves useful in analysing the internal influential elements such as organisational aims and routines of nonprofit newsrooms. On this conceptual basis, the thesis reports on findings from newsroom ethnography including 330 hours of participant observation and 47 in-depth semi-structured interviews with editors, journalists and administrative staff conducted at the *Korea Center for Investigative Journalism* (KCIJ) in South Korea, funded by individual donations, and the *Bureau of Investigative Journalism* (BIJ) in the United Kingdom, supported by foundations grants.

The perceived impetus driving both the KCIJ and the BIJ is the public's eagerness for rejuvenating investigative journalism in the face of severe challenges, such as the perceived loss of editorial autonomy from external political and economic influences. Media organisations with nonprofit funding models aim to insulate editorial autonomy from such undue external influences and to provide working conditions conducive to undertaking investigations based on their own journalistic values and norms. Newswriters at the nonprofits follow the traditional practices of time-consuming and labour-intensive investigative journalism. One tradition not inherited by them is the nature of seeking exclusivity and competitiveness. Instead, they pride themselves on participating in collaboration with a sharing, collaborative ethos encouraged by nonprofit funding systems. Impactful reporting, as a result of these journalistic practices, contributes to improving the newsrooms' perceived public value, establishing newsroom reputations. Such successes ultimately enhance the likelihood of further financial support for nonprofits from the public, creating a virtuous circle the news nonprofits. In closing, this study's analysis of its empirical evidence contributes to current scholarship on this topic by showing how nonprofit funding models affect journalistic practices focusing on public interest values and support collaboration for greater social benefits, which, in turn, can support sustainable nonprofit journalism in the longer term.

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Dedication

To my family.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis studies investigative journalism as a major actor for holding power accountable in healthy democracies. However, practitioners increasingly find “a number of new threats that limit their ability to fulfil their watchdog role” (Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2016, p.802). The commitment of news outlets to costly and labour-intensive accountability journalism has been challenged for political and economic reasons, and deteriorated working condition in newsrooms makes it harder for newswriters to dedicate themselves to original, in-depth investigative journalism, according to many observers.

The perceived crisis in the journalism sector has also promoted a search for new funding models, particularly where investigative journalism is concerned. As a result, there has been an unprecedented expansion of nonprofit journalism organisations since the end of first decade of the 21st century (Roseman et al. 2021). This thesis examines the rejuvenation of investigative journalism through two nonprofit case studies. The *Korea Center for Investigative Journalism* (KCIJ) in South Korea is one of the few nonprofits worldwide that is funded solely by individual membership donations and is the only South Korean partner of the *International Consortium of Investigative Journalists* (ICIJ). The *Bureau of Investigative Journalism* (BIJ) in the United Kingdom, is one of the largest and oldest foundation-funded newsrooms in the country and actively participates in intra-national local collaborative journalism. This chapter begins with the background and objectives of this thesis. Then, the discussion moves into the definition of investigative journalism. Next, the theoretical agenda and methodology will be explained, with research questions following. Moreover, it clarifies the thesis structure and underlines the principal features of each chapter.

1.2 Research Background and Objectives

This thesis examines the journalistic practices and challenges of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations with an emphasis on the influences of funding models in South Korea and the United Kingdom (UK). It has a major focus on editorial autonomy, one of the most important elements required by a newsroom in order to produce news reporting without undue influence from external factors. Conventional news media (state/public funded or commercially funded) have shown limitations in insulating newsroom independence from external political and economic forces (Davies 2009; Benson and Powers 2011). The loss of newsroom autonomy, influenced by the organisational and financial structures of news media organisations, became a primary concern in the journalism sector regardless whether they were state-funded or privately-owned newsrooms.

Significantly, such restrictions seem to become more severe when newsrooms face financial difficulties. Many academics in journalism studies have documented the crisis in journalism that has intensified since global financial crisis (Starkman 2014; Cagé 2016; Birnbauer 2019). Wahl-Jorgensen et al. (2016, p.801-802) highlights, “there are the well-documented and long-standing institutional threats to journalism. While the crisis in the business model of journalism has been ongoing for decades, it has sharpened since the global recession of 2007”. For instance, 25,000 journalists had to leave their workplaces during 2008-2009, a majority of whom were investigative journalists (Houston 2010, p.47). Amongst the large number of findings on such devastation, some have examined how the crisis has affected the watchdog role of investigative journalism and the ability of news to play its core accountability roles (Walton 2010; Carson 2020).

Without it [investigative journalism], executive or corporate wrongdoing will not only continue but can eventually corrupt the body politic. I believe that this process of investigative journalism – of breaking important stories rather than simply reporting or recycling public relations handouts – is under serious threat. (Barnett 2005, p.329)

Barnett (2005) illustrates here the starting point of this research. Investigative journalism, as it has been traditionally supported and executed, has faced this crisis in many democratic countries such as South Korea, the UK and the USA (Davies 2009; Kim and Han 2014; Starkman 2014; Cagé 2016; Shin 2016; Birnbauer 2019).

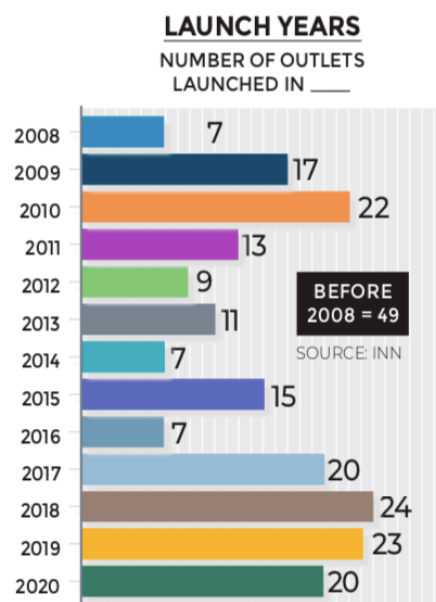
Although the perceived crisis has resulted in a negative impact on journalism to some extent, it has also had more diverse consequences in the journalism sector,

encouraging the public and practitioners to seek alternative ways of supporting investigative journalism using nonprofit models. The phenomenon is described as:

This tumultuous year generated the fastest growth in nonprofit news media since the financial crisis of 2008, when many journalists left legacy media to create nonprofit newsrooms, with the aim of saving accountability and investigative reporting considered essential to democracy. (Roseman et al. 2021, p.3)

The researchers' analysis indicates that unemployment from legacy media has partially boosted the sharp growing trend of emerging nonprofit newsrooms. More importantly, the purpose of establishing these nonprofit media organisations is to restore investigative journalism that is vital for a healthy democratic society.

FIGURE 1.1 The number of nonprofit media organisations established every year since 2008



Source: Roseman et al. (2021, p.5)

Current research has highlighted this remarkable emergence of nonprofit media organisations during the second decade of the 21st century (Cagé 2016; Konieczna 2018; Birnbauer 2019; Roseman et al. 2021). The *Institute for Nonprofit News* (INN) has been publishing a report entitled, *INN Index*, since 2018, highlighting the growth of the sector. Initiated with 27 news outlets in 2009, the INN now has approximately 360 nonprofit member organisations in the USA in 2021, which evidences rapid

expansion of the sector (INN History, n.d.; INN Who We Are, n.d.). As Figure 1.1 clearly shows, a 2021 report reveals that the total number of survey respondents (American nonprofit outlets) in 2021 is 244, which significantly increased from 49 before 2008 (Roseman et al. 2021, p.5). The fact that 80 percent of nonprofit media outlets had been established since 2008 clearly shows a steady growth of the nonprofit sector. Remarkably, the breadth of growth has been accelerated since 2017 with more than 20 outlets, newly launching every year (ibid, p.5). I would like to make clear that not all of the member newsrooms of the INN and the respondents of this survey in 2021 are investigative journalism specific organisations. However, these statistics are still meaningful to indicate the growth of this new type of a funding model for journalism. Especially, the 2021 report emphasises that the growth of nonprofit organisations “runs counter to continued deep declines in commercial media” (Roseman et al. 2021, p.5). Such nonprofit organisations “aim to fill public service needs and focus on deep reporting that takes more time than commercial media can often afford” (ibid, p.6). This means that these nonprofits are likely to share the value of in-depth reporting. Additionally, Lashmar (2009, p.14), in his study of the new funding model for journalism in the UK, notes, “The model of a not-for-profit organization, supported by a fund, providing expertise and high levels contacts in the media is the most promising”. It can be inferred from the research that the nonprofit sector has been considered importantly outside the USA as well.

This thesis particularly focuses on nonprofit investigative journalism organisations as an important component in the journalism sector for publishing investigative journalism. As pioneers in nonprofit investigative journalism organisations the *Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR)*¹ and the *Center for Public Integrity (CPI)*² were established in the USA in 1977 and 1989 respectively, and have successfully produced in-depth investigations until the present day. Moreover, *ProPublica*³, an American nonprofit investigative journalism organisation founded in 2008, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2010. The award was a pivotal moment for the sector since this was the first time in the history of the prize that it had been awarded to online news outlet (Gunter 2011). Illustrated as “relatively under-researched” (Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2016, p.804), studies about these new actors, including nonprofit investigative organisations, have been given little attention despite their efforts and contribution to boosting investigative journalism. Furthermore, whereas foundation-

¹ <https://revealnews.org> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

² <https://publicintegrity.org> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

³ <https://www.propublica.org> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

funded organisations are paying increasingly more attention to individual donations/membership-funded systems as a part of diversifying funding streams and membership funding increasingly contributes to the nonprofit sector (Roseman et al. 2021, p.13), still, there is a paucity of research on membership funding (i.e. individual donations) systems that media organisations can reference. Far too little academic attention has been paid to such nonprofit newsrooms outside the USA, leaving room for contemporary research to be undertaken whilst also broadening the geographical scope of what we know.

Considering such research gap in this field, the research aims to provide detailed exploratory insights into journalistic activities employed by the KCIJ of South Korea and the BIJ of the UK. To do so, this thesis examines in what ways applying nonprofit funding models to news media facilitates or challenges newswriters' ability to publish investigative journalism. Ultimately, this research seeks to understand the practices and challenges of newswriters in producing investigative journalism and how these relate to their nonprofit funding models.

1.3 Definitions of Investigative Journalism

Various terms used to describe investigative journalism show how difficult it has been for researchers to reach consensus on this matter. For instance, investigative reporting, accountability reporting, the Fourth Estate, quality journalism, public-service reporting, public-interest reporting, exposé, detective reporting, and muckraking have all been used. Throughout this thesis, numerous of these terms are interchangeably used. I do not seek here to resolve the normative debates around the definition of investigative journalism since, first, it would be meaningless for this project to set criteria to tick a box judging whether or not a news story is investigative journalism. Second, it is infeasible for this research to analyse all of the definitions discussed since to do so would require attention to multidimensional cultural, traditional, and journalistic contexts beyond my current scope. Instead, the reason for reviewing the definitions of investigative journalism is to obtain a better understanding of: what type of journalism this thesis focuses on; how it has been conducted; and why it is important to study investigative journalism in relation to its role in society.

For the purpose of this research, I have chosen four main themes dominating scholarly and practical definitions of investigative journalism to provide the background of this study, which will be discussed in detail below: the investigation itself and the process of doing it (does it challenge power or hold the powerful to account? Was what was found previously hidden or obscured?); the originality of news reporting; the outcomes and impact of such reporting (specifically, whether it sparks societal changes); and collaborative journalism among journalists.

First, revealing hidden truths and holding powerful entities to account is one of the essential elements for defining investigative journalism. De Burgh (2008, p.10) defines an investigative journalist as “a man or woman whose profession is to discover the truth and to identify lapses from it in whatever media may be available”. Similarly, Cordell (2009, p.118) points out that investigative journalism aims “to hold powerful interest to account and highlight systemic corruption and breakdown”. Starkman (2014, p.9) argues that accountability journalism “explains complex problems to a mass audience and holds the powerful to account”. Commonly highlighted, investigative journalism plays a role in examining hidden systemic wrongdoings and injustice.

Second, to achieve the aforementioned elements, consequently, investigative journalists take considerable time and effort to produce original reporting in the public interest. For instance, Clark Mollenhoff, an investigative reporter, states that investigative reporting requires “hours and days – and sometimes weeks – of tedious work in combing records; countless interviews with people who do not really want to talk to you; the running out of endless leads” (cited in Aucoin 2005, p.88). More specifically, one understanding of investigative journalism is comparing it with other kinds of non-investigative journalism subsidised by easily accessible news sources such as government officials, as De Burgh (2008, p.14) highlights. The originality of news sources and reporting necessitates undertaking substantial amounts of work, time and effort.

Third, investigative journalism values the impact of news reporting. Revealing the systemic malpractices and dysfunctions of society can (but does not always actually) lead to public outrage/awareness on critical issues and societal changes. Investigative journalists often “intend to provoke outrage in their reports of malfeasance. Their work is validated when citizens respond by demanding change from their leaders” (Protest et al. 1991, p.5). This view is supported by Ettema and Glasser (1998, p.3), characterising investigative journalists as “custodians of

public". The researchers explain that investigative journalists are not omnipotent decision-makers on moral, social and legal issues, but watchdogs who "hold the means to report and disseminate stories that can engage the public's sense of right and wrong" (ibid, p.3). The role of investigative journalism in society seems to deliver moral justice to the public and then to seek changes from the authorities.

The elements discussed so far have been commonly found in the past and contemporary literature. One last perspective I would like to add in defining investigative journalism based on more recent research is a focus on collaboration enabled by the development of digital technologies in journalism. Investigative journalism practices, with the aid of technology, have caused "adaptations including unprecedented collaborations and cross-border watchdog reporting" (Carson 2020, p.62). Networks established among practitioners worldwide provide unprecedented opportunities to investigate in-depth issues in new ways. Conclusively, Gearing (2021, p.24) highlights that "The most significant power shift facilitated by global connection is in enabling international and even global accountability". Based on recent research into the definition of investigative journalism, a new addition seems to be collaboration enhanced by digital technologies.

The presence of such numerous dimensions and differences of investigative journalism shows that, in defining it, more flexibility is called for than simply ticking off a strictly applied set of criteria. The thesis focuses on the practices and challenges of newsrooms with nonprofit funding models. Determining whether or not news content is investigative journalism is not necessary. The purpose of discussing the definition of investigative journalism here is for providing a better understanding of its status as a distinct genre of reporting. Hence, I suggest several elements that are universally examined in the definitions of investigative journalism. Certainly, not every element presented in the following paragraph is found in every single piece of investigative reporting, but the multiple combination of these elements constitutes investigative journalism of the kind focused on in this thesis:

- Topics: Revealing the hidden corruption, injustices and malpractices by seeking the truth;
- Process: Time-consuming and long-term processes in collecting, analysing, and scrutinising a topic to gather robust evidence. Collaborating to obtain a more comprehensive insight into local/national/global issues with the support of digital technologies;

- News Sources: Original news sources obtained by journalists' own efforts. Leaked data and/or whistleblower obtained by a journalist; and
- Impact: Encouraging social outrage and (in successful cases) sparking societal, economic and political changes

What should be clear here is that the feature of a news story with the above elements does not solely equate to investigative journalism. For instance, tabloid-style journalism focusing on entertaining audiences often publishes exclusive reporting. However, considering the purpose of this thesis, I exclude the tabloid-style investigations in my research. First, my interest in investigative journalism focuses on its function as a watchdog of society. Second, case studies of nonprofit organisations in this research aim to publish investigations in the public interest, not the subjects of entertainment.

1.4 Theoretical Agenda and Research Design

This thesis presents various debates and discussions that explain media ecologies in the 21st century, drawing upon a theoretical agenda. First, the chaos and control paradigm (Carson 2020) is originally used for analysing the challenges and sustainability of investigative journalism in the 21st century in a wider context of journalism sector. This is useful for my research to locate where investigative journalism funded in nonprofit ways can be situated. Carson (2020, p.90) explains that the control paradigm, including political economy theory, “highlights the limitations of the journalist trying to critique the powerful due to the overwhelming strength of political and economic forces that are set upon reinforcing and protecting the dominant paradigm”. This perspective is useful to explore the perceived crisis in investigative journalism at conventionally funded media organisations with consideration of editorial independence. The chaos paradigm is helpful to examine the normative function of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. Investigative journalism's critical role has always emphasised that “the notion of a central role for the news media in democratic society, which is to facilitate the participation of diverse and multiple voices in political discourse” (Carson 2020, p.83). Second, the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker and Reese 2014) is useful in exploring issues related to the organisational influences such as newsrooms' aims and routines in producing investigative journalism. Tuchman (1978, p.4) argues that “news is located, gathered and disseminated by

professionals working in organizations”. Therefore, journalistic practices have often been examined with consideration of such internal influences.

The chaos and control paradigm (Carson 2020) provides me with an useful insights into external influences on news production whereas the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker and Reese 2014) delves into internal influences. Owing to these different levels of analytic frameworks for examining influences, my research combines the use of two theories to conduct its enquiry. Although both theories are designed to analyse more conventionally funded media organisations, interesting sets of issues and elements influencing news production externally and internally identified in these theories are useful for me to identify concerns and issues worth exploring in the nonprofit newsrooms. So, I am looking at these issues at the different vantage point, the context of nonprofit journalism, to explore in what ways nonprofit funding models affect investigative journalism practices with encompassing such features in relation to rejuvenating the craft, while it is reported that many others are decreasingly able to do.

To answer my research questions, this thesis adopted a newsroom ethnography approach including participant observation and semi-structured interviews at two nonprofit investigative journalism organisations, the KCIJ in South Korea and the BIJ in the UK. Observed in the literature review chapter (see chapter 2) as limited and under-researched, particularly outside the USA, this research explores novel and under-discovered nonprofit newsrooms. Participant observation at nonprofit investigative outlets allowed much more analysis and enabled corroboration (or otherwise) of findings rooted in self-disclosure at semi-structured interview. The observation allowed the research to focus on the day-to-day journalistic practice of these newswriters, and therefore, was an effective approach for me to collect first-hand information in newsrooms. When conducting the pilot research, I had to rely solely on interviews and content analysis, which I was unable to cross-check the interview materials much. Therefore, I was aware of the need for this observation method to increase validity of interview data. In addition to observation, my interviews aimed to explore three main areas: perceived driving forces behind the foundation of their nonprofit organisations; differences in journalistic practices between their current financial models and ones of mainstream media in terms of editorial independence; and the advantages and disadvantages of their funding models for newswriters to conduct investigative reporting (as well as measures taken to address any challenges). My combined methods in newsroom ethnography

– participant observation and interviews – interrelate well because they allow a researcher to compare journalistic discourse (what people say they do) with observed habits and practices (what people *actually* do). In-depth interviews with journalists and editors and participant observations in newsrooms substantiate and test when comparing results of each other. This set of methodological techniques allowed the researcher to explore the newsrooms' professional motivations as a whole, given their media contexts.

Generally, since investigative journalism exposes hidden systemic breakdowns, abuse of power, wrongdoing in high politics and corruption in business, newsrooms devoted to it tend to be secured and closed to external people, primarily for security reasons. This is possibly why so many influential recent publications about investigative journalism have been, in the main, authored by previous journalists, with a knowledge of everyday activities and experiences within newsrooms (see Leigh 2019; Carson 2020; Gearing 2021). With little experience in this field, I was unexceptional in terms of having difficulty in gaining access to the investigative newsrooms. However, newsroom ethnography was the most suitable method to learn about the news production side of investigative reporting at nonprofits, so, with years of preparation, I pursued and obtained access to the two investigative journalism newsrooms.

Although this thesis chose two investigative journalism organisations in different countries, the study does not aim to conduct systematic cross-national or cross-cultural comparisons affecting journalistic practices between each. Instead, the purpose of examining two organisations is to obtain more exploratory qualitative insights into an under-researched emerging area by looking at essential features in each newsroom with a different key nonprofit funding stream, foundation funding and membership donations. Moreover, I aim to broaden the geographical boundaries of research understanding to Asia and Europe, which have so far been more limited to North America.

Surely, an understanding of cultural and national contexts is vital to examine social phenomena. However, when political and economic circumstances are not so dissimilar, analysing journalistic practices in different contexts can still produce valuable and meaningful results when studying relations between newsroom autonomy and funding systems. For example, the normative roles of journalism in South Korea and the UK are similar, as both are influenced by the Fourth Estate ideals. The World Press Freedom Index 2021 shows that both South Korea (42)

and the UK (33) fall into a “fairly good” category among “good, fairly good, problematic, bad and very bad black”⁴. Importantly, trends in the media industry show similar trajectories between both nations: limited newsroom autonomy in producing investigative journalism at conventional generalist news outlets has in both places, to some extent, promoted the emergence of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. Financial-wise, both countries stand in the top ten in GDP in 2021⁵ and politically, both countries are democratic societies. Therefore, examining two case study newsrooms with similar journalistic purposes in their societies was expected to be more beneficial for understanding this emerging field. By doing so, this research attempted to fill a gap by providing empirical analysis on the development of nonprofit organisations, suggested as a new funding pathway for investigative journalism.

1.5 Research Questions

This thesis proposes to understand the rejuvenating stage of investigative journalism with nonprofit funding models in terms of journalistic practices and the challenges facing newsrooms. On the one hand, the field of investigative journalism had been widely seen as less supported in many places (see section 2.5-2.7). In response to such phenomena, on the other hand, more recently, there has been a search for new ways of supporting this kind of journalism. Nonprofit funding models for newsrooms is one of them, which has sharply increased since 2008 with an aim of boosting original, in-depth news to fulfil a Fourth Estate duty (see section 2.8-2.13). Drawn from the theoretical agenda and literature review, three overarching research questions and sub-questions are defined. The first research question explores the perceived driving forces for the establishment and funding models of the KCIJ and the BIJ from internal voices. The second question focuses on the beneficial and disadvantageous aspects of nonprofit funding systems for newswriters at the KCIJ and the BIJ in producing investigative journalism. This relates to perceived newsroom autonomy from external forces. Moreover, internal influences such as organisational structure and routines are studied, which could either allow, or hinder, journalists from devoting themselves to conducting original research. The last research question is posed to determine any factors that may

⁴ <https://rsf.org/en/ranking> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁵ <https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf> [Accessed: 21 March 2022]

contribute to the sustainability of nonprofit newsrooms related to news impact and their impact on journalistic practices.

RQ1. What are the perceived driving forces behind the establishment of the KCIJ and the BIJ with nonprofit funding models?

- What are the perceptions from staff at the KCIJ and the BIJ on the driving forces in South Korean and British societies behind the establishment of their newsrooms in terms of the status of investigative journalism?
- What are the funding systems of these nonprofits, and how have these evolved over time?

RQ2. What are the affordances and constraints of nonprofit funding systems that allow and/or hinder the newsrooms to conduct investigative journalism?

- What are the benefits and limits of nonprofit funding systems for newswriters to conduct investigations in comparison to other legacy media?
- In what ways, do external pressures such as politics, commerce and funders affect media organisations in insulating editorial autonomy?
- In what ways, do internal operational systems such as newsworthiness and routines affect journalistic practices in producing investigative journalism?
- In what ways, do their nonprofit funding systems contribute to facilitating collaborative journalism that has emerged sharply in recent years?

RQ3. What are the challenges for the nonprofit newsrooms to achieve long-term financial sustainability?

- What are the internal and external factors, including challenges, that influence the sustainability of nonprofit newsrooms?
- What are the organisational approaches for overcoming the challenges to achieve long-term sustainability?
- What are the risks and opportunities of news impact in nonprofits' sustainability?

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1, the Introduction, examines the definition of investigative journalism, the background to the research of the thesis, the overview of the research design including the research questions, and further lays out the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2, the literature review, is presented in three parts. Part I discusses the theoretical agenda of the research by reviewing the appropriate key concepts. Part II examines the journalistic practices of investigative journalism in relation to the concept of editorial autonomy. This part analyses how external and internal

elements affect editorial independence and news content in more conventional news media concerning the perceived investigative journalism. Part III explores the emergence of nonprofit organisations, looking especially at the advantages and disadvantages of nonprofit financial models in producing investigative journalism. By exploring previous studies, the chapter identifies and highlights knowledge gaps in the field of study, which this thesis aims to fill.

Chapter 3, the methodology, starts with the introduction of two sample nonprofit organisations. The justification of research design and chosen method is presented with reference to the literature review. Then, the chapter provides operational details about the key research method, namely newsroom ethnography including 330 hours of participant observation and 47 in-depth interviews, at South Korean and British newsrooms, the research timeframe from preparation to field research, and the procedure for data analysis. Moreover, the approach I took to research ethics is detailed in depth.

Chapter 4, the first findings and analysis chapter, begins with the descriptive findings about the KCIJ and the BIJ, such as the perceived driving forces of establishment and the development of funding systems in answer to research question 1. This section is a fundamental background knowledge to understand the rest of findings. Then, the thesis analyses the benefits of nonprofit systems for newswriters in relation to production of investigative journalism in answer to the research question 2. Next, the thesis discusses in what ways such identified advantages affect journalistic activities in terms of the topics of investigations and the procedures of conducting them. The analysis includes a discussion of newsroom working conditions at these nonprofits in comparison with those at mainstream generalist news outlets. Finally, the chapter explores the emergent practices of digitally enabled collaborations, supported by nonprofit funding models, as an example of the ways in which nonprofit newsrooms are contributing to rejuvenating investigative journalism.

Chapter 5, the last findings and analysis chapter, is dedicated to answering research questions 2 and 3, in terms of the journalistic challenges and sustainability of newsrooms with nonprofit funding models. The analysis starts by discussing the disadvantages of their nonprofit funding systems. The news organisations' strategies to overcome the identified drawbacks are also examined. Additionally, the risks and opportunities of the increasingly central role of news impact for the long-term sustainability of nonprofit newsrooms are discussed. Ultimately, this research

generates evidence which points to a virtuous circle of the sustainability of nonprofit funding systems for investigative journalism.

Chapter 6, the conclusion, summarises the research of this thesis and main arguments discussed across the earlier chapters. The chapter concentrates on the implication of the empirical research, encompassing its significance and contribution to knowledge and makes suggestions and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an evaluative assessment of the scholarly literature and empirical studies in relation to investigative journalism. In particular, it focuses on the ever-changing media ecologies in which investigative journalism has somewhat weakened at the one end of the spectrum, mainly at legacy media, but also been bolstered at the other end through the emergence of nonprofit organisations in South Korea and the UK. This chapter presents key theoretical agendas for this thesis. This chapter also identifies and evaluates the meanings associated with newsroom autonomy and journalistic practices with a view to exploring the current status of investigative journalism at more traditionally funded newsrooms, such as public service media and commercial organisations, and nonprofit newsrooms. More importantly, throughout the chapter, I identify a research gap in journalism studies and discuss the relevance of the research questions for this thesis. This chapter has been divided into three parts.

Part I aims to secure the basis for the theoretical agendas that is built upon two critical and pertinent research concepts: the chaos and control paradigm (Carson 2020), which includes political economy theory, and the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker and Reese 2014). This part provides the overarching analytic approach to the thesis.

Part II presents the implication and necessity of studying the perceived crisis of investigative journalism under limited editorial autonomy with an emphasis on external and internal influences on news content. First, the extent to which the financial structures of conventional news organisations have affected the deterioration of working conditions for newswriters to produce in-depth investigations is studied in relation to political and economic external forces. Then, inadequate journalistic practices at conventionally funded news media related to internal elements at media outlets are considered. This part is useful to understand the background of current media circumstances in which the negative consequences of journalistic malpractices have filtered through to the public, mainly representing the media ecology in the first decade of the 21st century.

Part III explores nonprofit funding models for investigative journalism organisations in terms of their operational systems and influences on journalistic practices. It discusses the driving force for the increasing number of nonprofit news outlets and their practices, to produce investigative journalism that the now-weakened mainstream media would once have done in some places. Specific examples of the literature that identify the journalistic practices of nonprofit media organisations are presented for better understanding of these new funding models. The last part explains the dynamics of social and journalistic factors that support investigative journalism in the second decade of the 21st century.

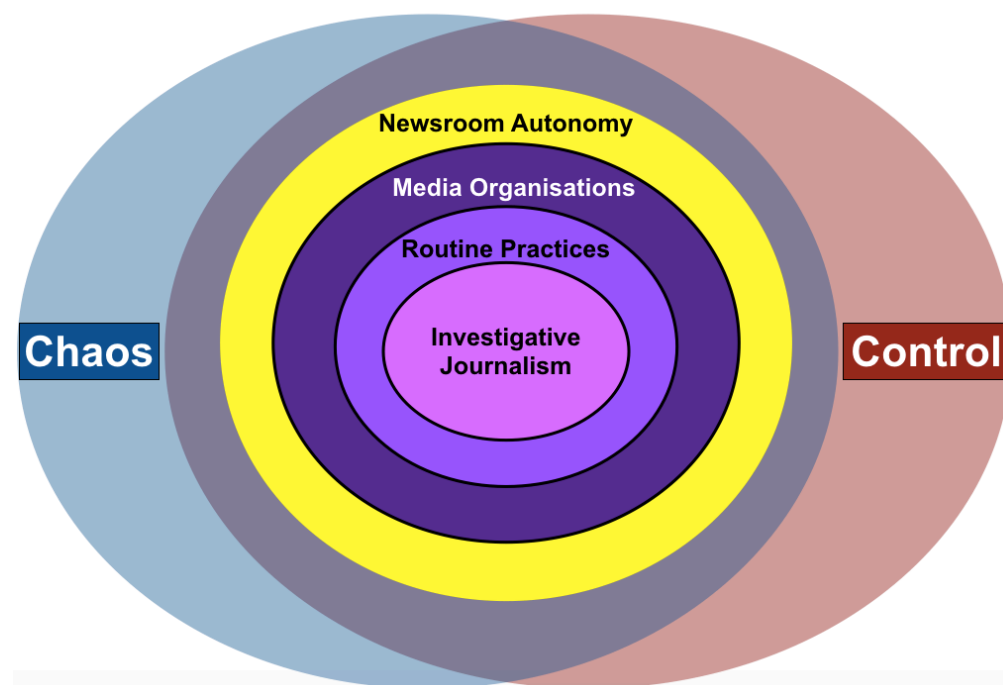
PART I: Theoretical Agenda

This thesis adopts two principal theoretical agendas to analyse nonprofit investigative journalism organisations in producing investigative journalism. First, chaos and control paradigm, designed by Carson (2020), is used as an overarching agenda to conduct a macro-level analysis on the media ecologies in which nonprofit funding models for investigative journalism are developed. Second, the hierarchy of influences model by Shoemaker and Reese (2014) is adopted for a meso-level analysis of the journalistic practices of both legacy media and nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. The combined approach aims to examine how news organisations with different funding models and organisational structures determine journalistic practices to conduct in-depth and original reporting. I would like to make sure that these researchers designed the paradigm and the model to analyse more conventionally funded journalism (primarily for-profit journalism) concerning media organisations' external/internal influences on news production. They provide helpful analytic aspects to examine media ecologies and working conditions in relation to the past and current status of investigative journalism. However, with these theoretical agendas, I look at investigative journalism at the different vantage point, the context of nonprofit journalism to explore to what extent, and in what ways, such nonprofit funding models affect journalistic practices in producing investigative journalism.

Insulating newsroom autonomy is a key logic for nonprofit newsrooms to be able to produce investigative journalism independently in comparison with some media organisations where external forces often intervene in editorial decision-making processes (see section 2.2-2.6). Autonomy “stands for the freedom from

interference, domination, and regulation” in the journalism sector particularly (Reich and Hanitzsch 2013, p.134). In this thesis, editorial/journalistic independence is used as a synonym for newsroom/journalistic autonomy. For instance, a large cross-national survey with 1,700 journalists from seventeen countries has found six types of influences on newsroom autonomy: “political, economic, organizational, professional, and procedural influences, as well as reference groups” (Hanitzsch et al. 2010, p.5). The implication from this research is vital for my PhD thesis in that diverse kinds of influences affect editorial independence, and accordingly, journalistic practices. Where newsroom autonomy is guaranteed, editorial decision-making can be more based on journalistic value with less interference from external elements. Therefore, editorial independence is considered a prerequisite condition for newswriters to publish what they believe as credible and objective news stories. In this manner, analysing journalists’ practices in relation to their perceived autonomy is imperative for this thesis.

FIGURE 2.1 Overview on the theoretical agenda



Source: Adopted and adjusted for this thesis from Shoemaker and Reese (2014) and Carson (2020)

Figure 2.1 shows a visualisation of the overview of my theoretical agenda. Carson’s paradigm (2020) suggests that investigative journalism can posit where the chaos

and control paradigm overlaps, which is why investigative journalism endures in the digital era. The analysis of this thesis then moves into detail on newsroom autonomy, possibly affecting news production based on organisational and routine levels of the hierarchy of influences model.

2.2 Chaos and Control Paradigm

Carson (2020)'s chaos and control paradigm analyses the media ecology where investigative journalism is under crisis in some areas while being simultaneously supported in other areas in the digital era. It is explained, "*why*⁶ watchdog reporting can endure in the digital age when the profitability of commercial media outlets is greatly diminished compared to the 20th century" (Carson 2020, p.83). Carson (2020, p.102) explores how investigative journalism can endure in the 21st century in that "the chaos and control approaches to media allows us to view through a multifocal lens how the changing reporting environment impacts upon investigative journalism and the organisations and people undertaking it". Although Carson (2020)'s chaos and control paradigm was designed to analyse accountability journalism within the wider journalism sector, it is also helpful for this thesis to explore the ever-changing of media environment where nonprofit investigative journalism organisations become emerged.

First, the chaos paradigm focuses on investigative journalism's role in society, that of normative watchdog holding power to account and encouraging diversity in voices to be heard, according to Carson (2020). The chaos paradigm "belongs to the liberal democratic tradition. This tradition proffers the notion of a central role for the news media in democratic society, which is to facilitate the participation of diverse and multiple voices in political discourse" (Carson 2020, p.83). An essential feature of McNair's chaos model approach is his "optimistic view about the mass media's contribution to the public sphere in the internet era" (Carson 2020, p.88). The public sphere "provides a communal public space facilitated by the media to allow citizens informed choice, participation, and the ability to monitor the deeds of public officials" (ibid, p.85). In the digital era, the public sphere has been a double-edged sword, according to Carson (2020, p.89), with digitisation offering the public, combined with emergent journalistic voices, new platforms in which to participate.

⁶ Emphasised in the original text.

However, at the same time, the rich volume of information coupled with misinformation “can complicate, overwhelm and distort political communications and deepen public mistrust of the news media (and of political elites) in democracies” (Carson 2020, p.89).

Responding to the decline in public trust in conventional media, both the journalism sector and the public have shown need for investigative journalism, holding national power to account (ibid, p.89). Carson (ibid, p.89) highlights the public’s eagerness to support independent news in the form of purchasing quality newspapers and donating in support of investigative journalism. For example, philanthropic donation to *ProPublica*, a foundation funded investigative journalism organisation in the USA, tripled from 2016 to 2017 (ibid, p.89). A key distinguishing aspect of newly demanded newsrooms such as *ProPublica* is their dedication to “investigative journalism for its civic functions rather than as a branding strategy designed for market success” (ibid, p.97). Carson’s use of *Propublica* as an example helped this research to be more developed in relation to its consideration of nonprofit funding models of investigative journalism. It inspired me to study media ecology in relation to the status of investigative journalism in conventional media organisations as well as the emergent of nonprofit ones like *Propublica* that focus on journalism’s primary civic roles in society (see section 2.5-2.13).

Newswriters at nonprofit investigative journalism organisations researched in this thesis, aim to keep norms, values and practices of traditional investigative journalism. Their methodology is not new, nor unprecedented. Rather, their practices are close to investigative journalism in so-called “the golden age” in the 20th century, such as the Watergate story of the *Washington Post* in the USA in 1972 (MacFadyen 2008; Leigh 2019) or the Thalidomide story of the *Sunday Time* in the UK in 1972 (Doig 1992; Davies 2009). These nonprofit organisations focus on the fundamentals of investigative journalism and on being a watchdog of society by fulfilling their duty as a Fourth Estate. They intend to succeed their predecessors’ work, which (by their own accounts, as well as those of researchers) has been weakened at some of the traditional media organisations owing to failure to insulate newsroom autonomy (see section 2.5 and 2.6). With consideration to the decline of such practices in general, these newcomers focus on establishing different structures that would allow them to continue investigative journalism for fulfilling its important role in democratic society. In this regard, the chaos model is appropriately helpful to explore the phenomenon of the emergence in nonprofit investigative

journalism organisations under media ecologies and journalistic performance. Particularly, I will adopt this perspective to analyse in what ways the normative role of journalism in society relates to the growth of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations supported by the public.

The second part consisting of Carson's model is the control paradigm, which includes attention to political economy theory. Carson (2020, p.90) describes the concept, which "highlights the limitations of the journalist trying to critique the powerful due to the overwhelming strength of political and economic forces that are set upon reinforcing and protecting the dominant paradigm". The economic approach requires paying attention to the financial structure of news outlets in order to examine how news is produced as a commodity. Political economy theory studies the structure and operation of media organisations and external influences over news content. This perspective brings the focus of this study and those of previous research to political economy theory (Murdock and Golding 1973; Herman and Chomsky 2002; Fenton 2007; Mosco 2009; Garnham 2011; Hardy 2014). Political economy theory is defined as "the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communication resources" (Mosco 2009, p.14).

Scholars in journalism studies justify the use of political economy theory as an analytic framework for media research because noneditorial considerations could affect editorial decision-making processes at newsrooms, and consequently, news content (Murdock and Golding 1973; Fenton 2007). For instance, Herman and Chomsky (2002, p.xi) argue that the media can play a role as an advocate for "the powerful societal interests that control and finance them" when it comes to news production. Since the mass media could represent the ideology of those in power, Fenton (2007, p.8) argues that this results in "the creation of new levels of social stratification". It is indisputable that some journalists write and produce news stories based on newsworthiness regardless of the pressure on newsrooms by political authorities, owners or funders (usually advertisers). However, some news reporting cannot make it to publication because of gatekeeping that puts more value on "the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public" (Herman and Chomsky 2002, p.2). Furthermore, Carson (2020, p.90) concludes:

This may involve political interference, market corruption that can lead to suppression of investigative journalism, or market failure resulting in

concentrated media ownership and the absence of real market choice. In each instance, we see the potential for a compromised news media with journalism that cannot live up to its idealised role in democratic society.

As shown above, the relationship between ownership and financial structures and media content is identified as a significant concern in media studies. Particularly, the researcher above points out the insecure status of investigative journalism under the certain environment.

Picard and Van Weezel (2008, p.23) also argue that theoretically, different types of ownership and capital sources could affect the practices of the news media differently. For example, they suggest different actors: in a private company, the source of capital (owners or advertisers) would have an influence on the organisational practices; management would have the influence in public service media; and in nonprofit it may be philanthropic funders wielding the power. Therefore, the strength of the political economy approach for this research lies in the ability to analyse and conceptualise the logic behind the production of investigative journalism in mainstream media (both the public and commercial), particularly in relation to newsroom autonomy (see section 2.5 and 2.6). Additionally, in the way it allows for examination of whether and how newer economic models for producing investigative news (such as foundation or membership funding) can affect editorial autonomy and their journalistic performances (see chapter 4 and 5).

Carson (2020, p.84) emphasises that the chaos and control theoretical paradigm, though previously seen as mutually exclusive, can explain how investigative journalism survives in the digital era. For example, investigative journalism, fulfilling its watchdog role, can be an essential aspect to make profits at a commercial news outlet when the reporting is something the public cannot obtain elsewhere (Carson 2020, p.103). By highlighting the future of investigative journalism, Carson (2020, p.99) has left a question on “the *means*⁷ for producing investigative journalism” for sustaining it in the digital era. This inspires my research to explore nonprofit funding models as one of the alternative ways of sustaining investigative journalism. Carson (2020, p.99) also adds, “This involves age-old necessities such as a journalist’s skills and time, combined with new-age tools such as digital technologies, big data, computational journalism, and information networks that allow information to spread far and wide”. It describes that investigative journalism can be sustained with the

⁷ Emphasis on the original text.

traditional labour and time intensive journalistic skillsets with modern digital and computational literacy. Although the paradigm is used to analyse more conventionally funded news outlets, interesting sets of discussions highlighted in Carson's research are helpful for me to identify concerns and issues worth exploring in the nonprofit sector. In the context of nonprofit journalism, then, this research questions to what extent, and in what ways, do nonprofit funding models (in an uncertain climate of external political economic forces) shape, support, hinder, and/or give direction to journalistic practices in relation to rejuvenating the craft.

As Carson (2020, p.83) highlights at the beginning of her theories, her chaos and control paradigm is advanced from many other researchers such as "Brian McNair, James Curran, Virginia Berridge, Denis McQuail, James McChesney, Edward Herman, Noam Chomsky, and others". Certainly, the chaos paradigm is rooted in Brian McNair's cultural chaos (2006) and the control paradigm is in the political economy theory on which Herman and Chomsky (2002)'s book, *Manufacturing Consent*, focuses. Drawing from diverse theories from researchers above, Carson (2020) formulates her theory particularly to analyse investigative journalism in the 21st century. Since there is little literature focusing specifically on nonprofit investigative journalism, I needed to find the closest study that can be applied to my PhD research. Carson's particular research scope on investigative journalism is the one; and therefore, studying her perspectives into investigative journalism seems beneficial to my PhD thesis. Carson's perspectives around chaos and control paradigm inspires my research into nonprofit funding models as one of the alternative ways of sustaining investigative journalism with an empirical approach focusing on investigative journalistic practices.

In sum, Carson's chaos and control paradigm raises a number of important issues with regard to investigative journalism and helps in providing an over-arching overview on external influences on news production in relation to funding models of media organisations. However, the concentration on the external influences can bring about a critical concern in that it neglects the interconnectedness of journalistic practices and organisational structures and routines at newsrooms. Internal aspects such as the aim of media organisation, their own sets of criteria on newsworthiness and publication schedules inevitably render into its outcome, news stories, as discovered considerably throughout journalism history (see Tuchman 1978; McNair 2009). To understand journalistic practices and challenges of newsrooms with nonprofit funding models, this research requires another theory

that can help to understand those internal influential elements. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Hierarchy of Influences Model

News production is affected by a wide range of both internal and external factors. The hierarchy of influences model by Shoemaker and Reese (2014) is relevant to the study of elements affecting news content, which “takes into account the multiple forces that simultaneously impinge on media and suggests how influence at one level may interact with that at another” (ibid, p.1). In this theory, news stories result from the combined or stand-alone influences of five factors: individual newswriters’ characteristics, production routines, organisational norms and purposes, social institutions and social systems (Shoemaker and Reese 2014). Although this model suggests five layers influencing news production, for the specific purpose of this thesis, the second (from the centre) and the third layers are applicable and the first, fourth and fifth layers are excluded.

The first layer, an “individual” level, means “the characteristics of the individual communicator” (Shoemaker and Reese 2014, p.8), which is excluded from the thesis in that this research does not aim to study the micro-level of the ability or characteristics of individuals in producing investigative journalism. Additionally, such a psychological analysis requires substantial time, resources and researcher expertise, which is beyond the scope and aims of this thesis.

The subsequent second and third layers of internal circles within a news outlet are most relevant to this thesis. The second layer is the level of routine practices, meaning “the most immediate constraining and enabling structures, larger patterns, or routines within which the individual operates” (ibid, p.8), including the time frame of publications of news. Previous researchers have emphasised the importance of analysing news production within organisational structures and work routines. Tuchman (1978, p.4) highlights that “news is located, gathered and disseminated by professionals working in organizations. Thus, it is inevitably a product of newswriters drawing upon institutional processes and conforming to institutional practices”. Logically, such analysis focuses on “the professional culture and organisational structure underpinning the process: the implementation of the objectivity ethic, as well as the limitations imposed by the news form, deadline

pressures and other elements of routine journalistic practice” (McNair 2009, p.55). As these academics highlight, work routines are crucial elements affecting news production. Shoemaker and Reese (2014, p.11) argue that the hierarchy of influences model shows the tendency “to view individuals as relatively more powerless as we view them as increasingly ‘constrained’ by successive layers of influence. Job routines do limit individuals in what they can do”. This thesis broadly agrees the perspective since individual journalists are employed by media which have their own missions, sets of criteria on newsworthiness, publication schedules and formats. For instance, a daily newspaper has to be filled with stories and therefore, journalists inevitably produce reporting to meet their routinised publication schedule.

The third layer, the level of media organisations is the highest level of influence within news media. This layer is described as “the influences of the larger organized entity within which the individual operates, the larger context of the routinized activities, which includes occupational roles, organizational policy, and how the enterprise itself is structured” (Shoemaker and Reese 2014, p.8). In terms of the journalism sector, elements such as ownership and structure, policies, values, and purposes of media organisations can be included. Shoemaker and Reese (2014, p.157) illustrate, “When organizational structures kept the news department autonomous and buffered from influences by the business side of the company, such effects were less likely”. As a result, editorial independence is closely related to the key characteristics of media organisations that can determine journalistic autonomy of newsrooms. For this thesis, the influences of organisations and routines level are particularly useful to see whether and in what ways the mechanism of these influences, observed at (primarily) commercial media by previous researchers, works at nonprofit investigative journalism organisations in publishing accountability journalism (see chapter 5).

The outer two levels, the fourth “social institution” and the fifth “social system” which exists outside of media organisational boundaries, are excluded from this research. The social institution influence is described as “how media organizations combine into larger institutions that become part of larger structured relationships” (Shoemaker and Reese 2014, p.8). My research studies specific newsrooms in relation to their funding, however, not to the broader media industry in South Korea and the UK. Moreover, Shoemaker and Reese (2014, p.8) highlight that the social system influence is useful for “cross-national comparisons of how the national and

cultural context affect media performance”. However, as specified in the Introduction of this thesis (see Chapter 1), this research does not aim to conduct cross-national or cross-cultural comparative analysis. Instead, this study has an emphasis on the relation between the journalistic practices and funding models. Certainly, there are comparative elements in analysing these two newsrooms in terms of main funding sources, but the analysis will not be based upon different cultural or national contexts. This thesis studies how investigative journalism is produced in relation to influences of external forces at media organisations with different funding models. Therefore, the chaos and control paradigm (Carson 2020) is more appropriate for the purpose of this thesis when it comes to analysing such external influences.

Certainly, some researchers evidence that Shoemaker and Reese (2014)’s model does not perfectly mirror journalists’ perspectives (Obermaier et al. 2021). Also, different elements such as seven social influences (Voakes 1997) and five domains of influences (Preston 2009) have been suggested by diverse researchers to explore influences on news reporting throughout journalism history. Therefore, a particular analytic agenda should be determined based on research purposes. In fact, a wide range scholarly works has adopted the Shoemaker and Reese (2014)’s model (see Milojević and Krstić 2018; Wintterlin et al. 2020; Grassau et al. 2021) as has this thesis by selecting parts or whole of the models.

2.4 Conclusion of Part I: The Use of Combined Two Theories

This section has presented two fundamental theoretical agendas for the thesis. The chaos and control paradigm by Carson (2020) is useful for a macro-level analysis, and the hierarchy of influences model by Shoemaker and Reese (2014) is for a meso-level analysis. Macro- and meso-level analyses are adopted in order to analyse a systemic rationale behind the status of investigative journalism under different financial models of media outlets. This research aims to analyse the journalistic practices and challenges for news production at nonprofit media organisations. Throughout journalism history, a considerable amount of literature has revealed that news production is influenced by both external and internal aspects. Therefore, examining both aspects at nonprofit investigative journalism organisations are crucial for the purpose of this PhD thesis. Both theories focus on influences on news production in that the chaos and control paradigm (Carson

2020) mainly relates to external aspects whereas the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker and Reese 2014) does to internal ones. Owing to the aforementioned reasons, the research chooses the combined use of two theories to conduct an explanatory enquiry. The combined references are helpful to examine how newsrooms with different funding models can produce investigative journalism while it is reported that many others are decreasingly able to do.

I argue that in terms of relationship, newsroom autonomy works as independent variable, and organisational purposes and journalistic routines do as dependent variables. For instance, when newsroom autonomy is compromised by economic interests then the organisational purpose and routines are affected accordingly. The result may be that a media organisation aims to maximise profit, and subsequently, practical daily routines are adjusted accordingly in order to achieve such economic purposes. Contrarily, when newsroom autonomy is more guaranteed (in order to produce news that plays its watchdog role in society), a news outlet can then adjust its working conditions to better enable in-depth investigative journalism. McNair (2009) suggests that an organisational- and professional-oriented perspective on media studies has considered positioning itself as being opposed to the political and economic-centric deterministic approach. However, in line with Carson (2020)'s approach, this thesis aims to reconcile both analytic agendas to explore changes in investigative journalism. This is because such social phenomena require a multi-dimensional approach and not just a linear one.

PART II: Investigative Journalism Crisis and Limited Newsroom Autonomy

Part II analyses the external and internal elements affecting newsroom autonomy at media organisations and how it has affected the status of investigative journalism in the journalism sector. First, this examines the political and economic forces outside news media. As discussed in Part I, the control paradigm (Carson 2020), including the political economy theory, assists this research in understanding the media ecology where investigative journalism has faced crisis. Second, the thesis explores the extent to which organisational purposes and their routinised journalistic practices can influence news content at media organisations with an emphasis on investigative journalism. Based on the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker and Reese 2014) discussed in Part I, internal elements at media organisations have strongly influenced their news production and news stories as outcomes of the production. Taking the theoretical agenda into account, it is essential for this research to examine how such external and internal forces influence news content in order to understand the status of investigative journalism primarily during the first decade of the 21st century.

2.5 External Forces Affecting Newsroom Autonomy

The discussion related to external forces affecting newsroom autonomy can be divided into two main features: politics and economics. The critical discussion here is the extent to which and in what ways such elements support or limit newsrooms to conduct investigative journalism. First, investigative journalism at public service media in South Korea and the UK is examined in terms of the affordances and limitations of the media system. Then, this discussion moves into investigative journalism in the commercial area in order to explore economic influences on news content. The consequence from imbalanced power between funders, such as owners and advertisers for seeking profits, and newsrooms for journalistic values, and the added burden on media organisations caused by financial crisis must be discussed so as to understand the current media ecology.

2.5.1 Limited Newsroom Autonomy in Public Service Media

This subsection explores how investigative journalism has been conducted at public service media, particularly in South Korea and the UK pertaining to its operational system and funding model. Investigative journalism has been undertaken by public service media, namely (but not limited to) the *Korean Broadcasting System (KBS)*⁸ in South Korea and the *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*⁹ in the UK respectively, for many years. McQuail (2010, p.178) describes public service broadcasting as “a system that is set up by law and generally financed by public funds (often a compulsory licence paid by households) and given a large degree of editorial and operating independence”. Such organisations are financed through national funding typically generated from a TV licence fee, a TV tax, or taxes on commercial media companies (Benson and Powers 2011; Potschka 2011). According to McQuail (2010, p.178), the main purpose of public service media is to serve “the public interest by meeting the important communication needs of society and its citizens”.

Signature investigative journalism programmes of public service media organisations around the world have been well-known (Lewis 2007; Rouan 2009). Investigative journalism programmes, such as *PD Notebook* of the *Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC)*¹⁰ and *60 minutes in pursuit* of KBS in South Korea, are the work of what are considered to be the most trusted Korean media organisations (Kim 2011). KBS had strongly supported their Investigative Journalism Team, which won the 2005 Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) Award for the first time for South Korean media (Kim 2006), until the termination of the team in 2008. The BBC, the public service broadcaster in the UK, makes *Panorama*, the investigative documentary series whose purpose is to report impartially news stories in the public interest (BBC n.d.).

Owing to the structural advantages of public service media, investigative journalism from such organisations has been considered independent with guaranteed editorial autonomy from outside forces (Benson and Powers 2011). In a large international

⁸ <https://open.kbs.co.kr/eng/> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/aboutthebbc/> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

¹⁰ MBC, Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation, is a South Korean terrestrial Broadcaster. It is commercially funded but governed by its largest shareholder Foundation for Broadcast Culture, a public organisation. Therefore, MBC considers itself as a public service broadcaster, according to its website. <http://with.mbc.co.kr/public/media/> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

study researching public service media in fourteen countries across the world, Benson and Powers (2011) report on how the public service media assure their autonomy, for instance:

Swedish public broadcaster, SVT, is likewise governed by a multiyear charter (in this case, three years) and owned by an independent foundation, Förvaltningsstiftelsen för Sveriges Radio AB, specifically designed to insulate SVT from both state and market pressures. (Benson and Powers 2011, p.12)

In such organisations, the professional autonomy of newswriters across the studied countries seem to be insulated with institutional systems such as multiyear scheduled budgets, separated institutions/governing bodies to provide distance from the funding body, and/or media laws and charters to regulate the influence of political forces on the organisations' professional autonomy (ibid). With such means in place to protect newsroom independence, it is well known that investigative journalism in public service media has been successful in many countries.

However, several researchers have highlighted that this kind of structure, funded and managed by government, challenges the assumed normative role of public service media as being objective and impartial in providing newsroom autonomy to editorial staff. Newsrooms in public service media sometimes suffer from political influences from those who fund and oversee the news media, and limits on newsroom autonomy have been seen to influence a deterioration of investigative journalism (McQueen 2008; Benson and Powers 2011; Kim and Han 2014; Shin 2016; Freedman 2019). Indeed, the structural and institutional system of appointing high-level positions at public service media in South Korea and the UK is likely to leave room for the current ruling party to indirectly exert their power over newsrooms (Kim and Han 2014; Freedman 2019). The tactic of appointing those in senior positions who are in favour of the powerful entities is often observed at commercial media by the proprietors of private news media to exercise their power in news content (McNair 2009, p.50-51). It seems that the process has also occurred in public service media. Under this system, political influences in media organisations could be an intrinsic structural flaw of the public service media whose independence heavily relies on the conscience and willingness of the government and associated interests.

In South Korea, the Press Freedom Index by *Reporters without Borders* (RWB) has fluctuated greatly since early 2000, depending on the ruling party. South Korean journalists enjoyed their freedom of reporting during the two consecutive

Democratic Party governments (1998-2003 and 2003-2008) (Shin 2016, p.71). The Index rose to the 31st position in 2006. Shin (2016, p.73) states that several practitioners at South Korean broadcasters consider the period as “the golden age of Korean broadcasting journalism”. However, the Index dropped during the following two Conservative Party governments (2008-2013 and 2013-2017), to the 69th in 2009 and to the 70th in 2016. The Index then climbed back up to the 41st place in 2019, during the Democratic administration (2017-2022) (RWB 2006, 2009, 2016, 2019). Certainly, this fluctuation was probably not just caused solely by public service media, but also caused by commercial media organisations. Still, the RWB highlights that the procedure of appointing Director Generals at South Korean public service media has been a major contributing factor to this fluctuation and recommends changes to the procedure for newsroom independence (RWB n.d.). Seungho Choi, a South Korean investigative journalist and the former Director General of MBC (2017-2020), has strongly backed up the RWB’s opinion by highlighting the amendment in managerial structure for public service media as a prerequisite for editorial independence (Kim 2021).

In a study that sets out to analyse the media environment in South Korea over the period of 2012-2014, Kim and Han (2014, p.256) have found that it becomes increasingly difficult to find news stories watching the powerful authorities in mainstream broadcasting systems, including commercial and public service broadcasters. The researchers argue that newswriters’ intention to find a truth about a military related issue was discouraged by: external and internal media control; the collapse of the group of producers; and argument over political ideology (ibid, p.265). In conclusion, they emphasise the need of changing the process of appointing Director Generals and governing systems of public service media in order to provide newswriters with independent working conditions to produce investigative journalism, which is necessary for the public’s right to know and the development of democracy (ibid, p.267).

In the UK, the BBC also receives some criticism about its structural and organisational system of appointment to high positions and funding from the government owing to potential political influences despite its reputation as an impartial media organisation globally (Benson and Powers 2011; Freedman 2019). Freedman (2019) points out three critical reasons why the role of the BBC as an independent watchdog is undermined: the system of appointing the Director Generals; sources of funding from the government; and a limited pool of recruiting

staff from Oxbridge. All of these factors, he argues, inappropriately constrain editorial autonomy being a check on the powerful (ibid).

Benson and Powers (2011, p.58) have found that the potential interference of political forces has exerted its authority on the BBC's newsroom, in spite of multiple mechanisms protecting their newsroom independence:

One prominent example of this happening occurred in the 1980s when Director-General Alasdair Milne was forced to resign by the Trust (then known as the Board of Governors) following pressure from the Thatcher administration, which claimed a general BBC left-wing bias and was specifically aggravated about coverage of the Falklands War.

Disputes arose between the BBC and Thatcher's government on news content prior to the Director-General's dismissal (Brown 2013). McQueen (2008, p.47) describes this period for the BBC as "politically volatile". Such intimate entanglement between public service media and government plays a role in regulating the ability of journalists' professionalism.

The example above could be considered outdated. However, the public service media's normative role of being balanced and embracing diverse viewpoints is also identified as limited in the 21st century by Cushion et al. (2017). By analysing news reporting over the course of one month in 2015, the team (Cushion et al. 2017, p.1209) examined political sourcing on BBC TV news and found that 82.7 percent came from the Conservative Party, whereas 14.7 percent came from the Labour Party; non-BBC TV broadcasters (ITV, Sky and Channel 4) reveal a distribution of 80 percent and 7.5 percent respectively. Although the BBC is supposed to be balanced and impartial in reporting, it has shown bias towards dominant political interests. The argument on fundamental factors limiting impartiality of the organisation is strengthened by Jones (2016), a former investigative journalist at the BBC who has written, "The BBC is culturally inclined against investigations" and "the fundamental corporate bias is pro-government, regardless of party" principally due to their funding model and operation overseen by the government (ibid).

Furthermore, financial crisis in the media industry at mid 2000s has added challenges to newswriters at public service media. Budget cuts to investigative journalism and subsequent redundancies are reproduced at public service media, including the BBC. The National Union of Journalists, cited in the report by Communications Committee (2012, p.181), states:

Editions are being cut from Radio 4's Law in Action, and The Report, while Beyond Westminster and Taking a Stand will come to an end. On BBC Radio 5Live, the 5Live Investigates programme will be scrapped. The regional TV investigative programme, Inside Out, faces 40 per cent cuts. Cuts are underway in National TV Current Affairs (makers of Panorama) based in London and have been since February 2010.

As described in detail, many producers and teams of investigative journalism programmes faced reduced resources, and even termination of their programmes. Such financial difficulty has also affected editorial autonomy of newsrooms, according to the report (ibid).

In summary, it is undeniable that public service media remains, to some extent, a primary provider of journalistic accountability in South Korea and in the UK. It nevertheless has shown its structural weakness under such long-standing political pressures. In some cases, public service media could provide lop-sided and distorted aspects of issues. Consequently, restricting critical investigations against close political alliances contradicts a mission of being impartial in delivering journalism in the public interest. The problem stemming from this limited autonomy is vulnerable working conditions for journalists whose role is, at least in part, to challenge those in positions of power, deteriorating the status of investigative journalism, and consequently a threat to a healthy democratic society.

2.5.2 Investigative Journalism in Commercial News Outlets

This subsection examines the extent to which investigative journalism has been supported and limited at commercially funded media organisations. Investigative journalism has been commercially funded, such as through advertising revenues, subscription fees or supported by a cross-subsidy format within commercial media. The cross-subsidy format means that an organisation funds news, that is less commercial but important in the public interest, by its revenues from more profitable production lines. This way of funding investigative journalism is commonly found for investigative TV programmes and investigative journalism units within broadcasters or newspapers (Beecher 2009; Davies 2009; Welly 2010). For instance, *60 Minutes* on Channel 9 in Australia, *Want To Know* of the *Seoul Broadcasting Service* (SBS) in South Korea, the Insight team of *The Sunday Times* in the UK, and the Spotlight team at the *Boston Globe* in the USA all operate (or operated) within commercial media organisations. Since investigative journalism has never been expected to

generate significant profits on its own, advertising-funded commercial companies often cross-subsidise, which had worked well for a time. However, by the beginning of the 21st century it had become a less viable option for many. The profit-seeking nature of market-based news outlets became more susceptible to noneditorial elements in protecting newsroom autonomy. Three primary concerns affecting news production have been 1) ownership of news media, 2) power of advertisers, and 3) financial difficulties increasingly enhancing the influence of funders over editorial content.

2.5.2.1 Relationship Between the Ownership of News Media and News Production

One of the most noticeable concerns in the literature is interference in editorial autonomy by proprietors of news outlets attempting to influence news production in order to maximise their profits and/or favour their political interests (Herman and Chomsky 2002; Barnett 2005; McNair 2009; Benson and Powers 2011). The operational logic of commercial media organisations is similar to that of any profit-seeking corporates, favouring their owners' associates such as advertisers and political allies, and seeking to influence legal and regulatory frameworks, to sustain and expand their businesses. For instance, media owners could exert their power over a newsroom and use the editorial ability to support their own "politico-ideological preferences" (McNair 2009, p.51). In this manner, political and economic interests are intertwined. Ownership-oriented management often restricts a newsroom's editorial independence on investigating contentious and problematic issues that might offend their political and economic partners or damage their interests (Herman and Chomsky 2002; Barnett 2005; Benson and Powers 2011).

Studies have identified that the concentration of capital and consolidation by global multimedia enterprises exacerbates the editorial independence of newswriters (Barnett 2005; Garnham 2011). An example of how a media company-government alliance could aggravate investigative journalism would probably be that of the Insight team, the legendary investigative journalism unit of *The Sunday Times* in the UK that was financially subsidised by the profits of the newspaper. Established in 1963, *The Sunday Times* played a role as "a prototypical promoter of 'good' journalistic practice exemplified by investigative journalism" (Bromley 2008, p.174) with the full commitment of the owner and the editor to accountability journalism.

The financial support for investigative journalism seemed substantial as one writer observed, “It spent money like water on investigative journalism” (Knightley cited by Bromley 2008, p.175). However, considerable changes were made to the team when, in 1981, Rupert Murdoch acquired *The Times and Sunday Times* (Davies 2009, p.360). Budgets were cut while expecting reporters to publish three times as many news stories as before (ibid, p.349). According to Hardy (2014, p.101), although Murdoch argued in 2007 that he “did not instruct the editors of *The Times and Sunday Times*”, academics have found that the press “became more partisan in news reporting under Murdoch”. With decreased financial and editorial support, the Insight team became “the Hindsight Team” (Davies 2009, p.349) and finally was terminated in the Summer of 2005. Davies (2009, p.379) concludes that “Insight was killed in the end simply to save Murdoch’s money”. This is a representative example of interference in newsroom autonomy by the proprietor of a media outlet. What happened to the Insight Team worries journalism practitioners and scholars owing to the profit-oriented operation of the media outlet and its consequences (Lewis 2007; Davies 2009). Although some in the news media have tried to insulate newsroom autonomy by limiting owner power, and overt intervention by funders is less common than more subtle influences, “the economic power wielded by the proprietor continues to be the single most important determinant of a news outlet’s editorial line” (McNair 2009, p.51).

2.5.2.2 The Power of Advertisers Influencing News Content

Another significant economic power in advertising-dependent media is that of advertisers. As Hardy (2022, p.57) argues, “Regulations and industry norms upheld principles of the separation of advertising and editorial across mass media”, media organisations have tried to insulate their newsroom autonomy from advertisers. Still, this external economic factor could influence news production in diverse ways. For example, news reporting which might offend advertisers can be withdrawn from publishing either voluntarily by internal decision makers or involuntarily after being negotiated by advertisers. In some cases, journalists are pressured to report news that favours advertisers to attract or maintain their advertising revenues (McNair 2009, p.52). Schiffrin (2017, p.4) rightly expresses concern over the ineffective firewalls between editorial and advertising departments, becoming “new impediments to the ability of the media to perform some of its key societal roles”. The firewalls are described as “boundaries between journalistic activity and the

business side of media companies, supposedly ensuring the news decisions are not economically motivated” (Birnbauer 2019, p.178). In other words, if firewalls are no longer able to separate editorial and financial departments, a decision-making process on news selection becomes distracted by noneditorial elements. Moreover, the dominance of profit-seeking operational tactics of traditional media organisations over journalistic value-based ones could be more brutal when competing for advertising space online (McChesney and Nichols 2010; Starkman 2014; Cagé 2016). As observed throughout journalism’s history, the influence of advertisers over the behaviours of media staff has strengthened, causing a severe and significant influence on newsroom autonomy. Since such an overt intervention into newsroom is rarely revealed to the public, there are not many detailed case studies to choose from, this thesis studies one incident each from South Korea and the UK.

In 2006, the collapse of the firewall between editorial and managerial departments at a media organisation was reported in South Korea. It was revealed that the managerial level position of *Sisajournal*, an investigative journalism magazine in South Korea, had withdrawn a news story critical of a South Korean conglomerate immediately before printing without any agreement from the editor-in-chief (Lee 2007; Lee 2010). This was reported as a situation where the managerial decision has overruled the editorial decision on news content. The editor-in-chief resigned as an expression of protest, and union members protested as well (Lee 2007; Lee 2010). Lee (2010, p.74) highlights that this shows the capital power influencing news production. Ultimately, in 2007 the union members left *Sisajournal* and established a media organisation called *Sisaln* aiming for publishing investigative reporting independently (ibid).

Advertisers exercising editorial control has also occurred on the other side of the world. More recently, the former chief political commentator of the *Telegraph* resigned and stated that news stories about an advertiser had been under-reported (Plunkett and Quinn 2015). He wrote an article titled, “Why I have resigned from the *Telegraph*” (Osborne 2015), emphasising that “If major newspapers allow corporations to influence their content for fear of losing advertising revenue, democracy itself is in peril” (ibid). He adds:

With the collapse in standards has come a most sinister development. It has long been axiomatic in quality British journalism that the advertising department and editorial should be kept rigorously apart. There is a great deal of evidence that, at the *Telegraph*, this distinction has collapsed. [...]

HSBC, as one former *Telegraph* executive told me, is “the advertiser you literally cannot afford to offend”. (Osborne 2015)

This shows the level of corporative power of advertisers at media organisations and how it can restrict newsroom autonomy. Osborne (2015) says that the firewall between managerial and editorial departments was somewhat demolished at this commercial newspaper. Such collapse at a media organisation illustrates how commercial forces can influence news production, which has been identified as one of the major contributing factors for the decline of newsroom autonomy.

Moreover, Örnebring (2016, p.137) broadly adopts this perspective, illustrating such contemporary phenomenon in news media, noting “Today, of course, it is increasingly economically unfeasible to separate editorial and advertising departments, something borne out by many studies”. Investigative journalism revealing systemic corruption and wrongdoing inevitably confronts targets but is vitally important in holding offenders to account and bringing the unscrupulous into the public area that it does so independent of this kind of influence. However, being cowed from losing advertising revenues, newsrooms are often wary and demotivated to carry out investigative journalism. This kind of presence also supports the keyframe of the control paradigm (Carson 2020) in analysing the perceived crisis in investigative journalism for this thesis.

2.5.2.3 Financial Difficulties Accelerating External Influences into News Production

These aforementioned examples illustrate where the discretionary decision-making of an editorial department is disrespected by the ownership or advertisers with an attempt to influence news content. Such noneditorial considerations influencing news production at traditional media outlets have been strengthened during the global financial crisis in the media industry, resulting in investigative journalism at many generalist news organisations under threats. A large volume of research has revealed that commercial news media have experienced unprecedented financial difficulties since the beginning of the 21st century (Meyer 2004; Lewis 2007; Rouan 2009; Houston 2010; McChesney and Nichols 2010; Carvajal et al. 2012; Powers and Yaros 2012; Starkman 2014; Cagé 2016; Birnbauer 2019).

One of the key factors affecting the situation, it is agreed, is the significant drop in advertising revenues. Digital technologies represented by the Internet have caused the migration of advertising spaces from offline, especially newspapers, to online. Various online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Google have expanded the range of spaces that advertisers choose from, which caused the reduction in capital flowing into traditional media organisations (Starkman 2014; Cagé 2016; Hardy 2022). Hardy (2022, p.56) highlights “the changing dynamics of media–advertising relationship” with analysing the phenomena. With the amount of online advertising rapidly rising and accounting for a large proportion of all advertising, this brings about a decrease in advertising in many traditional media. According to McChesney and Nichols (2010, p.28), classified-ad revenues “fell from 40 percent of all newspaper advertising revenues in 1999 to 22 percent in 2009”. On top of the decrease of advertising revenues in general, the global financial crisis in 2008 swept across all business sectors; the media industry was unexceptional. Such an economic situation has caused “the systematic deterioration of journalism” and “the crisis of journalism” (McChesney and Nichols 2010, p.3). The ad-based business model for journalism is consequently “dying and soon to be buried forever, or at least for the imaginable future” (ibid, p.11).

Investigative journalism was negatively affected by the failure of the commercial model for news media. In general, downsizing a newsroom and merging with other media organisations was conducted across the sector to overcome operational difficulties (Lewis 2007; Houston 2010; McChesney and Nichols 2010; Cagé 2016; Birnbauer 2019). Investigative journalism staff are often targeted first to scale down under dire financial circumstances owing to its cost and resource intensiveness, thus uncommercial aspect of their work (Barnett 2005; Cordell 2009; McChesney and Nichols 2010; Ware 2011; Stetka and Örnebring 2013; Birnbauer 2019). For instance, investigative journalists at half of the 20 medium/large sized newspapers in the USA had to leave their workplaces, and a majority of 25,000 journalists dismissed during 2008-2009 were investigative journalists (Houston 2010, p.47). Waldman (2011, p.148) examines the failure of the cross-subsidy model for investigative journalism at some commercial media in the digital era.

More and more newsrooms intentionally have moved their focus onto soft news that is more likely to attract audiences easily than hard news in the public interest (Barnett 2005, p.329). The business strategy of prioritising news in the private interest over the public interest has inevitably caused the less support for

investigative journalism in commercial media companies (Aucoin 2005; Bromley 2005; Bradshaw 2008; Davies 2009; McChesney and Nichols 2010). Illustrated as “vanishing species in the forests of dead media” (Walton 2010, p.20) and “endangered species” (Lewis 2008, p.24), investigative journalism has been diminished drastically in commercial media companies.

2.6 Internal Elements Influencing Newsroom Autonomy

This section discusses the relation between internal forces and newsroom autonomy. The key discussion here is to what extent, and in what ways, internal organisational aspects support or limit newsrooms to conduct investigative journalism in general. As seen in the theoretical agenda (Shoemaker and Reese 2014), organisational purposes and accordingly, routinised activities, significantly affect news production. Therefore, it is pertinent to study the influences of these elements on investigative journalism, in particular, to understand why and how this kind of journalism can be supported or restricted by news organisations. First, this thesis examines the factors enabling investigative journalism to be a watchdog of society with focus on organisational support for in-depth investigations. Then, the discussion moves into challenging working conditions in relation to journalistic routines in producing in-depth, original reporting. Furthermore, this thesis identifies problematic journalistic activities and financial circumstances in the media industry. Such practices discourage original, active research for news reporting, which makes news media become a main agent passively disseminating unverified information that counters many of the essential functions of journalism.

2.6.1 Organisational Support for Original Research

Impartiality is vital for journalism, described as “balance in the choice and use of sources, so as to reflect different points of view, and also neutrality in the presentation of news – separating facts from opinion, avoiding value judgements or emotive language or pictures” (McQuail 1994, p.255). For example, the BBC, as a British public service broadcaster, has clearly noted its purpose to “provide duly accurate and impartial news, current affairs and factual programming” (BBC, n.d.). Impartiality can be achieved through a continued effort of a reporter to develop a

production procedure maximising diverse viewpoints and facts and minimising personal subjective opinions.

Investigative journalism, in particular, is required to be impartial since seeking diversity in news reporting serves a democratic function in society (Hansen 1991; O'Neill and O'Connor 2008; Phillips 2010; Carlson 2011; Matthews 2013). One of the principal roles of investigative journalism is "to facilitate the participation of diverse and multiple voices in political discourse" (Carson 2020, p.83). The variety of news sources can serve as "a powerful measure of the media's performance in a democratic society" (Hansen 1991, p.474). Hansen (1991, p.476) has demonstrated that "*enterprise journalism*¹¹", including "investigative projects, interpretive or in-depth reports, explanatory journalism, specialized beat reporting or public service projects", is more likely to contain diverse sources and less likely to rely on governmental officers than daily news stories (ibid, p.478).

Seeking impartiality by providing more varied voices in news reporting is one of the ways that investigative journalism serves its watchdog function for healthy democracy. As investigative journalists' work is described as finding "the very hardest of hard facts" (Ettema and Glasser 1998, p.13), a verification process is crucial. An essential prerequisite for journalists to accomplish this is sufficient time and resources. Investigative journalists "most fully capitalize on the opportunity to go beyond the limits of daily reporting to confront reality more directly and completely" (Ettema and Glasser 1998, p.13). Therefore, being free "from daily deadline pressures" is imperative for them to do so (Hansen 1991, p.476), which is not available to all reporters. Journalists, whose organisations support in-depth reporting, can be liberated from the 24/7 news cycle, enabling themselves to find and verify original sources. To do so, they can fulfil their democratic accountability roles.

It is common for journalists to spend months or even years before publishing one investigative report, which is also why investigative journalism is considered the most expensive but least profitable business lines for media outlets. Due to this, investigative journalism has often been the first to be removed when media organisations suffer financial difficulty, as discussed in the previous section (see section 2.5.2.3). Therefore, its production is affected by organisational structures and decisions to insulate newsroom autonomy to provide flexible journalistic

¹¹ Emphasis in the original text.

routines without intervention from external forces. However, as seen in the previous section, a significant problem of many contemporary newsrooms is the strengthened influence of noneditorial political and economic influences on newsroom autonomy. When an organisation cannot be a shield for its newswriters, editorial independence is impeded, and therefore journalistic routines become adjusted to prioritise political and economic values over journalistic newsworthiness. The following section further discusses this phenomenon and its consequences.

2.6.2 Routines Making it Harder for Newswriters to Produce Original Research and Verification Process in Legacy Media

So far, I have discussed the main prerequisite for in-depth investigations at newsrooms: sufficient time and resources for journalists to collect diverse news sources to reveal facts. However, not all newsrooms can afford the luxury of such in-depth investigative reporting. I do not intend to argue that all media outlets have to dedicate themselves to investigative journalism, indeed some newsrooms report only breaking news and entertainment soft news stories. However, there is a concern for newsrooms that once were ardent supporters of investigative journalism, finding that this is no longer possible due to both external and internal control over news production. This subsection accordingly explores the extent to which internal elements make it difficult for journalists to produce investigative journalism. A media organisation, impeded by external forces, cannot protect its newsroom autonomy, thereby news content. For instance, if an organisation prioritises profit-seeking over journalistic value, journalistic routines might be established efficiently to make the most money with fewer resources. Routines and organisational level layers in the hierarchy influences model (Shoemaker and Reese 2014) are intertwined in an analysis of bigger, structural influences.

One prominent aspect impeding journalists in undertaking original research on news stories appears the limited time available owing to regulated journalistic routines by their organisations. Journalistic routines include newsworthiness, publication schedules and formats (Shoemaker and Reese 2014). At an independent newsroom, newsworthiness is determined primarily based upon journalistic value and norms, whereas at an economically oriented newsroom, the market imperatives, that is to say, profitability (such as audience preferences) are likely to decide newsworthiness (Shoemaker and Reese 2014). The problem of recent

media environments favours the latter, which has limited the space for, and caused less emphasis on investigative journalism. Due to technological development, the distinct 24/7 newsroom cycle has become prevalent in mass media regardless of public or commercial ownership. Increased workloads in tandem with a downsized newsroom has exacerbated the already challenging working conditions of newswriters (see section 2.5.2). Seeking diverse news sources for pluralism becomes more difficult to many but the privileged few elite media who can afford it. Consequently, a lack of diversity is observed in news content. It is argued that much of the source material in news reporting is no longer gathered actively, instead relying on passive reproduction of pre-packed sources mediated by PR and news agencies.

PR professionals and news agency materials have increased influence over many aspects of news reporting (Lewis et al. 2006; Franklin et al. 2010; Matthews 2013; Moloney et al. 2013; Jackson and Moloney 2016). Franklin et al. (2010, p.203) argue that when journalists and PR become too close, it creates a problem of “blunting journalists’ critical edge, transforming the journalistic watchdog into a public relations lapdog”. A consequence of the rapid growth of PR combined with aggravated working conditions after the financial crisis in the media industry, has transformed journalists “into mere *processors*¹² rather than *originators*¹³ of news” (ibid, p.203). Increasingly, PR, which used to be an “information subsidy”, has become an “editorial subsidy” providing not only news materials but also issue framing (Jackson and Moloney 2016, p.769). “PR-isation”, defined as “the professional state where PR attitudes are incorporated into journalism’s mind-set leading to the disablement of their critical faculties, and where PR-biased material is published without sourcing” (Moloney and McGrath 2020, p.82), becomes prevalent. The term, PR-isation, summarises the phenomenon of imbalanced power between PR and journalists, where news content is likely to be determined by external figures’ values and perspectives rather than independently by journalistic norms and judgements.

Pre-packaged news sources such as PR and news agencies have become dominant, as shown in much empirical research. Lewis et al. (2006, p.13) analysed 2,207 news stories from five British newspapers, the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, *The Times*, the *Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail* and 402 from TV and Radio news of

¹² Emphasis in the original text.

¹³ Emphasis in the original text.

the BBC and ITV. The content analysis identified found that with regard to wire service materials, “*nearly half of all press stories appeared to come wholly or mainly from wire services*¹⁴” (ibid, p.15) and 27 percent for broadcast. In terms of PR materials, 19 percent of press and 17 percent of broadcast stories were “*derived mainly*¹⁵ or *wholly*¹⁶ from PR material or activity” (ibid, p.17). The highest proportion of PR materials used by press and broadcast came from “Professional Private” (38 and 32 percent, respectively) and “Professional Government” (21 and 39 percent respectively) (ibid, p.22). Moreover, Saridou’s team (2017, p.1007) highlight that “the recycling of news content from established elite sources and across popular news sites has increased between 2013 and 2016, posing serious threats for content plurality and independent reporting”, based on their quantitative analysis on news stories in Greece.

Phillips (2010, p.375) asserts that journalists are “taking material from other news outlets without follow up or attribution”, referred to as “news cannibalisation”. Moreover, Davies (2009, p.70-71) criticises the copy and paste practice without verification of information by referring to it as “Churnalism”:

This is journalists failing to perform the simple basic functions of their profession; quite unable to tell their readers the truth about what is happening on their patch. This is journalists who are no longer out gathering news but who are reduced instead to passive processors of whatever material comes their way, churning out stories, whether real event or PR artifice, important or trivial, true or false.

Such news cannibalisation and Churnalism also often lead to less emphasis on original research for source diversity and a verification process than traditional journalistic practices (Lewis et al. 2006; Machill and Beiler 2009; Matthews 2013). Matthews (2013, p.247) points out that copy-and-paste practice of news agency’s materials without further investigation could expose journalists publishing “claims which are imprecise, if not entirely false”, if a fact-checking process is not adequately implemented. Copy-and-paste reporting decreases not only the diversity of news content, but also the likelihood of proper verification (ibid).

Reduced source diversity is likely to spread out a narrowed perspective, excluding the voices of less powerful sources (Hansen 1991; Anderson et al. 2005; O’Neill and O’Connor 2008; Matthews 2013), which contradicts the pluralistic democratic

¹⁴ Emphasis in the original text.

¹⁵ Emphasis in the original text.

¹⁶ Emphasis in the original text.

roles of journalism. Carrying “obvious dangers” (Matthews 2013, p. 245), such reliance on a narrowed spectrum of sources, implies a likelihood of generating news agendas shaped by certain interest groups of people, who are easily accessed, and exert increased control over news content and agendas (ibid). O’Neill and O’Connor (2008, p.497-498) also assert that “journalists are becoming more passive, often merely passing on information to the public that they have been given”. Their research shows that 76 percent of local news articles rely on a single news source. Discussing such phenomena, Matthews (2013, p.243) contends that journalism’s “independent monitor of the privileged and powerful” has been weakened.

Scholars observed that degenerating working conditions in the 2000s accelerated heavy reliance on easily accessible news sources, and copy and paste practices, coupled with less emphasis on the verification of information (Ekström 2002; Machill and Beiler 2009). Under pressure for profitability, journalistic norms regarding editorial quality and independence tend to be neglected to meet the organisational demands. According to Ekström (2002, p.270), journalists lack time to “do their own investigations or reflect on the reliability of various pieces of information”. Similarly, Machill and Beiler (2009, p.182) also reveal that journalists at German media organisations spend about eleven minutes per day on fact-checking, which seems insufficient. Journalism’s public service role providing “credible and accurate news” (Matthews 2013, p.246) is hardly served and without enough time for verification, “journalism risks becoming open to manipulation and misinformation” (ibid, p.246).

In South Korea, the average number of straight/short news stories one journalist writes per week in 2021 is 9.4 for newspapers and 12 for online news media, whereas narrative/in-depth reporting is 2.4 for both media types (Korea Press Foundation 2022). Under this national context, a South Korean investigative journalist Kyongyoung Choi (interviewed in Ddanji 2019) highlights that reporters often do not have sufficient time for reporting independently and checking facts. He continues that journalists need to meet many people to best be able to determine fact from fiction, but this is not commonly possible in many of contemporary South Korean newsrooms (ibid). The journalist mentions that he is lucky to be an investigative journalist without being stuck in the fast-track of a daily news routine (ibid).

2.7 Conclusion of Part II: The Problem of the Crisis in Investigative Journalism

Part II of the literature review chapter has discussed the combination of external and internal influences on newsroom autonomy, worsening working conditions for journalists in conducting original reporting at some legacy media. Political and economic forces outside media outlets are identified as key influencers to newsroom autonomy. Due to the structural system, particularly with regard to the appointment process of Director Generals, public service media in South Korea and the UK have exposed limitations in their ability to insulate editorial independence from the government to some extent. Some of the commercial media outlets have struggled to maintain investigative journalism primarily owing to their profit-seeking nature. It has often been found that owners of media outlets exert power over news content to be favourable to their political alliances or policymakers. Moreover, advertisement-dependent media organisations inevitably favour their advertisers, and therefore, the firewall between financial and editorial departments becomes less effective. The global financial crisis caused a further deterioration in working conditions for investigative journalists. Multi-layered external aspects exacerbated the circumstances in the media industry, and it seems to be more difficult for organisations to insulate their editorial independence. Consequently, journalism is often criticised for its incapacity to fulfil its watchdog role in society.

Organisational purposes focusing on profit-seeking rather than journalistic norms and values encourage journalistic routines that make it difficult for journalist to publish in-depth reporting. In the 24/7 news cycle, a paucity of investment in time and resources into research and investigation on news stories, both in investigative and daily routine news, leads to the weakening of journalistic norms and practices that prioritise independence. Generalist journalists increasingly base news on easily accessible (and reproducible) single sources from elite groups, leading PR-isation and Churnalism to become prevalent. A subsequent decrease in the diversity of perspectives threatens pluralism in a liberal democratic society, bringing about a dearth of trust in journalism and further squeezing opportunities for investigative journalism. News media prioritising profitability might have been successful on the business side, but they show “a civic or democratic failure” (Franklin 2011, p.103). In a context where many generalist news organisations are failing to fulfil their Fourth Estate function, nonprofit and independent investigative journalism organisations are examples of new actors emerging to play these roles in different

ways in the current media ecology. In this manner, it is meaningful for this thesis to investigate the ways in, and the extent to, which such new players are able to insulate their newsroom autonomy in order to produce original, critical and independent accountability journalism reporting. This is what the last part of the literature review discussed.

PART III: Nonprofit Investigative Journalism Organisations

Part III offers an assessment of the scholarly literature concerned with the emergence and practices of the nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. It identifies and assesses the funding models and practices of these nonprofits and the nature of, and reasons for, their emergence and growth. Reduced public's trust in many legacy media combined with the enduring need for watchdog journalism appears to become a driving force for rejuvenating investigative journalism in the 21st century's second decade. This Part III of the chapter gives an overview of the concept and diverse funding models of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. Next, I examine the role of these nonprofit newsrooms play to publish accountability journalism in society. The last section is concerned with discussing what is known about the challenges faced by nonprofits.

2.8 Rejuvenation of Investigative Journalism with Nonprofit Funding Models

As discussed in Part II, reduced newsroom autonomy at many established legacy news media has affected the accomplishment of in-depth original reporting, including investigative journalism. Practitioners have sought different financial models with alternative funding resources where editorial independence could be better insulated from external forces. Nonprofit funding is one of the options to empower a newsroom to support investigative journalism. This section examines the sharp increase of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations over the last decade. Also, it examines the various kinds of funding resources for nonprofit investigative journalism.

2.8.1 Nonprofit Investigative Journalism Organisations

A nonprofit investigative journalism organisation is a news organisation focusing on investigative journalism that is funded in a nonprofit way, such as through foundation funds or individual donations. Specific ways of incorporating or formalising institutions are often used to identify nonprofit status. In the USA, some legitimate nonprofit organisations, such as the *International Consortium of*

Investigative Journalism (ICIJ)¹⁷, are granted 501(c)(3) nonprofit status by the government¹⁸. In fact, nonprofit investigative journalism organisations have existed for several decades. For instance, the *Center for Investigative Reporting* (CIR)¹⁹ was founded in 1977, and the *Center for Public Integrity* (CPI)²⁰ in 1989. Writing of the perceived need for such organisations, and echoing a sentiment I encountered in my own more recent research, Charles Lewis (2014), the founder of the CPI, notes, “it became painfully apparent over time that network television news was not especially interested in investigative reporting”, in an article entitled “Why I left 60 Minutes: The big networks say they care about uncovering the truth. That’s not what I saw”. After leaving CBS²¹, Charles Lewis launched the CPI with funds from several resources, including small foundations, to continue with independent in-depth investigative reporting in a new context (Lewis 2007).

The CIR and CPI are viewed as the pioneers of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations (Meyer 2004; Lewis 2007; Houston 2010; Walton 2010; Konieczna 2018). Walton (2010, p.28) highlights how both the CIR and CPI wisely turned the journalism crisis into an opportunity “to expand their operations, and the Internet to expand their reach”. Apart from these pioneers, most nonprofit newsrooms in the USA have been established since the end of the 2000s. As discussed in the Introduction chapter (see section 1.1), a 2021 INN report shows that the number of nonprofit media organisations existed before 2008 was only 49, out of 244 respondents surveyed (Roseman et al. 2021, p.5). The nonprofit journalism sector has expanded gradually and the growth has accelerated since 2017 that more than 20 media organisations have newly launched every year (ibid, p.5). The *Investigative News Network*²² (INN) was launched by investigative journalists from 27 newsrooms in 2009 (INN History, n.d.). Its mission includes “providing education and business support services to our nonprofit member organizations and promoting the value and benefit of public-service and investigative journalism” (INN Who We Are, n.d.). With significant growth in the nonprofit journalism sector, the INN is now (as of March 2022) composed of 360 nonprofit news organisations in the USA (INN Who We Are, n.d.). It supports all types of nonprofit journalism, not only

¹⁷ <https://www.icij.org/about/icijs-story/> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

¹⁸ <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/exemption-requirements-501c3-organizations> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

¹⁹ <https://revealnews.org/about-us/> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

²⁰ <https://publicintegrity.org> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

²¹ “60 Minutes” is an investigative journalism programme on CBS in USA.

²² It changed the title to *Institute for Nonprofit News* including broader range of nonprofit news outlets including investigative journalism.

investigative news, but this still indicates the impressive growth of news media relying on such nonprofit funding models.

Previous studies have identified two key factors that have contributed to the rapid growth of nonprofit newsrooms: increased need from the public for in-depth journalism and technological development (Houston 2010; Birnbauer 2019). Although the existing media ecosystem was not favourable to resource-intensive and time-consuming investigative journalism, the public appetite for in-depth journalism, coupled with the affordances of technological advances, helped to create a new era for the sector. First, the growing emergence of nonprofit models for investigative journalism has been supported strongly by the perceived need for investigative journalism in a healthy democracy. Nonprofit funding systems are adopted by news outlets that aim to counterbalance crisis in investigative journalism caused by prioritising political and economic interests over normative journalistic values (Schilders 2008; Walton 2010; Powers and Yaros 2012; Cagé 2016; Konieczna 2018; Birnbauer 2019). It has been suggested that while “investigative reporting has drastically diminished in traditional and mainstream newsrooms, it has rapidly expanded into different forms and combinations in Web ventures and at universities throughout the world” (Houston 2010, p.45). Similarly, Birnbauer (2019, p.14-15) suggests that downsizing newsrooms at mainstream media in the USA has led to the transfer of many senior investigative journalists and editors into this new nonprofit sector, underpinning these new organisations boosting their reputations and credibility. As a result, it encourages enough trust for citizens and institutions to donate to them (ibid). Second, technological development has also played a significant role in growth of nonprofit news organisations, allowing new conditions for them to operate in terms of both the practice and dissemination of journalism (Houston 2010; MacIntyre 2011). The emergence of the Internet, which was key factor in having an unfavourable influence on the finances and practices of established news media organisations (see section 2.5.2.3), has also afforded new opportunities for investigative journalism institutions to set up and start on a new platform and to report in-depth news with less resource intensive ways.

In summary, investigative journalism in the second decade of the 21st century becomes increasingly supported by new financial models and advanced technology. Newsrooms with nonprofit funding systems were established with the aim of undertaking much-needed in-depth, independent accountability journalism. Before delving into the journalistic practices at nonprofits, I will present the main two types

of nonprofit funding systems supporting investigative journalism in the following subsection.

2.8.2 Types of Nonprofit Financial Models for Investigative Journalism

The majority of nonprofit newsrooms are funded mainly by foundations and individual donors. A large proportion of nonprofit media organisations were initiated with foundation funds and supplement their funding with individual donations, events, sales and so on. This section examines in depth the types of funding that support nonprofit media organisations.

2.8.2.1 Foundation Funding

Foundation funding refers to financial support from philanthropic foundations. Many nonprofit news organisations are mainly funded by foundations (Powers and Yaros 2012; Konieczna and Robinson 2014; Hamilton 2016; McLellan and Holcomb 2018; Birnbauer 2019). According to a 2021 INN report, foundation funding accounts for 47 percent of total revenue of nonprofit news organisations (Roseman et al. 2021, p.3). A well-known example of these is probably *ProPublica* in the USA. Initially funded by the Sandler Foundation²³ in 2007-2008, *ProPublica* is considered one of the pre-eminent nonprofit investigative journalism organisations owing to its performance, profile, and in 2010, it became the first online newsroom to receive a Pulitzer Prize (Gunter 2011).

There seems to be an agreed purpose among foundation funders for supporting investigative journalism. It is identified that foundations aim to fill the void of investigative journalism left by the legacy media, and consequently, to sustain democracy by supporting newsrooms (GiveSmart 2013; Hamilton 2016; Birnbauer 2019). Herb Sandler (cited in GiveSmart 2013) from the Sandler Foundation highlights a reason for supporting such independent newsrooms, stating “we all know the potential for corruption in city, state, and federal government, as well as in major corporations. And somebody’s got to be watching [...] That’s the muckraker tradition”.

²³ <http://www.sandlerfoundation.org> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

Moreover, Birnbauer (2019, p.80) highlights that in general, foundations acknowledge that “economic storms had so diminished the capacity of the mainstream media to provide the public with adequate information or hold power to account that they had to help fill the information gap by funding quality reporting”. This reflects comments from acclaimed foundations such as the James Irvine Foundation, the McCormick Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the MacArthur Foundation (Birnbauer 2019, p.80-81). It is undeniable that the changing journalistic landscape would not have been possible without philanthropic funders recognising the value to society of investigative journalism.

Whilst there is some research on philanthropically funded newsrooms in the USA, there have been few empirical investigations into those beyond the USA. This research intends to contribute to this growing area of foundation funded news organisations by exploring a UK-based nonprofit investigative journalism newsroom, the *Bureau of Investigative Journalism* (BIJ), to add knowledge from an empirical study as well as to widen the geographical scope of what is known about this important emergent area of news production.

2.8.2.2 Individual Donations

Individual donations (i.e. membership donations) include donations from members of the public such as subscribed members, readers, and supporters. In this thesis, membership refers to “small, recurring donations” of individuals (Roseman et al. 2021, p.13), such as a monthly subscription. Much of the current literature on individual donations pays particular attention to its potential ability in sustaining nonprofit investigative journalism organisations (Schilders 2008; Aitamurto 2011; Carvajal et al. 2012; Cagé 2016; Birnbauer 2019). The advantages of relying on donations from many individuals include spreading financial risks and making institutions more sustainable than if they rely more heavily on contributions from a few philanthropists (Birnbauer 2019, p.69). In these cases, it is argued, a diversified portfolio often helps to minimise the risks inherent in putting all ones’ eggs in just a few baskets.

Researchers have noted that “efforts to diversify revenue streams, a key indicator of financial stability, are evident” for nonprofit newsrooms (McLellan and Holcomb 2018, p.5). Individual donations play a crucial role in diversifying financial streams in

most nonprofit news organisations. According to a 2021 INN report, “From 2019 to 2020, the average revenue from membership per news outlet more than doubled. The number of members jumped, too, from a median of 355 members per news outlet in 2019 to over 600 one year later” (Roseman et al. 2021, p.13). A 2021 INN report shows that individual donations account for 36 percent of revenues of American nonprofit media organisations (Roseman et al. 2021, p.3), which increased from 33 percent revealed in a 2018 report (McLellan and Holcomb 2018, p.9). However, a model which relies on attracting funding from individuals is demanding, particularly in an era where readers are used to getting much of their news for free (Birnbauer 2019, p.69).

Reflecting on the importance of individual donations but the difficulty in establishing models based on them, the Membership Puzzle Project²⁴, one of the first research projects to follow their emergence, was conducted from May 2017 to August 2021. The project aimed to establish membership programmes, which could help newsrooms to overcome the financial challenges, by gathering data, sharing ideas, producing case studies and other tools. For instance, its “membership guide”²⁵ provides “Getting Started with Membership, Defining Membership, Planning a Membership Move, Developing and Launching Membership, Growing a Membership Program, Making Membership Stick”, so any newsrooms seeking alternative sources of funding can better adapt to the process. As observed, a membership model has attracted a large and growing cohort of newsrooms, although individual donations are still a funding stream the nonprofit sector could further develop.

A large-scale study by Powers and Yaros (2012) revealed that individual supporters of four American nonprofit newsrooms pay attention to sustain the in-depth investigative watchdog journalism. When it comes to the motivations of donors to support such news outlets, “quality journalism” and “general support of journalism” are mentioned most frequently (ibid, p.49). Again, similar to foundation funders, a perceived lack of accountability journalism elsewhere in the news ecosystem becomes a driving force for individual donors to contribute to nonprofit newsrooms. Even though individual donations normally contribute to the total revenue as just one of the multiple sources, there are a few nonprofit investigative newsrooms supported entirely by individual citizens. The *Korea Center for Investigative*

²⁴ <https://membershippuzzle.org> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

²⁵ <https://membershipguide.org/handbook> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

Journalism (KCIJ) of South Korea is one of them. According to Shin (2016), donations range between £8 and £80 per month and the number of donors was 36,150 as of April 2016. With a paucity of work on other examples, individual citizen donation-based funding models are under-researched in journalism studies. I believe that my in-depth study into the funding model of the KCIJ can help such organisations that may be seeking diverse revenue sources in developing their systems with a knowledge of the distinct features of individual donations/membership funding. Additionally, its geographic location outside of the USA is also another reason why I chose to focus on the South Korean nonprofit in this thesis in order to expand our knowledge on the membership funding model.

2.9 Role of Investigative Journalism Nonprofits: Filling the Void Left by the Legacy Media

With such new kinds of financial models, investigative journalism has an opportunity to rejuvenate itself after a period of crisis. While journalistic practices around newsroom autonomy in many of the public and commercial media organisations have been discussed widely in journalism studies, relatively little analysis has been done on those of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations (despite their sharp growth in recent years). It is crucial to pose questions about how journalistic practices have developed at nonprofit media organisations, and the extent to, and ways in, which nonprofit funding systems affect them (especially since political economic research has pointed out for so long the ways in which commercial models have interfered with newsroom autonomy). Several studies thus far have been able to draw on analysis into the journalistic practices of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations.

First, the most important implication from these studies is that nonprofit investigative journalism organisations increasingly play a crucial role in producing investigative journalism in their societies (Stetka and Örnebring 2013; Tofel 2013; Konieczna and Robinson 2014; Shin 2016; Townend 2016; Konieczna 2018). In general, nonprofit media organisations aim to publish in-depth, critical and independent accountability journalism, which fills the void left by many legacy media that decreasingly invest in the kind of journalism. Townend (2016, p.84) has studied charitable (philanthropically funded) journalism in the UK and suggests that, “they all provide content neglected in commercial environments, perhaps because this content does

not drive enough traffic to attract online advertising, or is considered unlikely to appeal to paying subscribers and readers”. Although the organisations studied are not labelled as investigative journalism focused, the research clearly indicates that nonprofit media organisations try to produce news content in the public interest that is typically under-reported elsewhere because it is unprofitable.

Another study, conducted across the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region by Stetka and Örnebring (2013, p.425), revealed that philanthropy-funded news outlets play “an important role in providing investigative journalism” in some of the nine countries where a majority of traditional news media reduced their supports in investigative journalism. The researchers suggest that online news organisations, including nonprofits, have been able to “replace the investigative journalism provision of other media when these withdraw from this form of journalism, or when they lose autonomy in the hands of influence-seeking owners” (Stetka and Örnebring 2013, p.429). Although this work offers a broad and comprehensive overview on nonprofit investigative journalism organisations in the CEE, a key limitation (common in much similar research) is its lack of detailed and exploratory examination. Their methodological approach overlooks much of the importance of close observations of journalistic practices concerning newsroom autonomy. Therefore, it would be very worthwhile to implement an observational method to obtain detailed findings about practices and their links to funding models.

Another study, by Shin (2016), highlights how the KCIJ has been able to maintain many of the norms and practices of traditional investigative journalism and show how this nonprofit has dealt with underreported issues, in an objective, critical and independent way. In addition, it examines how new digital technology enables the newsroom to develop a participatory news culture which involves citizens and enhance transparency in new ways (ibid). Such research about established, as well as newer, journalistic practices provides an important overview on the nonprofit newsroom. However, I believe that more research on its funding system, and its links to journalism practices, would help us to understand the nonprofit sector better. Especially, the KCIJ is one of the nonprofit investigative journalism organisations operated on individuals’ donations and very little is known about system.

Second, collaboration is highlighted by many researchers as a key part of how emerging practices at nonprofit news media have allowed the sector to expand in recent years (Houston 2010; Konieczna and Robinson 2014; Konieczna 2018;

Birnbauer 2019). Konieczna and Robinson (2014) analysed the mission statements of nearly 50 nonprofit journalism organisations in the USA and conducted ethnographic observation in two newsrooms. Four main strategies were identified from the mission statements: “using digital technology; aligning and collaborating with journalists; networking with each other; and building citizen relationships” (ibid, p.977). Advanced communication technologies support networking and collaborative work among media companies and the public, and therefore they can build more trust between them (ibid). Moreover, Konieczna (2018, p.63) highlights that news nonprofits in the USA aim to “improve on journalism *from within*²⁶, by producing quality content to be disseminated by existing news organizations as well as collaborating with and training other reporters”, which described as “field repair”. Collaboration between newsrooms with regard to nonprofit organisations will be examined thoroughly later in the chapter (see section 2.10).

Finally, news impact²⁷ is identified as another significant keyword for nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. Richard Tofel (2013), as the president of *ProPublica* (2013-2021) in the USA, published a white paper which focuses on the emergent importance of understanding on news impact in the nonprofit sector, with the aim identifying “issues around the quest to understand and better measure the impact of journalism, particularly non-profit journalism (or other journalistic work funded philanthropically)” (Tofel 2013, p.1). The research (ibid) reveals that, for nonprofit news organisations, the necessity of identifying, quantifying, and proving the impact of news is an issue which has led to the emergence of a range of new journalistic (and other) practices. Tofel (2013, p.2) describes the reasons for this:

The quest for measurement in the social sector has accelerated in recent years. Non-profits face increasing pressure for quantifiable results from numerous stakeholders. Funders are attracted by the potential of journalism to spur change; some have imported or adapted business methods into their work, talking of “investments” and “returns”.

As illustrated here, there has been an increase in the importance of news impact that can be attributed to the fact that funders of nonprofit media now require, or are perceived to require, this data. Adopting commercial metaphors of “investments” and “returns”, the writer emphasises that nonprofit newsrooms need to show news

²⁶ Emphasis in the original text.

²⁷ As will become clear in section 2.11, in this context news impact refers not to what is generally understood as media effects (e.g. how news impacts upon the behaviours or beliefs of audiences) but to more directly observable and quantifiable changes brought about by investigative journalism in a range of different contexts (e.g. laws or institutional practices which were changed after wrongdoing or malpractice was revealed).

impact contributing to important social, political, institutional and other changes as an outcome of donated funding (ibid). While there has been a growth in discussion on nonprofits and news impact, so far too little attention from media scholars has been paid to its detailed implications on whether or not, and in what ways such requirement and communications about news impact affect journalistic activities at nonprofit newsrooms. I review recent research and discussion around news impact at nonprofit investigative journalism organisations in more depth in section 2.11.

In the early days of online news media around the beginning of the 21st century, Allan (2006, p.26) highlighted the role of online news sites as “making available resources to help contextualize the news story, thereby bringing to light dimensions otherwise not being addressed by their print and television rivals”. Such online sphere offered journalism practitioners to expand the range of focuses in producing news stories. Still, the researcher left questions regarding its potential contributions:

Would the primary role for online news sites be an ancillary one, that is, mainly to provide background information to supplement the reporting undertaken by these rival media? Or, alternatively, would these sites contribute to the elaboration of a different type of journalism altogether? (Allan 2006, p.26)

These questions deserve a special attention in analysing nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. The “capacity for greater depth in online reporting” in comparison to the press and broadcasters is suggested one of the advantages of online news sites (ibid, p.25). It seems that such Internet-based nonprofit newsrooms maximise their advantages in this respect by establishing an alternative way of producing investigative journalism, as Allan (2006) asked about its role approximately 16 years ago.

Having discussed key findings from studies about nonprofit investigative journalism organisations in general, the importance of researching about the collaborations and news impact in the sector is clear. Furthermore, there are still interesting and important in-depth work to be done on the relevant benefits and concerns on nonprofit funding models for investigative journalism newsrooms, for example, around: the extent to which new funding models help or challenge newswriters in publishing investigative journalism; how sustainable nonprofit funding systems may be in the long-term; and if, in what ways, and to what extent, the pressure and influences from stakeholders could affect journalistic practices, which my research aim to explore.

2.10 Nonprofit Newsrooms' Active Involvement in Collaborative Journalism

Nonprofit investigative journalism organisations are actively engaging in cross-media collaborations (Houston 2010; Konieczna and Robinson 2014; Konieczna 2018; Birnbauer 2019). Collaborative journalism in this section usually refers to collaboration among professional journalists from different media organisations, described as “a partnership arrangement in which a reporter works with one or more trusted colleagues, sharing elements of their investigative workload such as their story lead, contacts or investigatory and writing tasks” (Gearing 2021, p. 83), but not limited to.

Collaborations between journalists in the 21st century is not entirely new, but the scale and degree of the collaboration has expanded from that of the 20th century, driven by a number of factors such as an increase in nonprofit newsrooms, economic pressures on many legacy media and the technological advances. Collaboration is more frequently undertaken by a greater number of practitioners from different countries and often involves an unprecedented volume of datasets than in previous years (Edmonds and Mitchell 2014; Clements 2018; Konieczna 2018; Sambrook 2018b; Heft et al. 2019). Furthermore, advanced security-related technologies also help collaborators to communicate with each other and share data more easily and safely (Heinrich 2012; Sambrook 2018b; Alfter 2019; Gearing and Berglez 2019). Referred to as “defensive technology” (Sambrook 2018b, p.36), encryption programmes, such as TrueCrypt and VeraCrypt for storing data, iHub, Slack and PGP encrypted emails for communicating, the Tor Browser and Virtual Private Networks (VPN) for diverting IP addresses and masking location, have all helped journalist to routinely collaborate more confidentially and with less external disruption (Sambrook 2018b, p.37).

The advantages of collaborative journalism across news media have been studied extensively in the previous research (Heinrich 2012; Edmonds and Mitchell 2014; Alfter 2019; Gearing and Berglez 2019; Carson 2020; Gearing 2021). Primarily, it reduces costs of reporting by collecting knowledge, skillsets and human resources, and enhances newsrooms' ability to cover certain topics that they would otherwise not have been able to (Heinrich 2012; Alfter 2019). For instance, the Pandora Papers collaboration²⁸, the largest investigation on offshore finances ever, led by

²⁸ <https://www.icij.org/investigations/pandora-papers/> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

the ICIJ in 2021, is based upon 2.94 terabytes of datasets which includes more than 11.9 million financial records on whose investigation 150 partner media outlets collaborate globally (Shiel 2021). Globalisation has reshaped a large part of our lives and therefore, increasingly more issues need to be reported from a global perspective and collaboration makes this possible for newswriters (Clements 2018; Heft et al. 2019). By empowering journalists to report a broadened range of issues which might have been neglected in the past, owing to practical restrictions, ultimately collaboration can foster diversity in public information and benefit society (Edmonds and Mitchell 2014; Bryant 2017).

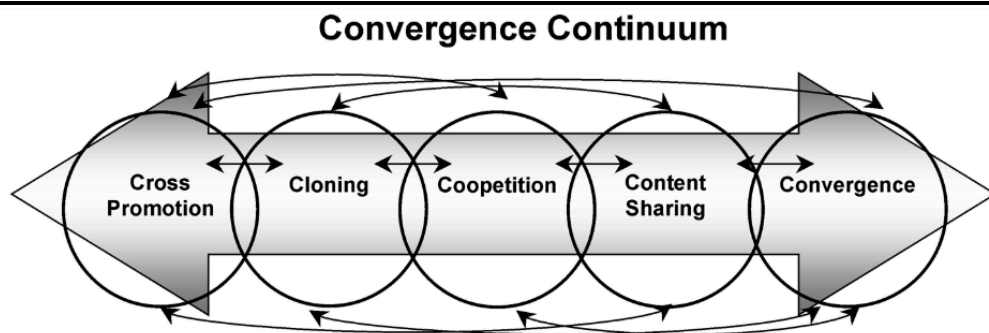
In the past, the idea of collaboration has often been considered unusual in the sphere of journalism since competition in seeking exclusivity among journalists has been a strong normative value (Guevara 2013; Stonbely 2017; Sambrook 2018b; Birnbauer 2019). In the light of this the traditional “lone wolf” image of journalists, “working in isolation and extremely protective of their work” (Guevara 2013), the non-competitive approach has been surprisingly successful and is on the rise. Previous research has identified that nonprofit news organisations have significantly contributed to the transforming attitudes in this regard (Edmonds and Mitchell 2014; Stonbely 2017; Sambrook 2018b; Birnbauer 2019).

Since many general studies about collaborative journalism have been conducted already, this thesis specifically focuses on nonprofit-involved collaborations in investigative journalism. Houston (2010, p.51) has argued, “The advent of the nonprofits has led newspapers to embrace collaboration, especially with nonprofits, as one way to counter the decline of staff and resources”. This section is designed to examine collaborations of nonprofit newsrooms as a mushrooming journalistic practice. First and foremost, it explores the role of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations as content providers in collaboration. In this case, an investigation conducted by a nonprofit newsroom is generally published by both the nonprofit and a partner legacy media together, which benefits both parties. Second, nonprofits play an important role as orchestrators of data and hubs of computational specialist expertise in collaboration. The ICIJ, described as “a modern catalyst for global investigative journalism, coordinating and nurturing complex stories across countries and organisations” (Sambrook 2018a, p.2), is an excellent example of this role in cross-border collaborative journalism such as the Panama Papers and Pandora Papers. Finally, the section examines the extent to which collaboration has an influence on nonprofit news organisations in terms of funding models.

2.10.1 Nonprofit Newsrooms' Role as Content Providers in Collaboration

A growing body of literature shows evidence that collaborations between for-profit and nonprofit media companies have increased (Edmonds and Mitchell 2014; Stonbely 2017; Sambrook 2018b), and “collaborations between nonprofits and commercial and public media are more common now than ever” (Birnbauer 2019, p.16). Sambrook (2018b, p.33) has pointed out that the “right mix of commercial and non-profit media” positively boosts collaboration.

FIGURE 2.2 A model of collaboration represented with circles and arrows



Source: “The Convergence Continuum” by Dailey et al. (2005, p.153)

One of the critical roles played by nonprofit newsrooms in growing collaboration is a content provider as a co-publisher of investigative journalism with partner media organisations. The most frequently identified form of collaboration between legacy media and nonprofits is publishing news content simultaneously, where nonprofits provide news reporting and legacy media republish with little or no editing through their own platforms (Konieczna 2018; Birnbauer 2019). Birnbauer (2019, p.19) highlights that the collaboration between nonprofit and for-profit media outlets generally falls into the category of “cloning”, based on the “Convergence Continuum” model (Figure 2.2), developed by Dailey’s team (2005). Cloning is a practice where “one partner republishes the other partner’s product with little editing” (Dailey et al. 2005, p.153). Similarly, another researcher studying nonprofit investigative journalism organisations has described the practice as “sharing through distribution” (Konieczna 2018).

The increase of collaborations between nonprofit and for-profit newsrooms is mainly down to the ways in which collaboration benefits both sides. Legacy media can provide the necessary platform to nonprofit newsrooms thus enabling them to reach wider audiences and, accordingly, to gain more exposure, whereas nonprofits can offer legacy media the in-depth news reporting that they are increasingly less able to afford because of economic pressures (Stonbely 2017; Sambrook 2018b; Birnbauer 2019). On the one hand, for legacy media, this is an opportunity to fill the increasing void left by a decreasing ability to invest in original investigative journalism with stories produced by nonprofits. Collaborations have provided a new opportunity for those legacy media to again publish more in-depth journalism while under severe financial pressure (Edmonds and Mitchell 2014; Carson and Farhall 2018; Alfter 2019; Gearing and Berglez 2019). Birnbauer (2019, p.17) notes, “The combination of journalistically sound original stories and a dearth of quality content produced by shrunken commercial newsrooms has made the offer of nonprofit stories at no or little cost irresistible”. Similarly, Edmonds and Mitchell (2014, p.3) highlight that such collaboration benefits legacy media by allowing them to publish “investigative projects or in-depth beat coverage that they cannot afford on their own”. Co-publishing an investigative story of nonprofit newsrooms is financially beneficial for legacy media because such content sharing rarely involves monetary exchange, shown in previous studies. On the other hand, for nonprofit newsrooms, collaboration offers an opportunity for the wide dissemination of their work. It helps news as widely as possible to be read by the appropriate audience groups. As relatively small-scale operations, they often have limited audience. However, co-publishing collaboration enables their stories to be circulated much further through the increased reach of more prestigious platforms of partner legacy media (Stonbely 2017; Konieczna 2018; Birnbauer 2019).

Collaboration partnerships between legacy media and nonprofits were often initially not warmly welcomed by practitioners at legacy media. A 2008 survey showed that almost half of investigative journalists from for-profit media outlets responded they were “somewhat or very uncomfortable, or neutral” about collaborating with journalists from nonprofits (Kaplan 2008, p.122). After more than a decade, such levels of discomfort seems to be changed. A suggested reason for the increasingly favourable attitude towards collaboration appears to be growing trust in the nonprofit newswriters’ ability to produce quality and valid news content (Stonbely 2017; Birnbauer 2019). One crucial element is the transfer of experienced senior journalists and editors from for-profit media companies to nonprofit media

organisations (Birnbauer 2019). For example, Bill Keller, a former executive editor of the *New York Times*, emphasises that nonprofit newsrooms such as *ProPublica* have earned “the trust of their mainstream peers by hiring good journalists and delivering quality (and prize-winning) work. And the economic challenges facing the industry made the free or low-cost work of nonprofits more attractive” (cited in Stonbely 2017, p.18-19). A large number of veteran investigative journalists have moved to the nonprofit sector across the world. For example: Paul Steiger, the former president of *ProPublica*, came from the *Wall Street Journal* of the USA; Rachel Oldroyd, the Managing Editor and CEO of the BIJ previously worked for the *Mail on Sunday* in the UK; and Yong-jin Kim, the Editor-in-Chief and CEO of the KCIJ used to be an investigative journalist in KBS in South Korea. As a result of collaborations between nonprofit and for-profit parties, Carson and Farhall (2018, p.1909) conclude that “despite challenging economic conditions that have triggered significant industrial restructures in newsrooms, quality investigative journalism continues in the digital age” where journalism seems to still function as a Fourth Estate.

2.10.2 Orchestrating Collaborations with Technology-Driven Innovation

Nonprofit media organisations play a crucial role in orchestrating collaborative journalism projects because of their technological expertise in the handling of big data. As mentioned earlier, the scale of collaborative projects is now more substantial than that of the previous century for a number of reasons. We live in an era where almost every piece of information related to everyday personal and professional life is digitised and stored, which leaves a lot of more data for journalists to analyse when seeking and producing stories. However, it is unfeasible for all newsrooms to have adequate data and computational literacy and capacity, and it is here where nonprofit newsrooms play a particularly significant role in providing such skillsets.

The Panama Papers collaboration in 2016²⁹, led by the ICIJ, a nonprofit organisation in the USA, is indisputably the most famous cross-border collaboration in journalism history. The project was initiated when 2.6 terabytes of data were

²⁹ <https://www.icij.org/investigations/panama-papers/> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

leaked to *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, a newspaper in Germany. Given the enormous volume of information that was leaked, 11.5 million electronic records, it was beyond the capability of just one newsroom to manage so *Süddeutsche Zeitung* sought collaboration with the ICIJ to assist in the investigation (Sambrook 2018b). The ICIJ has previously orchestrated transnational co-operation with its impressive technological expertise. Mar Cabra, a Data Editor for the Panama Papers project at the ICIJ, explains its role as a project manager and technological supporter, developing appropriate software programmes for the data to be easily and efficiently manageable and searchable for journalists (Sambrook 2018b, p.33). Consequently, Sambrook (2018b, p.39) argues that “technology expertise is a crucial component of collaborations” and, during collaborations, nonprofits can offer this expertise to other newsrooms whose journalists have few digital skillsets. Furthermore, nonprofit journalism organisations can offer education-related computational skillsets for newswriters at training and workshops that they operate (Gearing and Berglez 2019).

This vital role played by nonprofit media organisations in collaborative journalism became apparent with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the majority of mainstream media have already faced challenges of circumscribed working conditions primarily owing to financial pressures (see section 2.6). Lockdown measures adopted in a majority of countries in an effort to control the virus, inevitably and unfortunately, brought about a substantial impact on the economy (OECD 2020; World Bank 2020). The media industry seems no exception. There have already been signs of detrimental influence of the pandemic on news organisations. A 2021 report, “Impact of Covid-19 on journalists in Sierra Leone” reveals that “61.8% of journalists surveyed (n=395) experienced changes in their employment, including 3.8% (n=24) of journalists who reported that they had lost their jobs. A further 12.4% (n=79) said they had lost their jobs but were still working in journalism. 17.5% (n=112) of journalists responded that both their salary and working hours had been reduced” (Sreedharan et al. 2021, p.16). A majority of respondents have been influenced negatively in terms of their jobs. More importantly, 88.2 percent of responded journalists reported that “they had been unable to pursue certain investigations or stories” owing to “financial restrictions they faced” (ibid, p.21). Moreover, according to a survey from 1,406 respondents across 125 countries conducted by the *International Center for Journalists and Tow Center for Digital Journalism*, 80 percent of respondents answered, “their

newsroom's finances reported at least a 50% decline in revenue" (Mulcahey 2020, n.p.).

In addition to resourceful issues above, seeking to investigate a potentially life-threatening virus brought its own problems to the sector. The discrepancy in ability caused by various aspects such as reporting resources/capacities and data/computational literacy across newsrooms has become more evident than ever. To confront the discrepancy in each newsroom's capacity, since the beginning of 2020 the *Global Investigative Journalism Network* (GIJN), a nonprofit journalism organisation, has provided journalistic support. The GIJN has offered datasets, useful resources for investigations and operated training programmes and workshops to investigate issues around COVID-19, in addition to a free Webinar series "Investigating the Pandemic" to aid journalists in coping with new challenges (GIJN Staff 2020). The workshops are conducted in thirteen languages.

Under the rapidly intensified globalisation where politics, economics, culture and technological issues entangled with a deteriorating global economy, the need and demand for collaborative journalism appears higher than at any other time and is likely to continue to grow. Certainly, collaboration should not be considered a cure-all solution for journalists to utilise. Kayser-Bril (2018, p. 59) suggests, it is but one "tool among others that should be used only when appropriate". Still, many in the journalism field consider that "collaboration is the future of journalism" (Quackenbush 2020, p.12), and is likely to further flourish after the pandemic. As collaboration is expected to be augmented, the role of nonprofit media organisations will be more critical than ever before.

To sum up, numerous studies focus mainly on general trends and the consequences of collaborations of nonprofit organisations. Less emphasis has been placed on the progress and development of nonprofit investigative actors in collaborations from internal perspectives. Moreover, little is known about nationwide local level collaborative projects, which, for example, the BIJ has carried out successfully in recent years. These factors inspire the thesis to conduct in-depth research into the relation between nonprofit investigative journalism organisations and collaborative journalism in the subject newsrooms in South Korea and the UK.

2.11 News Impact of Investigative Journalism

Tracking and recording the news impact of investigative journalism has been identified as one of the primary elements of journalistic activities at nonprofit investigative journalism organisations (see section 2.9). The major objective of this section is to shed some light on the ongoing debates on news impact through an examination of key journalism theories and practices. Although the best way of charting the news impact of investigative journalism has been disputed in journalism studies, it is undeniable that the need to record and present news impact has risen in the sector, particularly among nonprofits. Therefore, this section includes an analysis and assessment of relevant literature that deals with both practical, real-life examples and theoretical approaches when examining the impact of investigative journalism. First, I examine the meaning of news impact in investigative journalism with an intention to obtain comprehensive accounts. Following on from that is an analysis on understanding and evaluating the discourse around news impact in relation to the emergent field of nonprofit newsrooms.

2.11.1 What Does News Impact Mean in Investigative Journalism?

Before discussing news impact, it is necessary to clarify that news impact in this research is completely different from media effects theory in media studies. This thesis is not concerned media effects theory, which focuses mainly on the often hidden and complex influence of media on audiences' attitudes, perspectives or behaviours (McQuail 1994; Potter 2012). Examples include studies about the effects of media violence (see Sparks et al. 2009) and mainstream media's influence on youth sexual behaviour (see Wright 2011). Although myriad studies have explored media's influence on audiences, some still argues that there is "little agreement on the nature and extent of these assumed effects" (McQuail 1994, p.327). This thesis has no intention to participate in the heated debate over whether and how media effects function.

News impact, explored in this thesis' research, does not concern how news reporting may influence audiences' behaviours or attitudes. In this context, discussions of news impact are about the more directly observable consequences of investigative journalism revealing malpractices and injustice and providing information in the public interest. Therefore, a majority of news impact, as the

concept is understood in the field of investigative journalism, takes more of a mechanical approach of problem-and-solution associations which are usually apparent enough to be widely agreed upon. For example, if MPs in the UK use information from a news outlet's investigative reporting to discuss and address problems found during parliamentary debates, or if an investigation leads to elite actors being held accountable for hitherto unknown wrongdoing, this would be considered news impact by the institution that did the journalism.

Although there is much talk about impact in the sector today, the terminology with regard to impact has been understood in various ways (Stray 2012; Tofel 2013; Hamilton 2016; Simons et al. 2017; Alfter 2019; Birnbauer 2019). Tofel (2013, p.6) argues that investigative journalism needs to examine news impact with an emphasis on socio-political changes such as "actual changes in behaviors, policies, practices, legislations". Since various interpretations of news impact have been suggested, specific examples can provide a better understanding of what impact means when it comes to investigative journalism in this thesis. Certainly, one of the most famous pieces of investigative reporting that had substantial impact on society is the Watergate investigation by the *Washington Post* in the USA in 1972 (Mollenhoff 1981; Schudson 2004; Gans 2012; Matheson 2012). As is widely known, the *Washington Post's* investigative reporters, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, "from 1972 to 1974 doggedly pursued electoral espionage and subsequent cover-up by officials of the Republican Party, a story which finally engulfed President Nixon" (Matheson 2012, p.85). Eventually, the President resigned (Schudson 2004, p.1233). As for a more recent example, the ICIJ has argued that their the Panama Papers project led to impact which includes resignations of political and business figures and numerous national investigations into the issue by prosecutors and governments across the world (Wilson-Chapman et al. 2019).

In terms of nonprofit news media, it is meaningful that there seems to be some differences in the criteria for understanding news impact held by many philanthropic funders, who favour metrics regarding reach and audience consumption of news, and many nonprofit practitioners, who generally do not. For instance, a study reveals that funders commonly request both quantitative metrics of different kinds and qualitative information (Rosenstiel et al. 2016). Approximately two-thirds of surveyed organisations response that funders want "some kind of metric, but not all ask for the same thing" (ibid, p.36). Qualitative data are also considered important in

that 50 percent of respondents provide information about “direct impact from their work, i.e. formal hearings, laws changed or charges filed” (ibid, p.37). Although funders of nonprofit media organisations focus on both quantitative and qualitative outcomes as news impact, it seems that metrics are considered less important to practitioners.

It is argued that, from the practitioners’ perspectives, statistical metrics, such as website traffic, social media numbers, page views and clicks, are insufficient in illustrating news impact of investigative journalism (Lewis and Niles 2013; Tofel 2013; Simons et al. 2017; Alfter 2019; Birnbauer 2019; Dahmen and Walth 2021). It is strongly suggested that news impact should be context-specific and determined with consideration to the aims and purpose of investigative journalism. The quantified metrics are deemed inadequate indicators of the success of investigative journalism since they show little of what investigative journalism seeks to do as a watchdog of society (Lewis and Niles 2013; Tofel 2013; Simons et al. 2017; Alfter 2019; Birnbauer 2019). A chief executive officer from *MinnPost*, an American nonprofit investigative journalism organisation, highlights that measuring the number of visitors to the websites is “worth zero” and continues that “they have no relationship to the success of our business” (Pew Research Center cited in Birnbauer 2019, p.86). When it comes to nonprofit investigative journalism organisations, it is argued that “social value” needs to be considered as primary news impact (Lewis and Niles 2013, p.8).

To sum up, practitioners at this field argue that criteria for the news impact are described based on what is the significant value of the projects in order to assess the outcome of journalistic performance. When it comes to investigative journalism, the relation between problems found in investigations and solving those problems afterwards appears to be an essential element for news impact. Previous studies have found that journalistic practitioners at nonprofit media organisations see qualitative data such as societal changes as being more important than quantitative data such as page views and clicks. Nonprofit funders are likely to want to know about the latter in addition to the former. Taking this into account, the following subsection analyses the reason behind the increased discourse about news impact in the journalism sector in relation to nonprofit media organisations.

2.11.2 The Increased Importance of News Impact at Nonprofit Newsrooms

As can be seen from the Watergate example above, news impact has always been one of the important elements evidencing the value of journalism. The question then is, why has the discourse on news impact grown in recent years? The answer has been found in the increase of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. In fact, news impact was sometimes considered an insignificant by-product of journalism at traditional media organisations. Journalists were assumed to focus on proceeding to the next investigation rather than recording and promoting the outcome of their past reporting:

The First Amendment means (thankfully) that there will not be a law or regulation that requires news outlets to quantify the impacts of their reporting. Competitive pressures and professional rewards dictate that reporting resources are much more likely to go toward discovering the next fraud or failure, rather than proving how past reporting generated desirable outcomes. (Hamilton 2016, p.134)

The quote highlights that journalists are generally not required to make an effort to collect evidence of impact after their investigations. Indeed, in traditional newsrooms journalists have been less likely to be encouraged to record news impact. Additionally, investigative journalists have shown a tendency to be disinclined to discuss the impact of their investigations (Konieczna and Powers 2017, p.1543). For these reasons, recording and archiving news impact has not, particularly, been a formalised or prominent part of daily journalistic activities in traditional media organisations.

However, it appears that news impact means more to nonprofit newsrooms than to legacy media. A most recurring theme in recent academic studies and practitioners' report is that news impact is taken seriously at nonprofit media organisations since their funders are keen to know about it (Lewis and Niles 2013; Tofel 2013; Keller and Abelson 2015; Schiffrin and Zuckerman 2015; Hamilton 2016; Rosenstiel et al. 2016; Simons et al. 2017; Hird 2018; Konieczna 2018; Birnbauer 2019). Unlike traditional news media, nonprofit newsrooms are more encouraged to trace and record news impact and to share findings with their funders. Hamilton (2016, p.98) writes that:

The rise in philanthropic support for investigative reporting has overlapped with an era of increased desire by donors to see evidence of whether and how their funds generated results. This has translated into nascent

attempts to develop nomenclatures and methodologies to describe (and, if feasible, quantify) story results.

The quote from Hamilton (2016)'s research addresses that the increase of nonprofit media organisations has caused the recent discussion on news impact because their funders want to know the outcome of their donations. Many others express agreement with Hamilton (2016) about this reason for the increased discourse about news impact in the sector. For example, funders want to see "the social impact of their financial investments" as they need to assess performance among "proliferating prospective grantees" (Lewis and Niles 2013, p.4). For example, Tofel (2013, p.10) states that news impact can be "the stated test of its value" and even the foundational mission statement of *Propublica* specifically foregrounds news impact: "To expose abuses of power and betrayals of the public trust by government, business, and other institutions, using the moral force of investigative journalism *to spur reform* through the sustained spotlighting of wrongdoing" (Tofel 2013, p.10, my emphasis).

Studies have argued that in some ways the importance of proving impact means that commercial business logic is transferred to nonprofits in an adjusted way. The reason why funders' request to see news impact is simple: donations are considered to be investments and news impact is a return on those investments (Lewis and Niles 2013; Tofel 2013; Schiffrin and Zuckerman 2015; Hamilton 2016; Simons et al. 2017; Hird 2018; Konieczna 2018; Birnbauer 2019). The philanthropical funders of nonprofits are differentiated from funders of traditional media organisations in that "they do not seek a financial return. But they do seek a return, although this is transformational, rather than transactional" (Hird 2018, p.4). Since the nature of the funds donated to nonprofits is not business-oriented, the return on the investment is accordingly not financial profit. However, the transaction is still required and therefore the investment-profit logic remains with news impact taking the place of profits.

As revealed, contrary to commercial or public media organisations, nonprofit media organisations necessarily track and record news impact for funders as part of their journalistic activities. This indicates a need to understand the extent to which the demand for evidence of news impact from funders has an influence on story selections, new content and other forms of investigative journalistic practices. This will be discussed further in the next section. Very little empirical studies on the topic exist, highlighting a gap in our research knowledge this thesis will seek to fill.

2.12 Challenges Nonprofit Media Organisations with Funding Systems Face

It is undeniable that nonprofit funding systems have broadened business models for investigative journalism and provided another lifeline for its continued survival at a time of crisis. As illustrated so far, nonprofit investigative journalism organisations have played an important role in rejuvenating in-depth journalism in many societies. However, as with other business models for sustaining news media, nonprofit funding models bring with them some limitations, especially regarding long-term sustainability³⁰ and the potential for editorial influence or interference from funders.

2.12.1 Long-term Financial Sustainability

Long-term financial sustainability has become a widely held concern for nonprofit news organisations. After the initial funding has been achieved, the continuation of funding has been identified as a major contributing factor to the survival (or not) of nonprofit news media (Schilders 2008; Houston 2010; McChesney and Nichols 2010; Walton 2010; Powers and Yaros 2012; Stetka and Örnebring 2013; Konieczna and Robinson 2014; Requejo-Alemán and Lugo-Ocando 2014; Hamilton 2016; Birnbauer 2019). An extension of current grants or acquisition of new funds is necessary for media organisations with the nonprofit business model, whereas philanthropic funds are limited (Birnbauer 2019). Bill Buzenberg (cited in Schilders 2008), the executive director of the CPI, is concerned about “donor fatigue”, meaning “the money flow from a certain donor can suddenly dry up” (ibid). In fact, some foundations also warn the industry that it would be risky for nonprofit newsrooms to expect that foundations would constantly renew their funding since “foundations found new interests and moved on” (Birnbauer 2019, p.92). Indeed, Birnbauer (2019, p.91) observes that several nonprofit newsrooms have already lost their funding, which could cause catastrophic financial difficulties to the media organisations.

For these reasons, nonprofit news organisations launching with foundation funding have been seeking ways to increase, but also diversify, funding to improve their

³⁰ According to Oxford English Dictionary (OED 2022), sustainability means, “The quality of being sustainable at a certain rate or level”. Similarly, here I used the word to examine nonprofit newsrooms’ ability to continue their operation over a period of time.

sustainability. Several researchers suggest that a solution is in multiplying revenue sources (Sopher 2010; Hamilton 2016; McLellan and Holcomb 2018; Birnbauer 2019). McLellan and Holcomb (2018, p.9) argue that developing multiple funding streams is “critical to the stability of an organization, so that the loss of one stream is not catastrophic, as it would be if only one or two sources were available”. A 2021 INN report highlights that “more than 70% of INN member news organizations have three or more revenue streams” (Roseman et al. 2021, p.3). Nonprofit organisations diversify funding streams such as individual donations and/or “earned revenue” including “advertising, sponsorship and events” (ibid, p.13). Particularly, it is meaningful to examine the changes in proportions of each stream in the total revenue of American nonprofit media organisations. The proportion of foundation funds decreased from 57 percent in 2018 to 47 percent in 2021 whereas individual giving raises from 33 percent in 2018 to 36 percent in 2021 (McLellan and Holcomb 2018, p.9; Roseman et al. 2021, p.3). Whereas individual donations’ contribution to the nonprofit section is expanding in this sector, research on the type of funding has barely conducted, which this thesis fills the gap. Financial instability itself is a challenge for nonprofit investigative journalism organisations to overcome to produce high-profile, original reporting in the long-term. However, what is worse here is that this kind of precarious status could bring about the increased funders’ influence over media organisations, which will be discussed in the following section.

2.12.2 Funders’ Influence on Newsrooms

Another critical limitation of nonprofit funding models identified is editorial independence from philanthropic and/or individual funders. Throughout journalism history, funder influence on commercial or state-run newsrooms has been an important topic both among journalists and academics. As explored in Part II, a number of authors have addressed the different ways in which funders have influenced reporting. Media outlets, under varying kinds of external pressure, have been led to prioritise noneditorial considerations over journalistic values, which results in limiting newsroom autonomy (e.g. withdrawal of stories in negotiation for advertising revenue and/or gatekeeping reporting based upon the political alliances of owners). It seems that nonprofit organisations cannot be entirely free from such debate, but also that organisations are seeking new ways to guard against such interference:

One concern raised by critics is that charitable trustees and funders would be able to put pressure on editors and journalists working for their publications, risking editorial autonomy. In counterpoint, it can be argued that the robust structure required for a charity, with guidelines and a system of regulatory enforcement, could, in fact, help protect journalism from editorial interference – offering greater safeguards than in commercial environments, where editorial interference from powerful owners is well-documented. (Townend 2016, p.85)

The quote above illustrates well both sides of the argument in relation to funders' influences on news content at philanthropically funded media organisations. On the one hand, just like at other kinds of newsrooms, funders could attempt to exert their powers over editorial independence. On the other hand, systems and governance structures can be introduced to insulate newsroom autonomy from noneditorial elements affecting journalistic practices and news content.

There has been little in-depth academic research on this topic, particularly concerning nonprofit investigative journalism organisations, so this subsection pays further attention to analyses from practitioners in this field as well as academics. Several studies on nonprofits thus far highlight the theoretical plausibility of undue funder influence, but there is a strong belief that such influence on professional autonomy in this emergent field is highly unlikely to happen. Generally, it has been argued that effective firewalls between funders and nonprofit newsroom result in insulating editorial independence (Schilders 2008; Browne 2010; Walton 2010; GiveSmart 2013; Birnbauer 2019). Firewall approaches are often used in other types of business models as well to protect newswriters from being influenced by funders.

For instance, in the case of *ProPublica*, Schilders (2008) highlights that the nonprofit newsroom protects its newsroom independence by concealing their upcoming news stories from funders. On the one hand, it is highlighted that “they [funders], and the rest of the board, don’t know in advance what we cover. And they are not to contact the reporters” (Paul Steiger, a former editor-in-chief at *ProPublica*, cited in Schilders 2008). On the other hand, the Sandler Foundation, a major funder of *ProPublica* (cited in GiveSmart 2013), has stated:

They’re proud of the thick firewall that separates the board from programmatic decisions. “We want the newsroom to be totally independent of the board,” Herb noted. “We [funders] know nothing about what’s going on there—we never ask, and we’re never told. We don’t find out until a story has gone public”.

As illustrated in the quote, the funder argues that *ProPublica* is independent from the managerial department such as the board. From the funder's stated perspective, the firewall at this nonprofit newsroom is well established, and funders also show willingness to keep their distance from editorial decision-making process. The organisation does this by keeping confidentiality on news stories until publication as shown above (Schilders 2008). In fact, confidentiality of news content is an essential journalistic practice in the sector. However, some mainstream media organisations have been unable to keep their news production secure due to external political and economic elements (see section 2.5). Practitioners in this field, perhaps learning from the experience of legacy news organisations have aimed to put measurement and governance in place to secure editorial independence from direct funder influences.

Although such direct influence can be prevented by a firewall agreed upon by nonprofit media organisations and funders, intervention in news content by funders in an indirect way remains to be explored: for example, whether, in what ways, and to what extent does the impact-driven journalism practices of newswriters and political and economic interests of funders affect decision-making process in nonprofit newsrooms. This is something I will seek to explore in this thesis. First, impact-driven journalism could restrict practitioners' activities at nonprofit newsrooms. Tracking and recording news impact is a key journalistic activity for nonprofit media organisations as funders request having the data, as discussed earlier in Part III (see section 2.11). However, it is argued that such requirements in relation to news impact could be problematic for journalists in that the news selection process could become more impact-centric rather than centred on journalistic and editorial values. In particular, this could be a challenge for newswriters when a newsroom takes a different direction to that favoured by funders. For example, in an analysis of *California Watch*, a nonprofit newsroom in the USA, Birnbauer (2019) identifies differences in objectives between a grantee and a grantor. The newsroom's fundamental focus is "pursuing hard-hitting investigative journalism", whereas a funder prefers "solution-based reporting" (Birnbauer 2019, p.89). Certainly, these two aims are not mutually exclusive in that some hard-hitting news stories revealing a problem, which can lead to solutions. Still, newsroom culture and ideology, not to mention practices and approaches, could be affected if the funders, as an external force, insist on their perspective being reflected in news content. Despite the significance of the matter, there is a general lack of research on the extent to which such an impact-driven ethos can

affect journalistic activities at nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. This indicates a need of more empirical investigations into this topic, which this thesis's research focuses on.

Second, another potential risk of nonprofit funding models for investigative journalism is the possibility of whether, and if so the extent to which, the political inclination of donors (individuals or foundations) influences news content. In terms of foundation funders, some criticism has been made to *ProPublica* that the philanthropic funder's political disposition might be reflected in news selection practices (Schilders 2008). Paul Steiger, a former editor-in-chief at *ProPublica* disputes the criticism, arguing "We don't have a predisposition to go after any particular person or administration, but after abuse of power" (Schilders 2008). It is suggested that the investigative journalism nonprofit seeks to remain politically neutral regardless of the view of foundation funders (ibid), but in-depth qualitative research is really the only way that such statements could be put to the test and explored effectively.

In terms of individual donors to nonprofit investigative journalism organisations in the USA, the majority of them show a political affiliation with the Democratic Party. Powers and Yaros (2012, p.48) surveyed 465 donors of nonprofit news organisations in the USA and found that 71 percent of respondents considered themselves supporters of the Democratic Party. Another study on the political inclination of funders at nonprofit media organisations was taken by Hamilton (2016). In his case study of three nonprofit news organisations in the USA, Hamilton (2016, p.206) examined the nonprofit donors and federal political contributions at three American nonprofit news organisations: *MinnPost*, *Texas Tribune* and *Voice of San Diego*. He found that during the 2012 Presidential Election in the USA, 94 percent of *MinnPost*, 63.7 percent of *Texas Tribune*, and 54.6 percent of *Voice of San Diego*, donor contributions went to the Democratic candidate, Barack Obama. These findings, that a large proportion of donors of nonprofit media organisations are Democratic supporters, could conceivably call into question the political impartiality of nonprofit newsrooms (Birnbauer 2019, p.72). Birnbauer (ibid, p.72) adds that the finding "should raise questions among nonprofit editors who insist their journalism is politically neutral. That does not appear to be the view of conservatives". As the researcher highlights, from the point of views of opposition political supporters (the Republican Party in the American context), investigations, that are published with a news media that is operated by a majority of fund from the

Democratic Party supporters, might not be viewed as impartial (ibid). These results from several studies infer a relationship between individual donors and the Democratic political inclination in the USA, but these findings cannot be extrapolated to all nonprofit news media. How nonprofit newsrooms have managed the issue of impartiality in relation to the politics of donors has not been thoroughly examined in nonprofit studies. Additionally, much uncertainty still exists about the ways in which political inclinations of donors could affect journalistic practices. This is one of the key research gaps in nonprofit media studies I will seek to address in this thesis.

2.13 Conclusion of Part III

Part III of this literature review chapter has focused on the emergence of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. The research analysed the change in trends of journalistic practices in relation to funding systems. As identified in Part II, investigative journalists were challenged in performing in-depth reporting due to restricted editorial independence at both public service media and commercial media organisations. The concern for investigative journalism crisis has encouraged the public to support media organisations with new types of business models. During the second decade of the 21st century, the number of nonprofit media organisations has increased significantly. Two key elements accelerating the increase of nonprofit newsrooms are identified: the public's desire for investigative journalism and the affordances of new technologies. Foundation funding is the main funding stream for nonprofit organisations, with a few newsrooms supported by individual donations. Studies have found that nonprofit investigative organisations produce high-profile, original news reporting which is filling the void left by mainstream media's decreased support for investigative journalism. In particular, cross-newsroom collaborative journalism has been adopted in a widespread way by nonprofit organisations and activities around recording and demonstrating news impact have become more important in the journalism sector.

Firstly, these news nonprofits have contributed to the recent significant increase in collaboration with the aid of technological advances. Due to their smaller scale compared to mainstream media, nonprofit newsrooms have tried to co-publish or co-investigate with other newsrooms regardless of funding models for wide dissemination, so wider audiences can read their work, and consequently, for more

news impact on society. At the same time, mainstream media have become able to provide in-depth, critical, watchdog news stories, which they become less able to afford to conduct. Most importantly, nonprofit investigative journalism organisations have played a crucial role in collaboration as content providers as well as technological experts. However, much uncertainty still exists with regard to local-level collaborations, such as the work and outcome of domestic nationwide collaborations within local media outlets.

Secondly, the expansion of the nonprofit newsrooms has also boosted debates on news impact in the media industry. A majority of nonprofit newsrooms record news impact and communicate about their news impact as evidence of the outcomes of their journalistic performance for their funders. Owing to the differences in describing news impact, it is suggested that impact measurement needs to be customised to each project or newsroom based upon their distinct purposes and objectives. There is a difference of opinions between funders and practitioners in considering what news impact means. Funders are more likely to regard quantitative metrics as a measure of activities of investigative journalism as well as qualitative results, whereas nonprofit newsrooms put less emphasis on such statistical data. Scholars have found the increased discourse around news impact pertains to the increase of nonprofit media organisations because of an increase in the need of philanthropic funders for a way of seeing a return on their investments.

Although nonprofit funding models have enabled journalists to conduct high-profile investigative journalism, as per other financial models, this system also has its limitations including those around long-term sustainability and funders' influence on newsroom autonomy. As this nonprofit system heavily relies on voluntary donations from foundations or individuals, funding can always be withdrawn. With the number of nonprofit media organisations increasing, funders have a greater choice of which one(s) to invest in, meaning the current nonprofits have to fundraise constantly and even harder. Another challenge for nonprofit media is potential funder influence in an editorial decision-making process. Nonprofit media and their foundation funders argue that firewall systems to insulate newsroom autonomy are in place. However, indirect interventions such as an emphasis on impact-driven journalism and the political inclination of funders remain as concerns for nonprofits to overcome for editorial independence.

Little is known still about this new generation of investigative journalism organisations in terms of newsroom autonomy under nonprofit funding and

operational systems. This thesis studies the perceived newsroom autonomy at nonprofit newsrooms with an analytic grounding in the theories presented in Part I. As revealed, most of the previous research on nonprofit investigative journalism organisations has been done in North America. Although a notable increase in nonprofits started in the USA, the phenomenon is spreading worldwide. However, studies in this subject outside the USA are still scarce. Additionally, research on a nonprofit newsroom operated mainly on individual donations is even rarer. Such a research gap leaves much uncertainty about the relationship between the funding model and journalistic practices, which this thesis took into account when choosing research subjects. Furthermore, there has been little qualitative data about practitioners' perspectives towards their financial models. This indicates a need to understand the various perceptions of journalistic practices developed to insulate editorial independence in this emergent sector. The focus of this research is to determine how nonprofit investigative journalism organisations have been able to produce this type of journalism when many legacy media are decreasingly able to. Another key discussion to be explored further is how nonprofit newsrooms deal with practical but critical challenges around long-term sustainability and funders' influences. With these knowledge gaps identified throughout the literature review, the thesis seeks to shine new light on these uncertain debates with reliable, in-depth qualitative empirical evidence.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an account of how the research was carried out in order to answer the research questions that evolved and developed from the literature review. This thesis aims to examine how investigative journalism has responded to changes in the media ecosystem with a new type of financial model. In order to develop the methods that best examine the research questions of this thesis, I have consulted suitable method literature and referenced relevant research in journalism studies. Traditionally, qualitative case studies with an empirical study are a well-established approach in analysing the practices and contexts of news production. However, ethnographic approaches – including participant observation and in-depth interviews – focused on the emerging area of nonprofit investigative journalism are rare despite their value and appropriateness for studying this sector. It is likely that this rarity is due to a reluctance by investigative newsrooms to admit external researchers, thereby preserving their confidentiality. In spite of such practical difficulties, this research has drawn exclusively upon the newsroom ethnography consisting of participant observation and in-depth interviews at two nonprofit investigative journalism organisations: the *Korea Center for Investigative Journalism* (KCIJ) funded by individual donations in South Korea and the *Bureau of Investigative Journalism* (BIJ) funded by foundations in the United Kingdom.

This methodology chapter consists of six sections. First, it starts with an introduction of the case newsrooms. Second, I explain the chosen methods with consideration of the positives and negatives of each method, including a discussion of my pilot research. Next, I describe the procedure to equip myself with the professional journalistic skillsets, and establish myself as a competent participant observer, to gain access to those newsrooms. The fourth part illustrates how these methods were applied during the fieldwork. Then, the procedure of analysing the data collected is followed. The last part details the research ethics of this research.

3.2 An Introduction to Nonprofit Newsrooms

I have chosen two nonprofit investigative journalism organisations in order to obtain further insight into what is, at present, an under-developed area of study. Sample choices were made with consideration of the diverse research gaps found in the literature review. Legacy media have become decreasingly invested in investigative journalism, potentially threatening a healthy democracy. Hence, I found organisations that pursue to publish investigative journalism in the public interest and try to carry out a Fourth Estate function (see section 2.9). The transfer of veteran investigative journalists from mainstream media and nonprofit sectors contributes to the increase of trust in nonprofit media and collaboration accordingly (see section 2.10). For this reason, I chose newsrooms primarily led and operated by professional journalists rather than by citizen journalists. Also, since the key streams of nonprofit funding are foundations and memberships (see section 2.8.2), I made sure to include two different funding types to understand impact of diverse funding sources with consideration of their locations for practical reasons. As a result, the KCIJ and the BIJ, that broadly covers various local, national and global issues were chosen. Table 3.1 summarises their main features. Detailed introduction will be presented in section 4.2 with the perceptions of staff at the KCIJ and the BIJ on driving forces in South Korean and British societies behind the establishment of their newsrooms in terms of the status of investigative journalism and the evolution of their funding systems.

The KCIJ is a nonprofit investigative journalism organisation based in Seoul, South Korea, officially established in 2013. It aims to be a nonprofit, nonpartisan and independent newsroom. Its membership-funded system relies on donations from individuals, which creates “its indissoluble relationship with its donors” (Shin 2016, p.5). This relationship will be discussed throughout the findings and analysis chapter 4 and 5. It publishes its (mainly video-formatted) news stories online, accessed free of charge by any member of the public regardless of membership. This differs from organisations that utilise a “paid subscription system”, whose members receive exclusive access to its news stories. There are currently only a few news outlets worldwide that are fully funded by the membership-funded system. Owing to this limited number of newsrooms, there is a dearth of research into institutions that use and rely on this kind of funding, despite the importance of the topic in enhancing our knowledge in this field. Its journalistic performance has been distinctive, in particular, as the only South Korean partner of the ICIJ. With particular

regard to the KCIJ, another reason why it has been under-researched could be due to its geographical location on the Asian continent and the official language of the newsroom, Korean. Fluency in the common language of the newsroom is essential for conducting field research. As a native speaker of Korean, I have an advantage in studying the newsroom with no language and cultural barriers.

TABLE 3.1 Key features of the KCIJ and the BIJ

	The Korean Center for Investigative Journalism	The Bureau of Investigative Journalism
Primary funding Stream ³¹	Individual Membership Donations	Foundations
Founded	2013	2010
Location	Seoul, South Korea	London, The United Kingdom
Founder	Former investigative journalists from legacy media	The David and Elaine Potter Foundation
Focus	Investigative Journalism on a local, national and global scale	Investigative Journalism on a local, national and global scale
Key Format of news	Video	Text-based Articles
Distribution Platform	The KCIJ website, Youtube, and Internet portal sites	The BIJ website and co-publishing partner media organisations
Number of Employees ³²	51 ³³	39 ³⁴

The BIJ is a foundation-funded newsroom in the UK, founded in 2010 with the initial funding granted by the David and Elaine Potter Foundation. A complete list of the BIJ's funding can be found on the BIJ's website³⁵. Elaine Potter is a former investigative journalist at the Insight Team at The *Sunday Times*. The BIJ is one of the biggest and oldest nonprofit newsrooms in the UK that specifically dedicate itself to investigative journalism. Research on the BIJ is scarce, despite its achievements

³¹ Although the KCIJ sometimes sells books and release theatrical documentary films, whose content is based on their investigations, and the BIJ also encourages audiences to support the newsroom on its website, these supplementary funding is a very small fraction in comparison to the primary funding streams, according to the newsrooms. So, this thesis considers one primary funding stream as their funding models.

³² This number is counted on the 21st of March 2022, according to the data published on their websites.

³³ <https://kcij.org/crew> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

³⁴ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/about-us/our-people> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

³⁵ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/about-us/our-funding> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

in publishing investigative journalism and establishing intra-national collaboration. Again, in choosing the BIJ, this thesis aims to widen the geographical limitation of current studies' predominant focus on the USA.

3.3 Justification of the Methodology

3.3.1 Overview of the Research Design of Newsroom Ethnography

This thesis draws upon newsroom ethnographic methods such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews at two nonprofit investigative journalism organisations to study the journalistic practices and challenges of newswriters at media organisations with nonprofit funding models. Zelizer (2004, p.65) describes the newsroom ethnography thus:

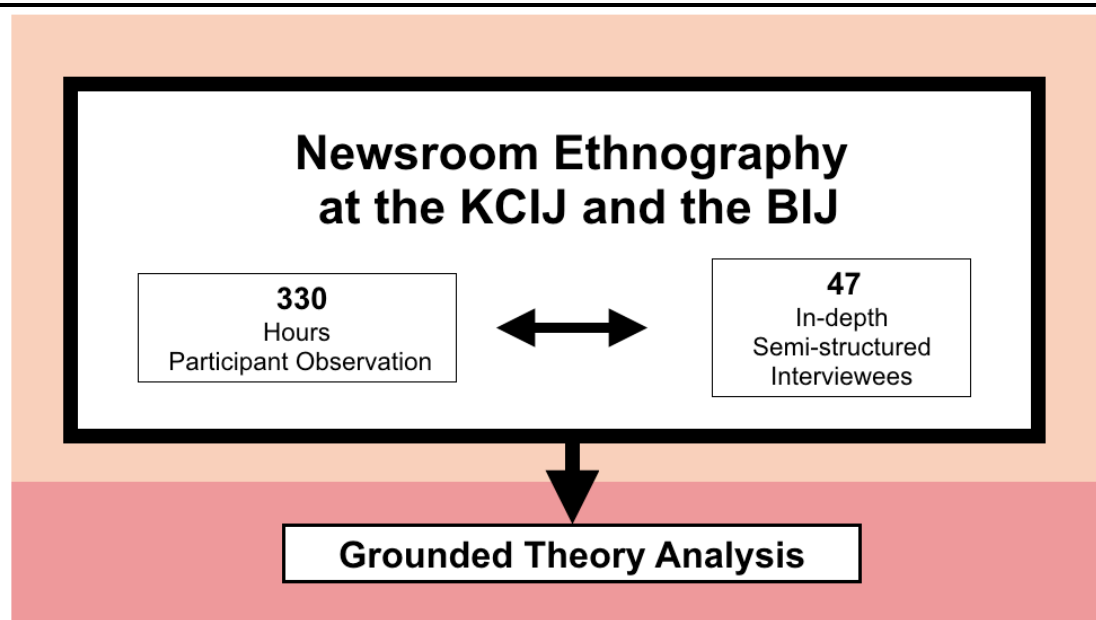
borrowing largely from the techniques and conceptual vocabulary of ethnomethodology, these studies were driven by grounded questions that tried to see the world through the news worker's point of view, tracking primarily decision-making processes regarding who decided what was newsworthy, how, and why.

This methodological approach in journalism studies has been useful to examine the progress of news production and particularly to obtain research data from internal perspectives (ibid). Anderson (2013, p.168) highlights that "Today, the term 'ethnography' is often applied as a generic label to a variety of qualitative methods". In detail, Singer (2008, p.158) specifies that the "qualitative ethnographic methods, drawing on participant observation and in-depth interviews of working journalists" can profoundly help researchers to understand journalistic practices in newsrooms. Classic newsroom ethnography, such as Gaye Tuchman's "*Making News*" (1978) and Herbert Gans' "*Deciding What's News*" (1979) since 1970s, have identified the complex relationships between professional journalistic practices and political/economic/institutional/technological influences (see Cottle and Ashton 1999; Boczkowski 2004; Usher 2014). Following this tradition, my thesis seeks to study the practices of investigative journalism today in relation to nonprofit funding models.

My methodological approaches were qualitative ethnographic methods such as participant observation and in-depth interviews. Participant observation included a total of 330 hours of newsroom observation at the KCIJ and the BIJ, including 14 editorial meetings, conversations among newswriters, field interviews (me asking

questions to newswriters), shadowing journalists (me following newswriters outside the newsroom when they went for reporting), and social events that a newsroom held for funders and the public. The term, “newswriters”, in my research, refers to anyone involved in news production processes such as editors, investigative reporters, data journalists, developers, video journalists, video editors, producers, and administrators. In addition, I conducted 47 semi-structured one-to-one interviews with newswriters at the KCIJ and the BIJ and each interview material lasted one to two hours. Data collected were analysed based on grounded theory, as shown in Figure 3.1. These research methods were adopted owing to their advantages and suitability to my study. However, like any research method, they have limitations as well as benefits, which I review thoroughly here.

FIGURE 3.1 Methodological framework of ethnographic approaches



Combined methods in this thesis – participant observation and interviews – interrelate well because they allowed me to compare journalistic discourse (what people say they do) with observed habits and practices (what people *actually* do). Applying more than one research method is likely to increase validity in research by “compensating strengths and weaknesses” (Denscombe 2021, p.205) of each

method, therefore, it is often recommended for observers to cross-check data obtained by different research methods.

Although I drew a large number of my findings upon interview materials in later chapters, both participant observation and interviews were equally important methods for this PhD research. It should be noted that such findings would have been impossible if I had not adopted the observational method. For instance, interview questions were framed and customised deliberately, and in a bespoke way, to each newsworker based on my observations of them at work (for example, what they said or how they behaved at unit or editorial meetings and/or in casual conversations in the newsrooms). Although generic interview topics were planned in advance, I revised interview questions every day after participant observation to customise them to each interviewee. I was only partially able to imagine important issues at nonprofit newsrooms before the fieldwork began due to the lack of previous research about this subject. Amending interview questions continuously also helped me to accurately interpret what I observed. Also, as most of the interviews were conducted while I was at the newsrooms, I was able to observe what they did in comparison to what they said in the interviews. This continued comparison allowed me to verify the data I collected from interviews, so I was able to use them confidently in my findings chapters as these interview materials were verified or substantiated by my observation as well as other interviews with the rest of their newsrooms. More importantly, I believe that my presence in the newsrooms contributed to generating the better quality of interview materials. As I explain further below, I was not involved in a network at either the KCIJ or the BIJ before I started the research. Therefore, my stay with newsworkers on an ongoing basis while making participant observation offered me a chance to build trust amongst the newsworkers. I believe that the quality of interviews and the findings they revealed were significantly improved owing to the benefits of participant observation. I certainly think that I obtained better quality datasets than the ones from an interview only approach without me spending time with them in the newsrooms. Therefore, I see participant observation and in-depth interviews as mutually reinforcing ethnographic research methods for this thesis.

Additionally, studying two newsrooms in an exploratory and in-depth way is pertinent to the aim of this thesis to generate much-needed knowledge and understanding of a novel and under-explored sector that is experimenting with a variety of ways of sustaining its important and influential work. This dual approach

also aims to make an essential contribution to the field by providing more extensive insights into two nonprofit investigative journalism newsrooms with different nonprofit funding streams: one with individual donations and the other with foundations. Moreover, further broadening the geographical boundaries of what we know about the sector from the USA to Asia and Europe will be another of my original contributions.

3.3.2 Participant Observation

Newsroom observation has been considered one of the most suitable methods in news production studies to investigate the complexity of circumstances influencing journalistic practices (Singer 2008; Williams et al. 2011; Hansen and Machin 2013). Participant observation is “an umbrella word covering several combinations of participation and observation and that different combinations were relevant for different studies and study sites” (Gans 1999, p.540). Reese and Shoemaker (2016, p.400) highlight that in terms of the organisational level of their hierarchy of influences model, “the ethnographic approach to journalism contributed the insight, now well accepted, that media representations are an organizational product”. An observer usually focuses on examining “*how the members of the group/culture being studied understand things, the meanings they attach to happenings, the way they perceive their reality*”³⁶ (Denscombe 2021, p.120). Therefore, it is useful to document news production within a context of its organisational, routine, political or economic situations, which this thesis aims to do so. News production involves multiple factors combining in complicated ways. Therefore, it is worthy to note that teasing out complexity is key in my research, and participant observation enhances the likelihood of capturing it. A researcher is granted “an opportunity to investigate, through direct observation, the lived experience of journalists” (Williams et al. 2011, p.118) by monitoring, engaging in, and recording the production process in a newsroom.

The most important advantage of the observational approach to a newsroom is that the method allows a researcher to reveal tacit contexts shaping journalistic norms, routines and practices which cannot be found by any other methods. This is possible because observers witness routinised everyday life of the observed

³⁶ Emphasis in the original text.

community (Howard 2002; Deacon et al. 2007; Denscombe 2021). Malinowski (1922, p.18) highlights that “there is a series of phenomena of great importance which cannot possibly be recorded by questioning or computing documents, but have to be observed in their full actuality”. This interaction among members of the targeted community allows a researcher to reveal “how people build culture from the bottom up” (Howard 2002, p.553) and the observation method is “useful in capturing and categorizing community symbols” (ibid, p.557). Particularly in a newsroom, the observational approach is considered as the only research technique “by which the normally invisible realm of media production can be recorded and made available for wider consideration” by making “the invisible visible” (Cottle 2007, p.5). All these arguments from multiple researchers strongly support this qualitative ethnographic approach to reveal contextual culture within a newsroom. I believe this method can best identify how news production can be affected by organisational influences and journalistic routines at nonprofit newsrooms.

The second key benefit of this method is its original research setting, enabling a researcher to explore the embedded natural environment of news production. An observational approach offers a portrayal of research subjects within context because the observed community stays within their “comfort zone” (Singer 2009, p.192). The natural setting increases the likelihood for a researcher to observe professional routines in as natural as possible in comparison to “artificially created conditions such as laboratory experiments” (Denscombe 2021, p.249). This is valuable in helping to understand how news is produced within “wider forces of change – whether political, commercial, technological or cultural” (Cottle 2007, p.6). This ability to observe and understand the work that newswriters do, their daily practices and how these affect the kinds of news produced, in the economic and political context of emergent financial models for funding investigative journalism, makes this approach very suitable for this research.

Another advantage of using the observational research method is its flexibility when faced with unexpected situations in the course of research. Its practical, exploratory and adaptable nature allows a researcher to amend the fieldwork as they go along (Deacon et al. 2007, p.258). For instance, a survey is impossible to change once a questionnaire is sent out. If a coding sheet for content analysis needs to be amended in the middle of a coding process, it must be re-done from the beginning. However, with the observational method, the researcher’s assumptions are continuously tested during the research. It is the most flexible method to be “open to

the contingencies of the field experience” (Cottle 2007, p.5), which is very important for this thesis in aiming to understand under-studied sets of working practices in an emergent news setting.

Because of these benefits, participant observation has unquestionably contributed to journalism studies. Tuchman (1978) and Gans (1979) have provided highly influential canonical newsroom observation and more recent research about nonprofit news organisations also adopted this methodological approach to examine these new and emergent media organisations (Shin 2016; Konieczna 2018). My study followed this traditional, time-consuming, productive and rewarding methodological technique to answer the research questions. As suggested by the previous studies discussed here so far, it is valuable for an observer to be embedded into the news production process. As I will explain, I worked hard to develop the specialist journalistic skills and knowledge to actively participate in my newsrooms as far as possible.

In addition, a globalised digital media landscape has required more sensitivity from researchers on virtual spaces and physical spaces in contemporary digital newsrooms. Technology has also irrevocably changed how journalists (generalist, as well as investigative) interact with their sources and collaborate to produce the news. As a result, it has become more challenging for researchers, who have had to adapt accordingly. The transfer to digital newsrooms has required researchers to broaden their analysis of news production in more multidimensional ways in terms of time and spaces with a “new methodological *sensibility*³⁷” (Robinson and Metzler 2016, p.454). Such widened observation presents a more complete picture of work in newsrooms, which are increasingly digitally mediated and decreasingly confined to the same geographical space. Accessing internal online transactions such as “emails, texting, private Facebook chats, direct messaging on Twitter” (Robinson and Metzler 2016, p.456) can provide researchers with “innumerable spaces and time periods to observe” (ibid, p.457) but is seldom approved to external researchers (ibid, p.456). This problem of access to the digital workplace is likely to be equally, if not more, present in investigative newsrooms, where confidentiality is a significant concern. I was not exceptional in facing difficulty of this kind in some ways. For example, the KCIJ used Telegram for internal communications. I asked permission to join their group chat, but the gatekeeper did not approve. Still, I

³⁷ Emphasis on the original text.

continuously followed newswriters' public Facebook and Twitter to keep up to date in different ways.

Even though I thought, and still think, that newsroom ethnography is the most suitable method for my research project, there are certain drawbacks associated with the use of this method, as in all other methods of media studies. I was aware of these and tried to overcome or minimise them during the fieldwork, which I elaborate on further.

In general, one of the significant challenges of this observational method even appears before the fieldwork begins, namely gaining access to the observed community. Gaining "access" is the first challenge, and the difficulty of getting inside a newsroom has been seen as a potential disadvantage to this choice of method (Denscombe 2021, p.92). This challenge becomes more difficult in investigative journalism newsrooms where confidentiality is crucial, and the level of openness to external people is often far lower than other types of workplaces. Ethnographic research in general newsrooms is somewhat scarce in journalism studies and is even rarer in investigative journalism newsrooms. In spite of this critical disadvantage, I believed that the observational method was the most suitable one to answer my research questions, so I worked very hard to overcome this disadvantage and to maximise the opportunities made available. I describe this journey in depth in section 3.4.

For the disadvantages during the fieldwork, first, the commonly discussed limitation of observational methods relates to their reliability and generalisability. The criticism stems from the fact that the research relies on a researcher's insight into understanding and interpreting situations and events, making it challenging to verify reliability by repeating a study (Robinson and Metzler 2016; Denscombe 2021). Therefore, it is suggested that the reliability of such qualitative research should be considered differently from that of quantitative research and should not be generalisable (Robinson and Metzler 2016, p.457). Several elements affect a study's reliability and generalisability, such as a researcher's ability to access, observe, and collect data. I tried to minimise the limits of participant observation as much as I could, but I could not completely remove them, as is the case with most participant observers. For instance, a researcher's individual ability to negotiate access varies widely even in the same place, therefore, restricted access can leave certain situations unobserved (Cottle 2007, p.7). To minimise this, I spent as much time as I could with investigative journalists. For example, I stayed at the

newsrooms for as long as I was allowed, attended a variety of meetings at the KCIJ and the BIJ, followed reporters outside of the newsroom when reporting, attended events held by the newsroom and joined informal lunches, dinners and drinks. Additionally, I tried to obtain further context through interviews when interpreting what I observed within the newsroom.

The second is a “Hawthorne effect”, meaning “the unintended consequences of observational research in changing the behaviour of the observed” (Deacon et al. 2007, p.264). Initially studied in a factory called the Hawthorne plant in the USA, this effect explains changed behaviours when acknowledging an observation going around the subjects (Wickström and Bendix 2000). The KCIJ often hires part-time researchers for investigations, therefore the presence of a newcomer in the newsroom is not extraordinary. The newsroom was pentagonal shaped, so I was not noticeably visible to some of the workers. Moreover, a majority of newswriters at the KCIJ already knew me because of relationships established during my training there (see section 3.4). I believe these elements lessened this effect at the KCIJ. The situation at the BIJ was different. The office was smaller than that of the KCIJ and rectangle-shaped, where I was more visible. So, I followed a suggestion from Deacon et al. (2007, p.264), noting “simply to work hard at being as inconspicuous as possible”.

For these reasons, Hansen and Machin (2013, p.63) emphasise that collected data should be understood with the premise that the research is conducted under a “particular setting at that particular time”. Indeed, there is no intention to generalise findings from my observations at the KCIJ and the BIJ to those of similar nonprofit investigative newsrooms all over the world. Participant observation study cannot be representative of all nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. Hopefully, however, this research will provide insights which can inform new studies into other nonprofit newsrooms in other countries to help us further understand the relationship between nonprofit funding models and journalistic practices and challenges in investigative journalism and beyond.

3.3.3 In-depth Interviews with Newswriters

In-depth interviews are designed as the part of many ethnographic approaches to overcome some of the previously discussed disadvantages of participant

observation (Deacon et al. 2007; Denscombe 2021). In particular, the meaning of what is observed solely relies on a researcher's interpretation, which "may or may not be correct" (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p.41). Therefore, researchers recommend to "combine observation with an interview or leave open the possibility to verify interpretations with participants" (ibid, p.41). Thus, participant observation and interviews played a role in mutually verifying data produced using each method to increase the reliability of my fieldwork.

The research interview is a favoured research technique in media studies because it allows researchers to access insiders' perspectives shared within a particular group (Priest 2010; Silverman 2013; Corbin and Strauss 2015; Denscombe 2021). Through the analysis of interview materials, researchers can collect data about "what people say they do, what they say they believe and what opinions they say they have" (Denscombe 2021, p.229). Priest (2010, p.101) highlights that in-depth interviews are "more practical" under restricted resources. Due to its advantages, such as the ability to approach insiders' perspectives, efficiency, and practicality, interviews were included for many previous studies in nonprofit media organisations (see Browne 2010; Powers and Yaros 2012; Shin 2016; Konieczna 2018). Interviews are an appropriate method to increase the effectiveness of data from the observational part of my thesis. Interviews allowed me to gather valuable and meaningful information about the abstract, unobservable, and/or less observable aspects of journalism practice and its contexts. These included participants' experience at previous workplaces, the perceived professional autonomy of newswriters, and how all of these things were understood and reflected in their journalistic activities. These elements cannot be observed externally. Also, recurring themes addressed by interviewees are likely to represent shared ideas in a group, increasing my research validity (Denscombe 2021, p.243). Therefore, interview sessions with newswriters were expected to offer important data revealing their own perceptions towards editorial autonomy under the nonprofit funding systems.

There are largely three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. First, at structured interviews, all interviewees are "asked the same questions, in the same order, and with subjects responding from a 'forced choice' by selecting one option from an assigned set of choices. Numerical values represent each choice" (Morse 2012, p.194). This most systemised interview (among three types) can provide "consistency" (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p.39). This is more like a "questionnaire which is administered face to face with a respondent" and such

standardised process is “particularly useful with large-scale projects” (Denscombe 2021, p.230-231). Consequently, to design structured interviews, it is necessary for a researcher to know “questions and responses” (ibid, p.195). In this type of interviews, topics, issues, and problems to be discussed in the interviews are decided by a researcher’s perspective, not by a participant (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p.39). Although the structured interviews have their own advantages in analysis, they are not adequate for this thesis. First, the nonprofit sector is under-researched, so there is insufficient information available for me to complete questions and responses in advance. More importantly, my research questions are only to be answered from the internal voices of the newsrooms, so it is crucial for me to provide interviewees with opportunities for sharing their opinions without restrictions.

Second, unstructured interviews refer to “a type of interview in which the researcher asks minimal questions” and aim to “obtain the participant’s perspective without ‘leading’ the participant” (Morse 2012, p.194). Therefore, this type of interviews is considered “optimally *emic*³⁸ (from the participant’s perspective), which, with the lack of interference or interjection from the researcher, increases validity” (ibid, p.194). One of the advantageous aspects of this type of interviews is to “provide the richest source of data” because interviewees can “determine what subject to talk about, at what pace, in what order, and to what depth” although a researcher still chooses a main theme to be discussed (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p.38). This type of interviews is indeed useful in exploring the topic but is challenging for a researcher to conduct. Since an interviewer needs to bring the interview back to relevant stories carefully without disrupting an interviewee’s participation if “the narrative drifts to a completely unrelated topic” (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p.38), it requires highly trained interviewing skills.

Last one is a semi-structured interview used for this research, considering the purpose of this study and my practical interview skills. Semi-structured interviews are more structured than unstructured interviews in terms of an interview guide but more flexible than structured interviews because interviewees can “response freely” (Morse 2012, p.197). First, during the semi-structured interview, “some topics are chosen before beginning the research”, but “when and how the topics are presented is not structured” (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p.39). An interview guide or interview schedule is designed to help interviewers to “remember to cover all the topic areas

³⁸ Emphasis in the original text.

that are important” (Priest 2010, p.101). Such interview guide can offer comfort to a researcher to some extent, especially early career researchers, to help them complete interviews without missing any relevant issues. Semi-structured interviews are well established in journalism studies (see Fink and Anderson 2015; Wagemans et al. 2016).

The fundamental rationale for conducting interviews for my thesis is obtaining internal perspectives from newswriters. So, it is certainly important to provide some freedom to interviewees while also being attentive to the need to data to answer the research questions. Therefore, my interview guide was designed to allow me to cover important issues and problems I found while preparing for each interview. Second, the semi-structured interview is beneficial in drawing out further elaboration during an interview due to its flexibility. Although a researcher undertakes interviews with pre-selected topics, semi-structured interviews “let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher” (Denscombe 2021, p.231). Nonprofit investigative journalism organisations are still under-researched, so there is substantial information still to be revealed. I expected to discover new findings during my observations that would need to be applied in customising each interview with a view to obtaining more insights from newswriters’ perspectives. Structured interviews do not allow a researcher to amend as the research goes on (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p.39). For these reasons, I chose the semi-structured interview with my interviewees at the KCIJ and the BIJ.

3.3.4 Pilot Research

Pilot research was conducted in 2014 as my Master’s dissertation. Nonprofit investigative journalism organisations outside the USA are a currently emerging area, and in 2013, when I was planning the research, it was still reasonably new (for example, Konieczna and Robinson (2014, p.969) called the area a “burgeoning industry” at the time). Pilot research is highly recommended before conducting actual research because it is meant to “save” a researcher’s “time and effort in the long run” although conducting it “may seem laborious” (Davies and Mosdell 2006, p.108). Therefore, in 2014, I conducted pilot research on these two newsrooms for the preparation of this PhD thesis. Content analysis on 166 news video clips from

the KCIJ and 105 news stories from the BIJ and three interviews with the BIJ staff and one with KCIJ journalist were conducted.

The findings were meaningful enough for me to pursue this PhD thesis. Investigative journalistic practices at the KCIJ and the BIJ mainly followed traditional ones in most of the aspects such as topics (systemic social disorders and corruptions), targets (powerful figures) and methods (document analysis, interviews, leaks and whistle-blowers) of investigations. Additionally, newswriters adopted some innovative techniques such as data-driven analysis and open sources with the aid of new technologies. Moreover, their news reporting had contributed to their societies by sparking changes. Most importantly, newswriters at both newsrooms argued that their funding model liberated them from external forces regarding decision-making processes on investigations. Still, suggestive data revealed the possibility that funders (either members or foundations) may try to influence news stories, or exert more indirect forms of influence.

The pilot had several limitations in that it drew on a small number of interviewees and did not engage with journalists' everyday work life. Taking all results into account, I contended that this research needed further study to investigate the relationship between nonprofit funding models and investigative journalistic practices. To do so, the best method to adopt was a qualitative analysis, especially a qualitative observational method in the newsrooms. This is because an observational approach is one of the most practical and valuable methods to gain insight into the complex newsroom ecology, including its sensitivity, interaction and cross-communication around work. The observational study still remains a preferred methodological approach in this emerging and ever-changing sector for exploring news production (Anderson 2013, p.167). The content analysis for the pilot research had already revealed that their investigations met the conventional standards of investigative journalism in many respects. Therefore, I considered it was more significant to focus on how the nonprofit investigative journalism media were able to publish such investigations, while investigations in many of mainstream media were decreasing supported due to both systemic market failure other kinds of interference.

3.4 Preparation for Newsroom Ethnography: Becoming a Competent Participant Observer and Gaining Access

Diverse political, economic, organisational and occupational factors around news production potentially influence professional routines and media outputs. Newsroom ethnography has been used for exploring the complex journalistic practices in their economic contexts. However, gaining access is, as identified in the previous section (see section 3.3.2), probably the first and most difficult challenge that a researcher has to overcome to conduct a newsroom ethnography study. Moreover, the possibility of taking part in news production as a participant observer is often only available to those researchers with journalistic skills and experience enough to understand and carry out news production. Former journalists are, in some cases, better able to undertake this kind of observational research by drawing on their professional experience (Deacon et al. 2007, p.251). As a former journalist with varied experience in media production, I already had some of the skills advantageous to participant observation. Still, I lacked the specialist knowledge and expertise to participate more fully in investigative news organisations. Therefore, I equipped myself with investigative journalistic skills by attending journalism training programmes to generate the best results during newsroom ethnography. Although I was familiar with much current investigative journalistic vocabulary, reporting processes, and journalistic practices, I was aware that the more I knew about, and could participate in, investigative news production, the more effective my data collection would be.

From 2014 on, I attended various journalism training programmes and conferences such as *Investigathon* Google for Media in London, the UK (2014), Community Journalism Training by the Centre for Investigative Journalism in Cardiff, the UK (2016), the Investigative Journalism Training Programme by the KCIJ in Seoul, South Korea (2016), The European Investigative Journalism & Dataharvest Conference in Mechelen, Belgium (2017), European Data and Computational Journalism Conference in Dublin, Ireland (2017), Cardiff, the UK (2018) and Malaga, Spain (2019) and the Summer School of the Centre for Investigative Journalism in London, the UK (2014 and 2019). At the KCIJ training programmes in 2016 I learned investigative journalism theories and practices in an intensive way over the course of four weeks. In this particularly valuable training KCIJ newswriters taught about an ethical code of conduct, investigative story writing, a fact-checking process, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and data journalism

with computer programmes. After two weeks of learning theories and practice, trainees were given the task to produce an investigative story over a further two-week period under the supervision of investigative journalists. Half of the task entailed my team carrying out field research to find and interview news sources. The other half was office-based where we searched data resources including requesting FOIA related to the topic. On the last day, trainees presented their investigations to journalist panels at the KCIJ.

I believe all the training and workshops enhanced my skillsets and expertise to understand investigative journalism practices and to collect data more effectively. One of the limitations of observational methods is that research solely relies on the researcher's ability to understand and interpret what is observed (Robinson and Metzler 2016; Denscombe 2021). Therefore, researchers need to be equipped and ready for collecting data wherever and whenever possible. All events and training opportunities contributed to improving my own understanding of what was required to be considered a reputable and ethical investigative journalist. Furthermore, these participations also helped me to forge relationships and build trust with some newswriters in my case study newsrooms, and to establish myself as a capable participant observer in their workplaces. Owing to all these efforts, I was able to conduct the fieldwork as a participant observer who could be actively involved in their journalistic work.

There is, however, a danger of a researcher getting too deeply involved in the observed community. The situation is called "going native", meaning a researcher is "forgetting all about the research and settling down to live out their days as a member of the 'tribe' that they had originally set out to study" (Denscombe 2021, p.264). Although I prepared by equipping myself with journalistic skillsets, this was only enough to participate in basic research, not for in-depth investigations. There was still a clear line between me and the rest of the newswriters at the nonprofit newsrooms and "going native" proved to be an unfounded danger during my fieldwork.

In fact, equipping myself with journalistic skillsets was an easier part of preparing for participant observation since this required my dedication solely towards participating programmes (except for Investigative Journalism Training Programme of the KCIJ, where I had to apply and compete with many other candidates to be selected). The more difficult challenge was that I needed to get permission to access the newsrooms. I had no acquaintances at these nonprofits when I first started my pilot

research. However, I believed that newsroom ethnography was the best and foremost method, I tried hard to make it happen. First, I acknowledged that no newsroom would open their workplace to a complete stranger, particularly investigative journalism organisations where confidentiality and secrecy was imperative. Therefore, I attended as many conferences and public speeches as I could where BIJ newswriters were guest speakers, so I could understand their organisations better but also introduce myself to them as an initial step of building rapport. For instance, I attended CIJ's Summer School in London, in 2014, because the BIJ Managing Editor at the time gave a speech in one of the sessions. I thought that this would be a good opportunity for me to meet the Managing Editor. After attending the session, I was able to converse with him and discuss interviews with BIJ newswriters for my Master's dissertation (pilot research for this PhD thesis). These persistent efforts led to three interviews for my pilot research in 2014.

TABLE 3.2 A timeline for gaining access to the newsrooms for ethnographic research at the KCIJ and the BIJ

Year	Time Period	Action taken
2016	3 June	Applying for "Investigative Journalism Training Programme" at the KCIJ
	27 June – 22 July	Attending the 4-week training programme
2017	28 August	Meeting with the Editor-in-Chief and CEO of the KCIJ to ask permission for accessing the newsroom
	September – November	Contacting the KCIJ through emails and text messages
	28 November	Permission for accessing the newsroom was granted
2018	19 February – 23 March	5-week newsroom ethnography at the KCIJ
	10 May	Meeting with the Managing Editor and CEO of the BIJ to ask permission for accessing the newsroom
	May – June	Contacting the BIJ through emails
	20 June	Permission for accessing the newsroom was granted
	16 – 27 July	2-week newsroom ethnography at the BIJ

For my PhD thesis, my formal contact with the newsrooms began in 2016. Table 3.2 summarises the procedure of obtaining permission for newsroom ethnography at my chosen newsrooms. My subsequent contact with the KCIJ was in Spring 2016 when I applied for and won a place on the competitive Investigative Journalism Training Programme, designed to educate citizens about investigative journalism. As part of the application, I disclosed that I had written my Master's dissertation about nonprofit newsrooms with a case study of the KCIJ and the BIJ and that I was now a PhD student researching them more comprehensively and thoroughly. As revealed earlier, the training programme improved not only my investigative journalistic skills, but also my knowledge about the organisation itself. Although this four-week period of training was not formally a part of my research, it was a good opportunity for me to build trust between myself and newswriters at the KCIJ as well as to gain more practical experience required to carry out participant observation in a specialist newsroom. In Summer 2017, I had an official meeting with Yong-jin Kim, the Editor-in-Chief and CEO of the KCIJ, to negotiate the terms of my access. After an iterative process (with emails and text messages) over three months after the meeting, I received verbal confirmation of access from the institutional gatekeeper at the end of November 2017 followed by signed consent at the start of the fieldwork in February 2018.

After finishing newsroom ethnography at the KCIJ, I contacted Rachel Oldroyd, the Managing Editor and CEO of the BIJ at the time (by email) who had been one of the interviewees for my Master's dissertation. She invited me to meet with her at the BIJ office in early May 2018. At the meeting, I explained my research and negotiated access to the newsroom. Again, after an iterative process with emails, newsroom ethnography at the BIJ was approved verbally around the end of June 2018, followed by signed consent at the start of the fieldwork in July 2018. This account makes a complex process sound somewhat simpler than it was because I had prepared for my first meeting with the Managing Editor since 2014. I had sought to understand the mission and work of the BIJ by attending conferences and workshops of the BIJ newswriters, such as a Data Journalism conference in Dublin. Furthermore, I followed and analysed their investigations and previously published interviews of the BIJ newswriters. I believe that this preparation, along with my recent experience at the KCIJ, enhanced my knowledge of the organisation and the sector enough to persuade this gatekeeper that I was a competent participant observer.

3.5 Implementation of the Ethnography Research at Two Nonprofit Newsrooms

As described, I had worked hard to make myself capable enough to conduct newsroom ethnography of the KCIJ and the BIJ in several ways. As many previous studies have argued, the quality of data collected from an ethnographic method is primarily determined by the ability of a researcher (Hansen and Machin 2013; Robinson and Metzler 2016; Denscombe 2021). Therefore, as a novice researcher, I prepared day-to-day plans in advance as thoroughly as possible for the privileged access to the newsrooms granted to me. To increase interpersonal and recall skills, I created a specific help guideline with a reference to “a bespoke ethnography briefing pack” of the Williams’ team (2011). This pack aims to preserve consistency in collected data regardless of a researcher’s experience or familiarity with a newsroom. My pack comprises an introduction of my research such as research questions and methodology. It includes daily and weekly timetables for planned research tasks, sets of generic interview questions, and a copy of the consent form. I conducted newsroom ethnography with the pack enabling me to follow the research plan.

Additionally, I read a range of selected documents related to these newsrooms before and after the fieldwork, which helped me understand the explanatory contexts and verify the collected data. The documents included published interviews and speeches at conferences of newswriters from both nonprofits and blog posts on their websites. Prior to the fieldwork, these data primarily provided me initial thoughts to create my observation pack. After the fieldwork, I continuously checked what they said was being constantly conducted.

3.5.1 Participant Observation at the KCIJ

The newsroom ethnography period at the KCIJ was initially granted for the 19th of February 2018 to the 16th of March 2018. However, at the beginning of the 4th week, I asked for a week extension for conducting interviews, which was accepted to the 23rd of March. I stayed in the newsroom from 9am to 6pm every day, plus extra hours for relevant events in the evening, in total approximately 240 hours of observation of workflows and interaction at the newsroom. As a participant observer, my role in the newsroom was to translate some data from English to

Korean. I was allocated to a desk within a block of six desks for Investigative Unit 3 and Global Task Force (TF). This allocation allowed me to observe Investigative Unit 2, 3 and Global TF, but not to the rest of the newsroom. Opportunely, I was relocated to a desk in Long-term TF, next to Investigative Unit 1 on the first day of the 3rd week, providing me with an excellent chance to experience and observe the other part of the newsroom.

Formally, the participant observation included attending a weekly plenary meeting on Mondays and several team meetings. I endeavoured to gain access to a high-level editorial meeting exclusive for Editors and the Editor-in-Chief and finally, I was given privileged access to the meeting. In addition to such privileged access to the meetings, my participant observation encompassed: communicating with newswriters (usually me asking questions about their behaviours); observing everyday discussions and conversations between editors and journalists in relation to decision-making processes on news reporting; and numerous work-related tasks (for example, phoning with news sources). Additionally, my research included "shadowing", meaning that a researcher spends "a day with a specific journalist, from the time they came into the office generally until the time they left" (Usher 2014, p.244). Further to the description, I followed journalists all day outside the newsroom when they visited other places and filmed the scenes for reporting. I also attended many the KCIJ-led events such as Membership Premiere and the Data Journalism School after working hours (6 p.m.).

As Priest (2010, p.99) suggests, it is beneficial for the observer to stay in an observed group, a newsroom in my case, and to capture newsroom routines as naturally as possible. According to Usher (2014, p.245), ethnographers are often criticised for the passive nature of their newsroom observation in that they "never leave the newsroom to watch people report". As a participant and observer, I tried to be as active as possible in conducting a multi-dimensional observation in and outside of newsroom activities. As mentioned above, my previous experience at the KCIJ as a trainee helped me blend into the newsroom and be seen as a competent participant as well as an observer. The many of the KCIJ workers already knew me before I started the fieldwork, so it was not difficult for me to spend time with the KCIJ workers informally for coffee, lunch, and drinks after work. I believed these informal gatherings allowed me to understand them better and vice versa. In general, I had unrestricted access to the newsroom as a physical space, except for

a few confidential meetings. Not only editors and journalists, but also administrative staff collaborated with me willingly in providing information.

3.5.3 Participant Observation at the BIJ

The period of newsroom ethnography granted to me at the BIJ was two weeks from the 16th to 27th of July 2018. I conducted the fieldwork from 9 am to 6 pm every day, representing approximately 90 hours of observation of workflows and interaction at the newsroom in total. Unlike the KCIJ, there were no official events after office hours during the fieldwork. As a participant observer, my role in the newsroom was to research one of the investigative topics the BIJ was conducting. I was allocated to a desk at the end of the newsroom (close to the main door) at first. However, this was a limiting, somewhat marginal, location for me to observe the newsroom, particularly the Bureau Local sitting at the opposite end of the space. So, I requested to sit closer to the Bureau Local during the second week of observation, which was accepted, enabling a more valuable perspective in a variety of ways.

At the BIJ newsroom, my participant observation included: attending a weekly plenary meeting on Mondays along with several team meetings; communicating with newswriters (usually me asking questions about their behaviours); observing discussions, interaction and communication between editors and journalists; and numerous work-related tasks (for example, phoning with news sources, filing fact-checking evidence). Although there was no opportunity to shadow journalists outside the newsroom, many of the BIJ newswriters tended to stay in the newsroom during my field research. Whenever I asked permission to observe meetings, it was usually accepted, except for a few confidential meetings. Informally, I joined for lunch and drinks after work. The BIJ office was smaller than the KCIJ, so it seemed journalists and editors communicated in person more, whereas at the KCIJ use of the online messenger was more common. In terms of virtual spaces, the Bureau Local used several channels on Slack for their internal and external communications. There were several private and confidential channels for internal discussions among collaborative journalism participants or the Bureau Local itself, which I was not able to access. There was a more open channel for communication with members of their “Network” outside the newsroom, which I could access as a member.

3.5.3 Conducting In-depth, Semi-Structured Interviews at Nonprofits

My qualitative ethnographic methods included in-depth interviews at the KCIJ and the BIJ, in addition to participant observation. My semi-structured interviews were designed to shed light on the unobservable events and situations to obtain further explanatory contexts around those I had observed within the newsrooms. I conducted one-to-one interviews rather than group interviews. There were two reasons I chose one-to-one interviews. First and foremost, a one-to-one interview allowed me to focus on every single comment and respond appropriately and instantly with some improvised questions. Second, newswriters at the KCIJ and BIJ were busy most of the time. Therefore, group interviews would have been difficult to set up. Arranging an interview with one journalist was sometimes very challenging. Most of interviews were conducted during my newsroom ethnography periods at these newsrooms. However, some of the newswriters I sought to interview were not available during my observation period, so I had to revisit both newsrooms after the fieldwork for further interviews.

I tried to increase the validity of interview data both by conducting as many interviews as possible to obtain various aspects and interpretations and by observing newswriters continuously. To ensure the representativeness of the sample of interviewees and to acquire a wide range of opinions and perspectives, I approached indiscriminately all levels of reporters and editors. Most staff from the editorial department at both the KCIJ and the BIJ participated in interviews, whereas a few journalists were unable to do so for several reasons. At the KCIJ, administrative officers also participated in interviews. Most of the interviews were conducted face to face, but in one case, I had to undertake a telephone interview.

A prearranged set of an interview guide for my semi-structured interviews was a helpful way for me to cover all relevant issues. More importantly, it allowed me to be flexible in creating extemporaneous questions informed by the course of the discussion and/or by my ongoing experience as a participant observer. Since nonprofit investigative journalism organisations were under-researched, I could only prepare generic questions. Therefore, I tailored the interview guide to every interview based on findings during the observation. Daily data collection was meaningful enough to make customised questions to each reporter, which generated further important data to reveal unknown details about nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. Moreover, throughout the interviews, prompts and follow-up questions were used to develop further discussion in

response to interviewees' answers. Such preparation and prompts were crucially significant in helping me to draw in-depth interviews to reveal the unknown about these emerging outlets.

The interview guide consists of three main parts. First, in an attempt to make interviewees feel comfortable and to break the ice, I asked a general question: how and why they had joined the newsrooms. This question was open and exploratory and light enough to begin conversations. Although unanticipated, answers to the question at the beginning of interviews led to some significant data which allowed me to understand the effects of funding models on journalism practices compared to those of the more conventional ways of funding for legacy media organisations. I used the script accordingly to prompt all future participants to reflect on their previous experiences in this way. Then the planned interviews moved to the emergence of nonprofit newsrooms in South Korea and the UK. The main conversation discussed the pros and cons of the nonprofit funding systems related to investigative journalism production with a particular emphasis on editorial autonomy. These questions were wide open for interviewees to reflect on their routinised news production and practitioners were invited to be open about their perceptions and experiences. For the final section, interviews turned to overcoming the cons and related sustainability of nonprofit funding models. The interviews took into consideration on the different media landscapes in South Korea and the UK when questioning.

3.5.4 Collecting Data Materials

The qualitative ethnographic research at both the KCIJ and the BIJ granted me a compelling opportunity to collect valuable data about investigative journalism production at nonprofit investigative newsrooms. During the fieldwork, I primarily adopted a conventional recording method, taking notes in a notebook with my observation pack. Additionally, I sometimes wrote in a Word document if I was working with a laptop to minimise the changes in my behaviour in order to not disturb newswriters around me. Priest (2010, p.99) emphasises that it is beneficial for a researcher to take notes as soon as possible to catch "initial observation". Therefore, I tried to take notes as promptly as possible to capture events during the observation before anything else disrupted me. Nikki Usher (2014, p.245) notes that

her journalistic training was useful to record “direct quotes verbatim” on the spot. My previous journalistic experience was likewise valuable in taking notes.

Meetings and interviews were recorded simultaneously using two digital audio recorders (iPhone and iPad) for safety reasons under participants’ agreement. These recording files, daily entries and notes were backed up to both my laptop and Cardiff University Intranet OneDrive every day. Each night, I reviewed the day to prepare for the next one. While reviewing the ethnographic notebook, I was able to identify what I needed to focus more on the next day and how to approach certain newswriters according to their routines. My fieldwork produced 47 one-to-one interviews in total (32 of the KCIJ and 15 of the BIJ) and 14 meeting recordings (7 from each organisation). In addition to the human-based observation data, I also collected available information, such as newsletters and pictures of the office. Given the richness of data I had collected at two newsrooms, I was satisfied with the research materials by the time my newsroom ethnography was completed.

3.6 Data Analysis

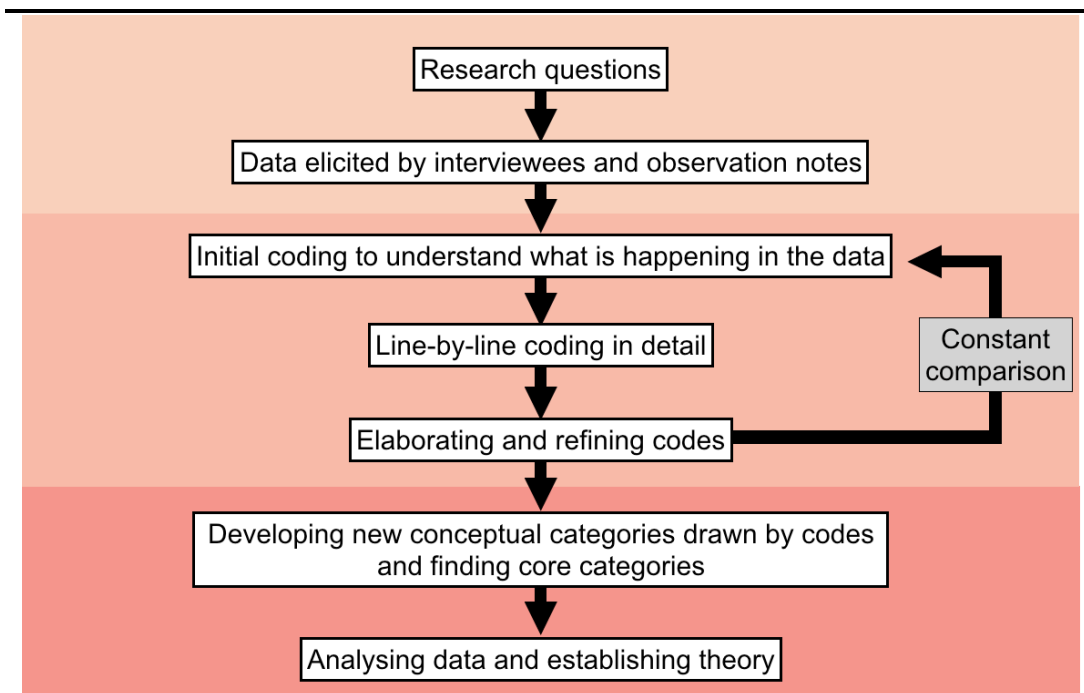
Digitisation and textualisation of all data collected from participant observation and interviews over the course of two years were processed at first. The interviews and meetings recorded on digital audio recorders were transcribed using Transcribe³⁹, an online tool developed to increase productivity in transcribing. I corrected simple grammatical errors in interview scripts, such as indefinite or definite articles, where necessary. I typed hand-written observational notes for the fieldwork in digital Word documents. I used NVivo, a data analysis software, for final data management and analysis.

As interviews with the KCIJ staff were conducted in Korean, I translated direct quotations as best as I could do to deliver their meaning as accurately as possible. While translating, I continuously checked the equivalence of original and translated text as Ercikan (1998, p.544) highlights, “Translations as potential sources of bias can affect the meaning and functions of single words, sentences, and passages, the content of the items, and the skills measured by the items”. I was aware of the issues on the accuracy of translating, so I tried to maintain the meanings of interviews as best as possible. Additionally, I tried to follow the ten guidelines

³⁹ <https://transcribe.wreally.com> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

suggested by Brislin et al. (1973 cited in Ercikan 1998, p.544), including, “(1) Use short, simple sentences of fewer than 16 words. [...] (10) Avoid sentences with two different verbs if the verbs suggest different actions”. Since I was the one who conducted the interviews and observed them in the office over the course of the period, I understood the contexts of their responses more than anyone. So, I did not hire an external translator. I translated first and proofread together with a native English speaker, word by word and sentence by sentence, in order to maintain the equivalence of the texts as much as possible.

FIGURE 3.2 The iterative process of analysis based on the grounded theory



Source: Adopted and Recreated by the Author with references to Charmaz (2014) and Corbin and Strauss (2015)

The data analysis was based on grounded theory. The theory’s methods “consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves” (Charmaz 2014, p.1). This data-driven research allows the data itself to generate its own analytic framework, unlike hypothesis-driven research. Grounded theory was chosen mainly because the study area of nonprofits was emerging and under-explored. Therefore, I believed that an inductive way of developing theories and finding insights into the emergence,

practices and sustainability of such nonprofit investigative newsrooms was more appropriate than a deductive way of verifying pre-set hypotheses. Despite criticism of qualitative analysis for credibility and verification in comparison to quantitative methods, the systematic but flexible codified procedure of grounded theory allows researchers to increase the accuracy and credibility of analysis (Glaser and Strass 1973). Additionally, it is recommended that a qualitative researcher aim for “sensitivity” instead of “objectivity” (Corbin and Strauss 2015, p.77), which means “having insight as well as being tuned in to and being able to pick up on relevant issues, events, and happenings during collection and analysis of the data” (ibid, p.78).

As shown in Figure 3.2, the grounded theory approach was an iterative process. First, to familiarise myself with the data, I transcribed the audio recordings and read the transcribed documents and observation notes several times. The second stages of analysis, I conducted initial open coding to understand and analyse the general stories without preconception, which was followed by meticulous line-by-line coding using a software programme, NVivo. These processes are iterative, where a researcher examines “data by constant comparison, initially of data with data, progressing to comparisons between their interpretations translated into codes and categories and more data” (Mills et al. 2006, p.27). I compared preliminarily codified data with other data continuously to elaborate and refine coding deliberately. At the third stage, conceptual categories were drawn from the codes, and the determined categories were segmented to answer my research questions. Then, the leading theory and sub-theories were established based on their significance to the research questions. I reviewed and re-evaluated emerged themes identified once again before moving onto writing. The repeated analysis of integration is presented in the findings and discussion chapters (see chapter 4 and 5).

3.7 Research Ethics

Since qualitative ethnographic research such as participant observation and interviews inevitably involves interaction with human research participants, researchers should pay attention to ethical issues when planning a research project (Hansen and Machin 2013; Silverman 2013; Denscombe 2021). Research ethics aims to protect all parties involved in the research: “researchers, subjects and institutions in field sites” (Iphofen 2013, p.2). Obtaining consent to access before

undertaking a study is significant for researchers. Making contact with “gatekeepers” is crucial for a researcher to collect data as their authorisation profoundly influences the range of research data (Denscombe 2021, p.123). Moreover, Iphofen (2013, p.28) argues that “Ensuring participants have, and perceive themselves to have, adequate power to determine their role in the research is seen as ethically necessary”, which includes “children, old people, marginalized groups, or those with learning difficulties – all who may perceive themselves as possessing less power in ordinary relationships anyway”. All of workers at the KCIJ and the BIJ were capable of understanding the research and were aware of me as a researcher in their newsrooms.

Prior to the fieldwork, I had submitted an ethical approval application to the Cardiff University School of Journalism, Media and Culture’s ethics committee in order to ensure that the terms and conditions were applied appropriately. I complied with all the guidelines listed on the Cardiff University ethical approval application and obtained approval to proceed with the fieldwork at the newsrooms in South Korea and the UK. The consent forms for my research are four types. Two are for the gatekeeper to grant access to the newsroom, and the others are for interviewing individual newswriters in Korean and English versions. As for my ethical criteria, obtaining informed consent includes research details (e.g. purposes, methods, publication), voluntary participation, research value outweighing harm for both myself and the participants involved, confidentiality, independence of the research and so on (Iphofen 2013; Denscombe 2021). Written informed consent was obtained by the gatekeepers (Yong-jin Kim, the Editor-in-Chief and CEO⁴⁰ of the KCIJ and Rachel Oldroyd, the Managing Editor and CEO⁴¹ of the BIJ) and each participant during the fieldwork.

First, gaining informed consent from participants involved a detailed explanation about the research to help them fully understand. Additionally, to obtain access to the newsrooms, my research proposal and references from two supervisors explaining newsroom ethnography were submitted to the gatekeepers at both organisations. Second, informed consent implies that the participation of newswriters at the KCIJ and the BIJ “must always be voluntary” (Denscombe 2021, p.28). I ensured my participants could withdraw their participation in this

⁴⁰ Although the Managing Editor and CEO is the official title, “the Managing Editor” of the BIJ will be used for this title throughout the rest of this thesis for practical reasons.

⁴¹ Although the Editor-in-Chief and CEO is the official title, “the Editor-in-Chief” of the KCIJ will be used for this title throughout the rest of this thesis for practical reasons.

research at any time if anything caused concerns or discomfort from the research. Some interviewees expressed a request to be withdrawn from the research after the fieldwork, which I accepted as promised in the consent. Third, the critical principle for researchers to be concerned about with ethics issues is “the attempt to balance the risk of harm against the potential for benefits” (Iphofen 2013, p.24). This research is expected to add another layer of knowledge in journalism studies, specifically the sub-section of the field devoted to understanding investigative journalism and nonprofit funding. I explained why I believed that the potential value of my research could outweigh potential harms to the participants in the consent.

In terms of confidentiality, before designing consent forms I communicated with a KCIJ journalist to understand their concerns about having me in the newsroom. One thing the journalist worried about was the confidentiality of their investigative journalism. I promised the newsrooms that I would keep the newsroom confidential and not leak any information about any current and future investigations. So, I also assured them that, if they preferred, I would not attend any meetings about investigations. When I attended one of the high-level editorial meetings at the KCIJ, after a general discussion on news stories, the Editor-in-Chief asked me to leave the meeting prior to more confidential agendas being discussed, which I did in line with my previous commitment.

As researchers (Iphofen 2013; Denscombe 2021) in this field emphasise, I did my best to maintain anonymity and confidentiality since such precautions could help circumvent any possible risks around the security of confidential information as well as protect participants who wanted to seal off the record. In order to protect participants, the option of anonymity (in a whole interview or in part) was offered (Iphofen 2013; Silverman 2013; Denscombe 2021). Researchers must be mindful in “protecting the privacy of research subjects and keeping any information they provide as confidential” (Iphofen 2013, p.42). Some participants might want to be anonymous, but still open to sharing information and the decision on confidentiality needs to be made at the beginning of the research (ibid), so I included this as a consideration in the consent form.

I provided four options for participants to choose from in terms of anonymity: named in the thesis; named in the thesis with a review of quotations before publishing; anonymised in the thesis; anonymised in the thesis with a review of quotations before publishing. Before finalising this thesis, I shared the quotations with the participants for their review and obtained permission for their use. This was to

enable the newswriters to check the factual accuracy of their quotations and descriptions to prevent any potential risk caused by the data being made public. Reassuring interviewees is imperative for researchers, so accuracy- and fact-checking with the community before publishing is generally applied in observational research. I accepted all suggestions and feedback from the participants to make amendments to preserve their rights of protection under research ethics.

Notwithstanding, there are a few limits to keeping anonymity under certain circumstances for my research. First, it is impossible to conceal that interviewees are from either the KCIJ or the BIJ, where my newsroom ethnography took place. Second, some of the interview questions were related to their investigations, discussion of which may also inadvertently reveal the identity of an interviewee. In order to address this issue upon request to preserve anonymity and confidentiality I made comments anonymously and deleted any contextual clues that might reveal identities that were deemed sensitive. I explained the aforementioned limitations to interviewees at both media organisations before gaining informed consent. In the thesis, pseudonyms were generally used to preserve the anonymity of individual participants and separate their identities from the information provided, which were written such as KCIJ 1, KCIJ 2 and BIJ 1, BIJ 2. For further anonymity, a number with BIJ “reporter” was used in addition to a number with BIJ only. So, BIJ 1 and BIJ reporter 1 indicate different people. There were exceptional cases where the job titles, such as the KCIJ Editor-in-Chief, BIJ Managing Editor, Bureau Local Director, were used when the interview materials inevitably specified the interviewees. When I asked interviewees for reviewing their quotations, I clearly explained that some of interview materials would be published with their job titles, which they reviewed and accepted. I anonymised any names of other companies, media organisations, or any events that might become a clue to identify interviewees. Furthermore, I put in place a process to store my data securely. The raw data, including interview recording files, observation notes and pictures of newsrooms, were stored in secured folders (opened with passwords) in the researcher’s laptop (opened with different passwords from the folders) and Cardiff University’s intranet (accessed with passwords) for backup.

Last, it is vital to declare details of potential publication of the research as well as information about funding sources to research participants (Iphofen 2013). I explained to them that the research could be published in academic journals and books in addition to the PhD thesis before obtaining the consent. Moreover, I

informed participants that the research was funded solely from my own funds and there was no hidden connection between this thesis and any third parties.

3.8 Conclusion

The main goal of this chapter is to present the rationale behind the methods selected for answering the thesis' research questions. Empirical research at newsrooms was chosen to explore the relation between nonprofit funding models and journalistic practices under media ecology after the financial crisis in the media industry. I selected two sample newsrooms from South Korea and the UK that differed on their nonprofit models to obtain more exploratory insights into nonprofit organisations. The KCIJ in South Korea and the BIJ in the UK were purposely selected after considering the relative scarcity of relevant research outside the USA. The qualitative ethnographic method including participant observation and in-depth interviews was specially designed for examining the journalistic practices and challenges in newsrooms supported by nonprofit funding models. Participant observation allowed me to be profoundly more involved in journalists' daily routines and news production. In-depth interviews were adopted to obtain internal opinions and thoughts that could not be observed by an external researcher. The semi-structured interview was adopted due to its potential for exploring internal voices as well as its efficiency in providing me with the flexibility to make adjustments as necessary while interviewing. The two methods were interrelated well, so I was able to compare and verify data gathered from each method. I conducted newsroom ethnography at the KCIJ for five weeks and at the BIJ for two weeks. The fieldwork generated 330 hours of participant observation including 14 editorial meeting recordings with several field notebooks and 47 in-depth interviews. All of the data were digitised and imported to NVivo for qualitative analysis guided by grounded theory. The findings from research materials will be presented in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER 4

The Insulation of Newsroom Autonomy and Investigative Journalism Practices Under Nonprofit Funding Models

4.1 Introduction

The issue of newsroom autonomy has been widely debated in media studies (see section 2.5). State-funded newsrooms have sometimes experienced limitations on editorial freedom in relation to influence from governmental agencies in ways which have harmed the independence of investigative journalism (Kim and Han 2014; Shin 2016; Freedman 2019), as have commercial media organisations in the form of the power of advertisers over news content (McNair 2009; Schiffrin 2017; Birnbauer 2019). Such influence has worsened due to continued and intensifying financial difficulties (McChesney and Nichols 2010) in relation to passive journalism such as PR-isation (Moloney and McGrath 2020) and Churnalism (Davies 2009). As Carson (2020) suggests, the crisis of investigative journalism in particular occurred in the first decade of the 21st century and the *Korea Center for Investigative Journalism* (KCIJ) in South Korea and the *Bureau of Investigative Journalism* (BIJ) in the United Kingdom were established around this period.

This chapter examines research question 1, “What are the perceived driving forces behind the establishment of the KCIJ and the BIJ with nonprofit funding models?” and a part of the second question, “What are the affordances and constraints of nonprofit funding systems that facilitate and/or challenge the newsrooms to conduct investigative journalism?”, with consideration of aspects differentiating these newsrooms from organisations with other business models (e.g. those which are publicly funded or commercially funded). With an emphasis on the newsroom autonomy, I evaluate the practitioners’ perceptions of the ways in which their funding models affect their everyday journalistic practices and organisational approaches to producing investigative journalism. This chapter first explores the evolution of nonprofit funding models and establishment of the KCIJ and the BIJ in-depth. Then, I analyse the advantages of nonprofit funding systems for

newswriters in operating investigative journalism organisations. Next, I discuss the ways in which these identified advantages affect news production practically in terms of news content and journalism practices. Last, I evaluate the ways in which nonprofits specifically recognise the value of collaboration and undertake it in delivering accountability journalism in ever-changing media ecology as they put their missions into journalistic practice.

4.2 An Introduction to Nonprofit Investigative Journalism Organisations in South Korea and the UK

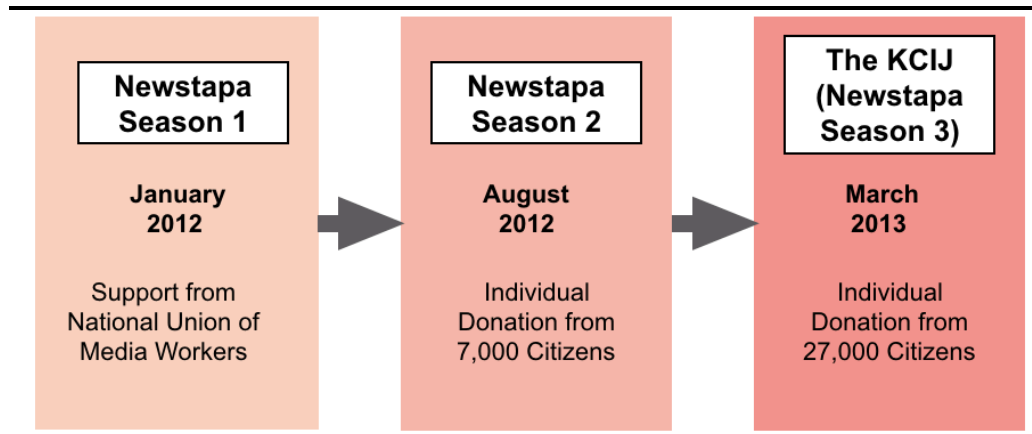
I have briefly introduced my study newsrooms, the KCIJ and the BIJ in the methodology chapter (see section 3.2). Here I analyse the background of the establishment of two investigative journalism organisations and funding models. As discussed in the literature review (see section 2.2), Carson (2020, p.89) proposes that the decline in public trust in media, to some extent, boosts the increase of public's support in accountability journalism: "Sales of quality newspapers and donations to investigative outlets in the United States hit new high after the 2014 presidential election". The researcher used an example of public's increased support in *ProPublica*, considered to be the foremost nonprofit investigative journalism organisation in the USA. From collected information and multiple information, I found that both the KCIJ and the BIJ were also founded to be a nonprofit independent news organisation with public supports. With this, this section descriptively examines their development of funding models, seeking to answer the research question 1. Specifically, it focuses on the perceptions of staff at the KCIJ and the BIJ on driving forces in South Korean and British societies behind the establishment of their newsrooms with reference to investigative journalism.

4.2.1 The Korea Center for Investigative Journalism in South Korea

The KCIJ in Seoul, South Korea, was founded in 2013 with a membership funding model, evolved from a journalistic project called "Newstapa" launched in 2012 by former investigative reporters from legacy media organisations. It is a national news outlet providing investigative journalism in various areas, the most prominent of which is its collaboration with the *International Consortium of Investigative Journalism* (ICIJ) as the only South Korean partner. The following session explains

in more detail how the membership model of the KCIJ was developed, which is visualised in Figure 4.1.

FIGURE 4.1 The evolution of the KCIJ from a journalistic project called “Newstapa” with the development of a membership funding system



Source: Author collected through interviews

Newstapa Season 1

On January 2012, a journalistic project called “뉴스타파” (Newstapa) which would ultimately give rise to the KCIJ began to produce public interest journalism for the public with support from the National Union of Media Workers. “뉴스” (News) means the same in Korean and English and “타파” (tapa) means “to tear down” in Korean. From its inception and naming, then, the KCIJ sought to be a critical journalistic institution, pointed in its take on the stories of the day and the industry within which it operated. Opposition to inappropriate external interference and the poor journalism which resulted from it drove the South Korean newswriters who were behind the launch. The project was initiated by ex-employees of mainstream media outlets such as KBS, MBC and YTN⁴². Launched by approximately eight journalists and volunteer university students, Newstapa produced its stories in a video format using two small video cameras and a laptop (Foundation member). It aired reporting on YouTube which offered some savings for their production budgets. This can be considered as an indicator of how new technologies such as the Internet have

⁴² YTN is a 24-hour news channel in South Korea. It is seemingly a commercial broadcaster, but a majority of stocks are owned by Government related organisations.

contributed to the initiating and sustaining such an investigative journalism project with a small budget. Although the rise of the Internet and social media has affected generalist news outlets' revenues detrimentally (see section 2.5 and 2.6), ironically, they have also contributed to the revival of in-depth investigative reporting.

The Newstapa project gained a public following thanks to its hard-hitting news stories about the malpractice and wrongdoing of the powerful political and commercial entities in South Korea. The KCIJ Editor-in-Chief explained the media environment of the time:

The political situation significantly affected the media industry. The media environment was closely interrelated with the politics. As mainstream newsrooms were unable to inform the public, there arose a need for an independent news media outlet to provide information which the public had to know concerning how the government and society operate. (KCIJ Editor-in-Chief)

The KCIJ Editor-in-Chief discusses how other South Korean mainstream media were decreasingly paying attention to publishing important news to inform citizens about the Government and society. Practitioners including him, who observed the phenomena of important news being under-reported, felt a desperate need to report such news at an independent newsroom (ibid).

Another intriguing aspect of the project is the history and development of its member-based donation system. The process was not a top-down affair (wherein the newsroom set up the system, then started soliciting donations), but a bottom-up, truly community-centred response to supporting this kind of newswork. Citizens who appreciated Newstapa's reporting then wanted to help sustain it, so they started contacting the team to ask how to donate and support the project (Foundation Member). In fact, public involvement in the news media is nothing new in South Korea. The country is often "described as 'the most wired country in the world', and as such one of the world's leading 'webocracies'" (Allan 2006, p.129). Such connectivity has long encouraged citizens to engage more with online spaces, including different kinds of newsrooms. One of the earliest citizen journalism newsrooms, *OhmyNews*, was established in February 2000 with "its commitment to investigative reporting, which partly explains its appeal to South Koreans, who see on its pages an array of stories otherwise being ignored or down-played by the mainstream media" (ibid, p.132). The implication of *OhmyNews* can be "the possibility of a citizen-led communication network developing into an alternative journalistic model" (Chang 2009, p.147). With an aid of advanced communication

technologies, citizens have actively participated in developing an alternative journalism. *OhmyNews* focused more on a direct citizen participation into journalistic practices, but the Korean public supporting Newstapa financially could be seen, in this context, as another way of citizen participation in journalism. In fact, the culture of donating to newsrooms (in other words, paying for news) was not widely cultivated in South Korea, unlike donating to aid or cultural charities (KCIJ Editor-in-Chief). Therefore, it is worth noting that Newstapa's donation system should be considered successful in breaking new ground, inspiring citizens and raising public awareness of the importance of journalism and the need to pay for it.

Newstapa Season 2

With the successful launch of the membership donation system, Newstapa season 2 began in August 2012. Foundation member says, "there was a sharp increase in support after the Presidential election in December 2012". After the Conservative Party candidate was elected, it is argued that some of the public members considered that the Democratic Party candidate lost "because of some generalist cable TV networks" (Foundation member). The reporter continues that it seemed there was an increasing discourse about a citizen-owned newsroom (ibid). Support to the Newstapa project sharply increased that the total number of members became approximately 27,000⁴³, which motivated the official establishment of the KCIJ (ibid).

The Korean Center for Investigative Journalism: Newstapa Season 3

Given the overwhelming amount of public financial and journalistic support, the Newstapa project team established a news outlet called the KCIJ in February 2013 (Foundation Member). Newstapa Season 3 began in March 2013⁴⁴. The KCIJ recruited new staff, including veteran investigative journalists and data journalists. As discussed, the KCIJ aimed to be a nonprofit, non-partisan and independent news organisation, according to its mission statement. The Editor-in-Chief highlights

⁴³ This data is based on rough numbers given by the newsworker in the verbal interview, not based on exact written statistical data. Therefore, there might be slight differences between actual numbers and the given numbers.

⁴⁴ <https://kcij.org/history>

that these features enable the newsroom to differentiate itself from other media organisations and to focus on investigative journalism in the public interest (KCIJ Editor-in-Chief). How this mission statement is put into journalistic practice will be discussed throughout this thesis (see chapter 4 and 5).

TABLE 4.1 Key topics covered by each of the KCIJ editorial Unit as of the fieldwork in 2018

Unit	Topics	Staff
Investigative Unit 1	Scrutinising the power of the legislature, executive, and judiciary	7
Investigative Unit 2	Economy and Finance, Corporate Watch	5
Investigative Unit 3	Public Safety, Public Health, Welfare, Consumer issues	4
Long-term Task Force	Not specified	3
Global Task Force	International Collaborations	3
Data Journalism Unit	Not specified	3

Source: Author collected

Table 4.1 shows the primary topics covered by each of the KCIJ Units during my newsroom ethnography⁴⁵. Given that membership donations are for core funding, there are no predetermined topic areas for investigations; these are set internally by the KCIJ alone. The Long-term Task Force (TF), Global TF, and Data Journalism Unit report any topics of investigations. Three members of Long-term TF are generally veteran experienced investigative journalists conducting work requiring even longer time than other investigations. The total number of staff at the time of fieldwork was 48. The KCIJ obtained a nonprofit charity status in South Korea in 2018, so donation members became eligible for exemption on their donations through a year-end tax settlement⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ It should be noted that the structure and members of teams change regularly, and therefore, this structure only represents at the time of my field research in 2018.

⁴⁶ <https://kcij.org/notice/u/N1OXL> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

4.2.2 The Bureau of Investigative Journalism in the UK

The BIJ was founded in London, the UK, in 2010 by the David and Elaine Potter Foundation. It focuses on local, national and global issues in the public interest. News distribution is done by both its website and publishing partner organisations (from magazines to mainstream media). Leigh (2019, p.200) describes the BIJ's basic model as "to give away its work, partnering with mainstream outlets who provide publicity and credibility". This section explains in more detail how the nonprofit model was developed.

The BIJ is a philanthropically funded investigative journalism organisation aiming to be an independent news organisation, bringing investigative journalism back and holding power to account in British society. Initial funding was donated by the David and Elaine Potter Foundation, which describes itself as "a charitable grant giving foundation established in 1999 to encourage a stronger and fairer society" (David and Elaine Potter Foundation, n.d). In the same vein, in a statement from the funder on the BIJ website, Elaine Potter (n.d) mentions:

When we launched the Bureau I wrote: "Democracy itself is imperilled in the absence of honest information and a robust watchdog to hold government and the powerful to account. Without that we all become susceptible to the manipulation and deceptions orchestrated by governments, industry or even the media."

The foundation funds the BIJ to support a role of the watchdog on society to hold the powerful to account in British society for the health of democracy so the BIJ can be a news outlet that would fulfil its Fourth Estate duties (ibid). Understanding the backgrounds of these founders can shed light on why the foundation launched the BIJ as an investigative journalism organisation, capable of achieving press accountability. Elaine Potter was formerly an investigative journalist at the Insight Team at The *Sunday Times*, participating in the production of much hard-hitting reporting including the high profit decade-long investigations in the UK.

As of Summer 2018, the BIJ's funding system consisted of core funding and project-based funding. According to Leigh (2019, p.200), the BIJ's revenue "rose from £490,000 in 2014 to over £1 million in 2017". The BIJ Managing Editor mentions that previously sales of films and documentaries to the mainstream media was one of the funding streams, but that it ceased due to it being unprofitable. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a complete list of the BIJ's funding can be found on the BIJ's website.

The BIJ was running four projects as of my observation in 2018 (Table 4.2). One journalist describes how the project-based funding application process works:

We outline what the project would look like; who would work on it; what the wages would be; and the outputs. And not in terms of what we will write as such, but what areas we will cover as part of the project and how many stories we will produce. For example, in the proposal to the donor, you have normally committed to publishing a certain number of articles, and you should meet that goal. We have to write the donor some kind of closing report at the end of the project, alongside occasional reports on the project's progress. (BIJ 12)

When applying for foundation grants, only newswriters involved in a project work on the grant application form, excluding any third party. Although funds are granted to a particular area, detailed topics within the area are decided by journalists themselves, which serves to protect newsroom's editorial autonomy.

TABLE 4.2 Ongoing projects at the BIJ as of Summer 2018

Project	Staff
Shadow War (an expansion of the BIJ's long-term investigation, "Naming the Dead")	3
Global Superbugs	2
Food and Farming	2
Bureau Local	7

Source: Author collected through interviews

The BIJ mission statement demonstrates that the focus of the BIJ is "in-depth, rigorous investigations that can make a real difference at a global, national or local level" (The BIJ, n.d.). How this mission statement is put into journalistic practice will be discussed throughout chapter 4 and 5. The number of staff at the BIJ has increased gradually, 19 as of July 2018 (at the time of my field research), and 39 as of March 2022⁴⁷, according to its website. Investigative stories from the BIJ are available online free of charge on its website and co-publishing partners' platforms. The Trust for the Bureau of Investigative Journalism obtained charitable status during my newsroom ethnography research. When announcing this everyone was very excited, which was interesting to observe, and I wondered why. The reason for

⁴⁷ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/about-us/our-people> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

such enthusiasm turned out to be principally economic. “It’s much easier to persuade someone to give you money or encourage them to give you money if you’ve got charitable status”, the BIJ Managing Editor explains.

4.3 Insulating Newsroom Autonomy at Nonprofit Organisations

As revealed in section 4.2, my discussion of participants’ accounts of the KCIJ and the BIJ suggests that the driving forces behind their establishment were the perceived needs for in-depth, original investigative journalism in their society. Seeking ways to support the kind of journalism by both the public and journalism sector resulted in nonprofit investigative journalism organisations in South Korea and the UK. The rest of this chapter aims to explore answers to part of my research question 2, “What are the affordances and constraints of nonprofit funding systems that allow and/or hinder the newsrooms to conduct investigative journalism?”. This section first analyses in what ways these organisations enable newswriters to publish accountability journalism with regard to their funding models. One of the most important and significant benefits of working in a nonprofit newsroom, according to the newswriters at the KCIJ and the BIJ, is that this financial model offers a newsroom a high degree of independent editorial autonomy. When asked about the advantages of their nonprofit models, it is highlighted from both media organisations that, owing to their nonprofit funding systems, their newsrooms can be independent of external political and economic forces (including from funders, something which I explore further in-depth later in this thesis). It is worth noting that this over-riding advantage of their funding models is very widely agreed among the staff.

The KCIJ newswriters argue that newsroom autonomy is insulated from external pressures and that this is enabled by its nonprofit funding model (KCIJ Editor-in-Chief; KCIJ 2; KCIJ 7; KCIJ 10; KCIJ 23; KCIJ 27). The KCIJ Editor-in-Chief explains:

Declaring ourselves as a nonprofit and nonpartisan newsroom means that we set ourselves outside of old conventions in the South Korean press. Being nonprofit and nonpartisan means that we have a financial model which is completely different from other outlets and are independent from partisanship. As a result, we seek to be independent from political and economic powers.

Another told me that “the advantage of our funding model is that this seems to be the most suitable funding system for editorial independence among existing funding systems of news media at the moment” (KCIJ 2). In line with insights and findings discussed in the literature review (see section 2.5), participants suggest that producing independent investigative journalism in some traditional news outlets seems somewhat limited in South Korea. Such opinions from KCIJ staff are important for understanding the advantages of the nonprofit funding model to conduct in-depth original reporting.

The argument evidenced by interviews, that namely their nonprofit funding model offers newsroom independence, is one of the most important findings for this thesis. As Shoemaker and Reese (2014) highlight, the organisational level influences the inner circle – the routines – level. If a media organisation endeavours to shield its newsroom autonomy from external forces, the newsroom will probably develop and establish bespoke routines and practices for news production. If not, the news production process would be open to being interfered by non-editorial influences. For this reason, the perceived newsroom autonomy is the fundamental premise underpinning journalistic practices to be determined by newswriters themselves at the KCIJ. Therefore, I paid significant attention to their attitudes and behaviours throughout my newsroom ethnography at the KCIJ to test and verify such arguments. Newsroom autonomy was my particular focus whenever I observed conversations between newswriters and joined meetings including high-level editorial ones with the Editor-in-Chief and all Editors. At all of the meetings, when discussing news items and investigations, their discussions focused primarily on how to improve their reporting with fact-checked evidence. In ordinary days, there was no discussion of concerns around external political and economic interests. Editorial independence insulated in this way relates closely to the manner in which the KCIJ sets its goals and shapes the journalistic practices of the newswriters, which will be discussed throughout this chapter. Additionally, drawing on participants experiences working elsewhere, the differences in news production between the KCIJ and other legacy media will be analysed in-depth. Certainly, there was one exceptional case when non-editorial considerations were discussed at meetings, but this was not related to current or future investigations. Instead it related to an investigation published in the past, which I will elaborate on further in the next chapter (see chapter 5).

Similarly, the most significant advantage of nonprofits mentioned by the BIJ newswriters also relates to safeguarding newsroom autonomy. It is highlighted that their editorial autonomy is highly secured from external influences (BIJ Managing Editor; BIJ Investigations Editor; Bureau Local Director; BIJ 4; BIJ 9). One of the BIJ staff says, “100 percent. I mean I guess you have to. [...] we always make sure that we have 100 percent autonomy editorially” (BIJ 4). Another BIJ journalist argues, “I think it’s pretty impartial. I can’t think of any influence. [...] there’s no-one else dictating on our stories” (BIJ 9). It is argued that the newsroom has never experienced any interference from outside forces such as funders (BIJ Investigations Editor). Similar to the finding from the KCIJ, the argument that newswriters at the BIJ have a very high level of newsroom autonomy is one of the most important findings from interview materials in relation to journalistic practices. Hence, I purposely sought to observe this element from daily conversations and discussions during editorial meetings of each project to test and verify such arguments. At meetings, there was no one, regardless of whether they were journalists or editors, talking about non-editorial considerations such as political or economic interests while pitching news items or presenting the progress of current investigations. Being an independent newsroom is a primary aim of the BIJ with support of philanthropic funding. BIJ newswriters say that this editorial autonomy allows them to work based upon their own professional judgements, which I will examine further later in this chapter.

Additionally, efforts to safeguard editorial independence are also raised. For example, one reporter at the BIJ told me, “we are very clear whenever we approach funders, we’re discussing with funders. We insist on maintaining complete editorial independence over everything we do. So that’s very much like built into any agreement that we make” (BIJ 4). To avoid funders’ potential intervention in newsroom autonomy, this newsroom aims to directly address and clarify this matter from an early stage when communicating with funders, according to staff (ibid). Two important aspects can be found from the quotes above: assurances around newsroom autonomy and concrete steps taken to keep their newsroom autonomous. Editorial independence is a fundamental standard that the media organisation has to continuously strive to preserve. As previous research about foundation-funded media outlets explores (Townend 2016; Birnbauer 2019), funder influences on news content could be a concern for nonprofit organisations, which will be explored in the next chapter.

Throughout journalism history, we have observed a failure in adequately protecting investigative journalism under conventional financial models in the literature review (see section Part II). Carson's chaos and control paradigm (2020) is particularly useful to consider the importance of editorial independence at media organisations. With reference to it, I analyse in what ways newsroom autonomy is insulated at nonprofit newsrooms. It is no surprise to see that securing editorial independence at these nonprofits should be seen as so crucially vital. Although newswriters at both the KCIJ and the BIJ argue that they have a very high level of autonomy, as with other funding models for news outlets, my research analyses that newsrooms funded by nonprofit ways also show, to some extent, potential limitations in terms of editorial independence, thoroughly discussed in chapter 5. Additionally, to further understand and test arguments about this perceived newsroom autonomy at nonprofit newsrooms, we need to discuss relevant journalistic practices at the KCIJ and the BIJ in greater depth. Journalistic practices can only be best explained with reference to the editorial autonomy owing to their intertwined relationship. With this regard, this thesis considers the analysis on newsroom autonomy at the KCIJ and the BIJ imperative.

4.4 Nonprofit Organisational Aims and Their Impact on Investigative Journalism Practices

This section is to analyse in what ways these nonprofit investigative journalism organisations embed their organisational aims and missions (that is, what they say they seek in terms of journalistic values and norms) into their journalistic practices (what they do) with the perceived newsroom autonomy. Shoemaker and Reese (2014, p.157) illustrate, "When organizational structures kept the news department autonomous and buffered from influences by the business side of the company, such effects were less likely". Their hierarchy of influences model explains that aims of organisations are closely related to how the organisations establish their own criteria on newsworthiness and routinisation to publish news stories based on them (ibid). Although their analysis deals with more conventionally funded media organisations, this perspective provides useful insights into concerns around journalistic practices that I can consider when exploring nonprofit funding models and their impact on journalistic practices. Organisational influences can be described as the "internal apparatus that governs decision-making process and

management routines of newsrooms and media organizations” (Hanitzsch et al. 2010, p.15). The overriding concern on news production at some legacy media is that organisational influences guide a newsroom to consider more on noneditorial figures, which accordingly brings about the perception on the decreases in the amounts and quality of investigative journalism (see section 2.6). Under the such media ecology, the KCIJ and the BIJ were established with a specific mission to produce investigative journalism as independent newsrooms. It is argued that investigative journalism in both countries has become decreasingly supported and produced by many legacy media, not because of the value of such journalism but because of various external criteria such as political pressure or concerns around securing and sustaining advertising revenues (see section 2.5), which was also corroborated by my findings (see section 4.2). Found in the last section, statements of a high level of newsroom autonomy by newsmen at the KCIJ and the BIJ suggest that the organisations have the independence to pursue their own journalistic purposes. With that context in mind, I analyse here in what ways relative editorial independence influences decision-making processes around judgements of newsworthiness at nonprofit newsrooms.

4.4.1 Journalism that Only the KCIJ Can Do: Neither Partisan Nor Commercial

It is revealed that KCIJ staff argue that their newsroom should pursue “investigative journalism which only the KCIJ can do” founded in their independence as a nonpartisan and non-commercial newsroom (KCIJ Editor-in-Chief; Investigative Unit 2 Editor; Long-term Task Force Editor 1; KCIJ 18; KCIJ 20; KCIJ 23; KCIJ 26; KCIJ 32). Of importance here is that this does not just mean finding “exclusive” news stories for the sake of breaking news faster than any other media. They conduct investigations on issues that other news outlets are unwilling to cover due to the more limited newsroom autonomy.

In order to use their editorial autonomy as effectively as possible, the KCIJ newsroom explicitly seeks to work on under-explored issues in South Korea:

I think the KCIJ should try under-reported issues that should be revealed that other newsrooms overlook, or don't pay close enough attention to. We don't need to work on items that everyone is covering. [The KCIJ should focus on] certain areas that conventional media organisations don't reach, or that they disregard, or that other newsrooms can't cover, due to their

structural limitations. I think the KCIJ should scout out these areas to investigate. (Long-term Task Force Editor 1)

According to the Editor, finding under-reported but critical news items is one way of producing exclusive investigative journalism. The Editor highlights that there will be particular topics that other newsrooms avoid reporting because of limits from their operational structures. As discussed in the literature review, it has been found that some mainstream media outlets in South Korea shows limited autonomy in publishing investigations that may conflict with elite allies' political stances or discomfit advertisers (see section 2.5).

One of these under-reported areas includes topics related to political bodies. More limited newsroom autonomy in issue selecting and judging newsworthiness has been identified in South Korean public service media (Kim and Han 2014). As noted in the literature review, this is one of the key elements affecting South Korea's fluctuating scores in the index of the Press Freedom (see section 2.5.1). One of the KCIJ staff had faced such pressure on editorial decision-making processes at his previous workplace:

I was investigating the National Honour Medal in order to produce a TV documentary series for the 70th anniversary of Independence Day. The documentary series was supposed to be two episodes. One was about the fabrication of North Korean spies, and the other was about pro-Japan collaborators. However, KBS decided not to air the latter. [...] While I was agonising about the series, the KCIJ offered me a job. I took time considering their proposal and decided to join the KCIJ. In the end, only the spies and National Honour Medal episode was broadcast. I left KBS without the other episode being published. (Investigative Unit 1 Editor)

The Investigative Unit 1 Editor told me that self-censorship in a media organisation also influenced the publication of material, with the decision-makers taking noneditorial, politically related in this occasion, considerations more seriously than journalistic norms and practices. The Editor argues that part of his investigative journalism TV programme series was censored. He initiated this investigation at his previous workplace but could only complete it at the KCIJ. After joining the KCIJ, the Editor published a series of the investigations (with additional episodes) titled, "The National Honour Medal and Power"⁴⁸. This was one of the many examples that newswriters provide to show their independence of the KCIJ from political powers. Some KCIJ staff argue that the newsroom's main advantage is an ability to report government-related topics without restriction (KCIJ Editor-in-Chief; Investigative

⁴⁸ <https://newstapa.org/medal2016-prologue> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

Unit 1 Editor; KCIJ 27). It is also emphasised that they are one of the few newsrooms to have the freedom to investigate a wide range of political and governmental issues.

Another kind of under-exposed reporting can be found in the commercial arena. Advertisers' influence on news content at advertising-dependent media organisations has been of concern in journalism studies (McNair 2009; Starkman 2014; Cagé 2016; Birnbauer 2019). Some commercial newsrooms are encouraged to produce favourable reporting to advertisers and discouraged from producing critical news that might offend them (see section 2.5.2.2). A KCIJ newsworker shared an experience from their previous workplace of an overt intervention of private business into a media outlet:

I wrote a story related to company X⁴⁹. It wasn't a story revealing corruption within the company. It was just part of a bigger story. [...] However, company X started ringing me before the story was published. I did not answer their calls. The company also rang my colleague, who too chose not to answer either. People from the company then came to my newsroom in person. [...] The following day, the news story was published in a changed way. I assumed it happened pretty often to newsworkers there. I am so glad, now I've escaped from such an institution, because I've joined here. (KCIJ 9)

The journalist describes the attempt and result of direct external commercial influence on news content involving phone calls and visiting newsrooms around news reporting. It is important to note that the company eventually achieved what it wanted. Such examples show how external economic forces have apparently breached the firewall between the editorial and financial departments at some newsrooms, but also how this nonprofit newsroom has become a place where journalists can be free from such pressures. The last sentence from the interview above appears to summarise the reporter's satisfaction with the current workplace.

This journalist's experience at a commercial media organisation contradicts strongly with what KCIJ newsworkers say they experience at this nonprofit newsroom. KCIJ staff insist that investigations about private companies are conducted without concern over financial implications, and they insist that this is apparently because the KCIJ is funded by the public and not bound to any commercial funding such as advertising revenues (KCIJ Editor-in-Chief; KCIJ 29; KCIJ 31). A project called "My

⁴⁹ The company name is anonymised by the author.

Car's Faulty"⁵⁰ was suggested as one that possibly only the KCIJ can do (KCIJ 31). The project's purpose was to develop a portal website where the public could search a wide range of car safety information such as government-ordered recalls and free-of-charge repairs. One of the KCIJ staff argues that "The Car portal website. Consumer issues. It is really challenging to cover these unless you are entirely independent of capital. Because all manufacturers are conglomerates" (KCIJ 31). The reporter emphasises that this was only made possible because of the KCIJ's funding system (ibid).

As discussed in the literature review, studies related to political economy theory have highlighted that the detrimental impact of noneditorial considerations such as political and economic aspects into news production (Murdock and Golding 1973; Fenton 2007). Similarly, some newswriters at the KCIJ have experienced restriction on editorial autonomy at previous workplaces (public service media or commercial organisations), which caused other values outweighed journalistic norms and values during decision-making processes. In cases like the KCIJ, widespread general opinions about the independence of this nonprofit newsroom from such external influences could be backed up with reference to detailed examples. To sum up, one reporter highlights their freedom in choosing investigations by adding, "there are no items I'm barred from reporting on since joining the KCIJ. There is no external force influencing on or telling us what not to do" (KCIJ 27). Taking interviews and observations into account, the newsroom has been able to make decisions about issue selection and newsworthiness based on their own criteria, enabled by the very high level of newsroom autonomy (mentioned by newswriters) at the KCIJ. More significantly, it is argued (and to a large degree substantiated) that autonomous journalistic practices are possible owing specially to the nonprofit funding system which relies on donations from the public.

4.4.2 Stories Only the BIJ Can Do: Covering Systemic Breakdown in the Public Interest

The British newsroom also tries to publish investigative stories that "only the BIJ can do". Like the KCIJ, this emphasis on exclusivity does not mean it aims to break

⁵⁰ checkyourcar.net [Accessed: 4 April 2018].

stories faster than other media outlets. Instead, its aim is to publish original investigations that other newsrooms cannot undertake for diverse reasons, such as a lack of resources, expertise and/or willingness in the newsroom. The principal theme identified here is that investigative reporting at the BIJ should cover what they identify and understand as systemic corruption and issues in the public interest, first and foremost.

Discussions related to the topic selection of investigations are particularly prominent in the interview data. The qualitative material indicates that the reporting of systemic corruption in the public interest is one of the key elements that the BIJ seeks to report (BIJ Investigations Editor; BIJ 3; BIJ 4). The BIJ Investigations Editor describes the most important consideration when journalists pitch their news items, fleshing out what exactly meant by “systemic” in this context:

We’re looking for something which is systemic so we’re not looking for, ideally, just an individual case. We’re looking for something which exposes a more general problem. Because you want to have an impact and you want to change things. So, we would not particularly be doing an individual miscarriage of justice. [...] So, if it was Police force that fitted up a lot of people then we can show that. That would be interesting. If a police force put dozens of innocent people in jail that would be much more interesting. We would try to do something on the police force, but an individual miscarriage of justice, we probably wouldn’t do it. (BIJ Investigations Editor)

According to the Editor, the BIJ focuses more on complex problems and organised wrongdoings than reporting a one-off, single incident of corruption. Such a substantial scale investigation requires multifaceted analyses on the issue by interrogating diverse data sources, requiring more time and effort than reporting a singular incident. Although reporting systemic wrongdoing takes significantly more time than reporting an individual issue, it is more likely that this reporting will reveal a fundamental problem which relates to an entire interest group and thus has the potential to generate more change, according to the Editor.

A further important finding helps us examine how the BIJ understands its stories to be in the public interest. The fact that a news outlet seeks to publish reporting in the public interest might sound obvious. However, this normative value has been restricted owing to non-journalistic influences on story selections, as discussed in the literature review chapter (see section 2.5 and 2.6). Limited newsroom autonomy at some conventional media less supports newswriters in many ways and stories in the private interest of political or commercial groups have in many instances often

been prioritised (Aucoin 2005; Davies 2009; McChesney and Nichols 2010). Nevertheless, nonprofits' persistence in upholding this journalistic value seems to be echoed across the BIJ newsroom. The BIJ Managing Editor is pleased with the journalism-first environment at the BIJ:

It's brilliant we are working for an organisation that is totally focusing on journalism. The most important thing to this organisation is our stories. And that's the same. I've worked in big companies and I have to say that they are only interested in stories. But they are interested in stories that have been read, the stories right for their readers. Our stories are in the public interest. That's quite a different way of thinking about journalism. (BIJ Managing Editor)

Here the BIJ Managing Editor demonstrates a subtly different approach to understanding the role of journalism at the BIJ in comparison with conventional media. Although other newsrooms certainly place importance on normative journalistic values, there are also noneditorial aspects to consider when publishing news stories. These are less pressing at the BIJ, which can better prioritise reporting in the public interest (ibid).

Organisational aims and policy are closely related to journalistic practices and routinisations, according to the hierarchy of influences model by Shoemaker and Reese (2014). This model is useful to examine in what ways nonprofits' missions are intertwined into their daily journalistic activities. The criteria of newsworthiness at the BIJ seems not only to be theoretically important but also is discussed practically in everyday journalistic spaces, which I was able to observe during my newsroom ethnography. For example, at one of the general Monday meetings I attended, the BIJ Investigations Editor asked the rest of the newswriters to formally write the reasons why their investigations were in the public interest. After the meeting, I asked about the reasons for highlighting this in a written form. The answer revealed that there were both normative and practical reasons for this kind of inter-weaving of professional reflection on newsworthiness into everyday journalism practice:

Partly we should always be thinking about the public interest anyhow. Why are we doing the story? Is there a public interest in it? But also, if something goes wrong later on and there is an inquiry into it. It's very helpful if you can show that you've looked into the public interest and you made that decision based on that. You may have it wrong, but at least, you made that decision based on that. [...] You need to record these things. [...] There has to be a process there. It stops people acting like cowboys. Just running off and doing stuff. And also, if something goes wrong, you

then go to that paper trail, which is extremely helpful. (BIJ Investigations Editor)

According to the BIJ Investigations Editor, there are two important reasons why he emphasises the formal record of consideration in the public interest. First of all, the added process of checking the value for public interest purposes can maintain the standard of their investigations. The Editor suggests that newswriters at the BIJ should use this process to shun behaving “like cowboys”, that is, publishing a news story without in-depth examinations around the issue. Second, the Editor believes the written description of the public interest could also help the newsroom practically should the need later arise to justify and defend journalistic decisions. The Editor expects the formal considerations of the public interest could support the newsroom if it becomes involved in troublesome situations, owing to an investigation. In this case, the written consideration can be helpful in evidencing in concrete ways the legitimacy and justification of the publication made in relation to this journalistic value.

Shoemaker and Reese (2014, p.157) highlight the importance of organisational structure shielding an editorial department which can make noneditorial consideration less influential when analysing factors influencing journalistic practices. The BIJ newswriters highlight that they pursue to undertake investigations that other news outlets are unwilling to do, not because of journalistic value, but because of other varied considerations. However, as identified in 4.3, the BIJ points out their high level of newsroom autonomy, leading to a journalism-centric organisation. With this, it is argued that the newsroom sets criteria to put their mission into practice in publishing investigative journalism in the public interest.

4.4.3 Summary: Evaluating Newsworthiness Primarily Based on Journalistic Values

Investigative journalism, as it reveals hidden wrongdoing and malpractices, inevitably confronts powerful entities in society. Limited newsroom autonomy from external forces at conventional media outlets often discourages this type of journalism. Established with a mission of being independent newsrooms that hold power to account, the KCIJ and the BIJ commonly seek to publish original investigative journalism that many other newsrooms eschew due to ideological and practical reasons such as political alliances, advertisers’ influences, or a lack of

human and other resources. Newswriters at both newsrooms emphasise that this is possible since decision-making processes around news selection are primarily based on professional journalistic norms and values rather than consideration of external elements. When asked, they are able to provide many examples to back up and substantiate such opinions (still, this will be continuously examined in this research).

The KCIJ argues that their newsroom is free from the major external forces intervening in many other newsrooms in South Korea due to its nonprofit funding system, and therefore, they can undertake investigative journalism that they think no one else in the country could do. For instance, the KCIJ was able to publish a story that had been banned from publication at public service media owing to the nature of the topic and to undertake a different project which may have discomfited major advertisers in commercial media. In the same vein, the BIJ sees itself as different from many other legacy media by producing in-depth reporting. The newsroom focuses more on systemic and extensive social problems than on individual ones for revealing structural hidden malfeasance and corruptions. In doing so, the BIJ's stories should be in the public interest, which is a key principle of journalism, but which has been increasingly neglected by many traditionally funded newsrooms that instead often prioritise noneditorial elements to the detriment of critical, independent reporting. At editorial meetings and team meetings that I attended at both the KCIJ and the BIJ, discussions on investigations primarily focused on practical issues such as the need to justify how an ongoing story was in the public interest, fact-checking, or measures to improve reporting to meet internal criteria, without concern for any external aspects such as political or financial issues. Most significantly, newswriters at these nonprofits highlight that the newsrooms are able to establish such journalism-centric organisational purposes and everyday practices because of their nonprofit financial models.

My findings here corroborate previous research on a role of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations, playing a crucial role in producing the kind of journalism, particularly about issues neglected by many legacy media (Stetka and Örnebring 2013; Tofel 2013; Konieczna and Robinson 2014; Shin 2016; Townend 2016; Konieczna 2018). This indicates the meaningful ways in which organisational structures and aims at nonprofit investigative newsrooms can affect everyday practices such as decision-making processes around judgements of newsworthiness more favourably to investigative journalism than in many legacy

media newsrooms. By establishing the hierarchy of influences model, Shoemaker and Reese (2014, p.157) highlight the role of a news organisation to shield its editorial department from economic aspects. Although the model analyses more conventional newsrooms, looking at such elements discussed in the model when analysing nonprofits was useful to understand nonprofit funding models and their relation to journalistic practices. At both the KCIJ and the BIJ, strong concerns around autonomous decisions about newsworthiness with considering political and commercial interests over journalistic values, found increasingly in many legacy media, were not identified. Instead, they argue to be able to put their missions, publishing investigative journalism in the public interest, into practice in a relatively unfettered and much more autonomous way.

4.5 Investigative Journalism Unbound: Journalistic Routines and News Content at Nonprofits

The study then moves to a more detailed exploration of ways in which this relative newsroom autonomy, insulated by the nonprofit funding models, affects in what ways the KCIJ and the BIJ can produce what they think newsworthiness such as stories that only they can do. As Tuchman (1978, p.4) has previously highlighted that “it is inevitably a product of newswriters drawing upon institutional processes and conforming to institutional practices”, analysis on an organisational level of processes and practices related to news production is necessary for this research. The hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker and Reese 2014) offers an analytic agenda on factors affecting news production. According to the model, journalistic routines influenced by organisational structures can enable or constrain individual professionals in their everyday journalistic activities (ibid, p.8). Traditionally, investigative journalism requires, fundamentally, sufficient time to be conducted as extensive as possible, and naturally, is less constrained to daily routines (Hansen 1991; Ettema and Glasser 1998; Aucoin 2005; De Burgh 2008).

As discussed in the literature review, this tradition has suffered across many newsrooms, particularly commercially funded ones, leaving a paucity of in-depth examinations on complex issues (see section 2.5 and 2.6). This also has brought about related concerns around passive journalism discouraging deep-dive reporting but encouraging over-reliance on single sources (O’Neill and O’Connor 2008;

Matthews 2013) and PR/News agency news subsidies (Lewis et al. 2006; Moloney and McGrath 2020), leading to the criticism of Churnalism (Davies 2009). A subsequent problem stem from such passive journalistic practices is less emphasis on a verification process of news material (see section 2.6.2). Taken these issues in journalism studies into consideration, this subsection examines the ways in which news organisations with nonprofit funding models set their own routines to put their missions into practice and how this is related to their perceived newsroom autonomy. Key findings are analysed for each nonprofit organisation respectively.

4.5.1 Sufficient Time and Resource at the KCIJ

According to staff, working conditions at the KCIJ are outstanding and enable newswriters to dedicate themselves to in-depth reporting to an unusual degree. Newswriters highlight that they are afforded as much time as required to investigate issues, so that the resulting reports are of a high quality that they can be proud of, and this is a crucial principle of putting their journalism-centric mission into practice. Several newswriters at the KCIJ argue that prioritising journalistic values in journalism practice encourages them to concentrate solely on investigations without considering the amount of time and resources required (Long-term Task Force Editor 2; KCIJ 29; KCIJ 32). It is argued that the round-the-clock routinisation of online publication and daily newspaper's deadlines at a majority of news organisations impede reporters from conducting in-depth news stories (KCIJ 29; KCIJ 32). The dedication to investigative journalism in the KCIJ newsroom provides working conditions where staff can concentrate on investigative journalism, while being supported both journalistically and financially, despite the newsroom's relatively small size compared to mainstream media.

KCIJ newswriters consider the luxury of time and resources as a key strength in producing deep-dive investigations. One newswriter emphasises that "the strengths we possess are time and freedom" (KCIJ 29) and describes their work environment in comparison with daily newsrooms:

Certainly, not all of the general journalists do this, but due to a lack of time, they often tend to consider an issue as just story material for reporting. They report efficiently and leave. If you can find the ABC of an issue, you just report ABC quickly to find out what to write in a story, because you have to write a news story about it quickly and move on to the next item. I think we should have a different attitude when approaching news items.

Some items require sympathy. Certain items require scientific analysis. We should avoid their attitudes of treating a news item like something disposable, because we have more time. (KCIJ 29)

The newswriter argues that some media organisations in South Korea deal with news items in cursory ways and seem less likely to investigate the multifaceted aspects of news items, instead treating them as one-off issues due to the fast-paced cycle of publication (ibid). The newswriter highlights the KCIJ's contrasting approach to news when considering why the other media organisations are unwilling to go into any depth with their news sources: sometimes, investigations require a heartfelt understanding of the situation of victims, and other times technologies need to be adopted for an analysis, both approaches require time and attention which KCIJ newswriters generally have (ibid).

These interview findings were well-supported by my observation of newsroom practice. The flexibility in reporting was observed at unit meetings I attended. When pitching their news items, a journalist generally shared the progress of investigations and received feedback from the rest of the unit. When an investigation was at an early stage, there was no deadline required by the Unit Editor. Instead, the Unit Editor guided and asked the journalist to get as much evidence as possible to check facts without any fixed deadline for reporting. At the KCIJ, it seems that the publication is determined not by a fixed schedule, but by the level of completion of investigations. Certainly, publication schedules for investigations were discussed at the high-level editorial meetings with the Editor-in-Chief and Editors. However, by the time they discussed the schedules, investigations were almost completed, so the schedule did not seem to pressure a reporter to finish in hurry to meet the deadline.

As an example of a long-term investigation, a series of investigations entitled, "How My Taxes are Spent⁵¹" is suggested, which focuses on how government subsidies for nonprofit, non-governmental organisations were spent. The Editor who conducted this investigation explains the extensive time scales needed for the process of obtaining original datasets for the investigation:

Around 2014, I wanted to investigate how government subsidies for nonprofit, non-governmental organisations were spent. I thought to myself, "Why are my taxes being used to subsidise such strange nonprofit organisations?". I then started researching this by collecting related

⁵¹ <https://www.newstapa.org/tags/내%20세금%20어떻게%20쓰이나> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

information. [...] The problem was that it was really difficult to obtain information on the expenses of government subsidies. Subsidy beneficiaries have to submit evidence of all their expenses. For instance, coffee shop receipts, if you drink coffee; or hotel receipts, if you went to a hotel. They have to submit details about whom they met, the purpose of money they spent, and the amount of money they spent. Thus, lots of personal information is included. The government said that it couldn't give me the data relating to subsidy expenses, in order to protect the personal information of others. That's why it took four years. (Long-term Task Force Editor 2)

The Editor started researching wrongdoing and corruption among nonprofit organisations related to government subsidies. However, due to personal information involved, it had been difficult for the Editor to obtain the raw data. The detailed information that grantee organisations submit for proof of expenses inevitably includes personal information, which is a reason given for the government's denial (ibid). Through painstaking and persistent efforts over several years, the Editor finally found another way to obtain the information legally (some details of which will remain confidential in this account):

Because of the enormous size of the dataset, I couldn't receive it through email or USB. So, I had to collect the dataset on 24 DVDs, equivalent to 80 gigabytes of data. [...] I spent an estimated three months just reading through the information. There were at most 800 - 900 documents for each individual organisation. What I could do was to let the public know the truth, by publishing a news story. I needed to highlight the situation to the public, that our taxes were being spent on things that we wouldn't want. That's what I think the KCIJ should do. I don't think other media would be able to conduct this kind of investigation. (Long-term Task Force Editor 2)

The process of obtaining the raw information itself took several years, but that of analysing it required substantial time owing to the vast amount of data. According to the Editor, such a comprehensive research, investigation and analysis process for a news story could only be implemented by the KCIJ as other media organisations seem to be less able to do (ibid). As discussed in the literature review (see section 2.6.2), South Korean journalists in many general newsrooms, on average, write 9.4 straight/short stories per week at newspapers and 12 per week at online outlets in 2021 (Korea Press Foundation 2022). Under the routinised fast publication cycle at many other newsrooms, it would be challenging to imagine newswriters publishing stories requiring several years of gathering original news material, followed by months of subsequent analysis.

Above all, sufficient time and freedom to research and investigate stories (underpinned by high levels of editorial autonomy) is considered one of the most

beneficial aspects of the KCIJ's nonprofit funding model, as one reporter argues that "the KCIJ doesn't receive any advertising revenue or sponsorships. It is operated solely by membership donations. Because we don't have advertisements, we can be independent of conglomerates or the government" (KCIJ 32). The reporter attributes their newsroom autonomy, determining the level of support based on the perceived newsworthiness of an investigation, to their funding model, financed by citizens' donations.

It is noteworthy that newswriters at the KCIJ frequently highlight that their editorial independence comes from the nonprofit funding system. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) have highlighted that how organisational structures and their practices at more conventional media outlets can affect the outcomes in diverse ways. According to the KCIJ staff, at this nonprofit newsroom, those aspects affect news production more positive way. The nonprofit newsroom, prioritising journalistic values, supports newswriters to afford as much as time and resources for investigations, following the tradition of investigative journalism. My findings from the KCIJ is interesting in that: on the one hand, it shows that a newsroom's organisational structure (and following aims and missions) is closely related to news production as Shoemaker and Reese (2014) highlight; on the other hand, it stands in stark contrast with those of previous studies about mainstream media in some of which such tradition is decreasingly supported.

4.5.2 The Fact-Checking Process at the BIJ

The BIJ newsroom establishes its own routines in line with its organisational mission and procedures to produce investigative journalism that meets the criteria of stories that only the BIJ can do with the perceived newsroom autonomy supported by a nonprofit funding model. The most important theme drawn from my analysis in this regard is that in-depth research on fact-finding is a vital practice at the BIJ, shaping its normative identity as an independent investigative journalism newsroom. It appears that the legitimising autonomy at the BIJ newsroom has empowered its professionalism to develop into two principal practices: the fact-checking and right-to-reply processes, enabled mainly by having sufficient time and resources to investigate stories because they are removed from the pressures of the daily news cycle.

A key advantage of the BIJ by having relative editorial autonomy is that it offers newswriters working conditions where they can solely concentrate on single investigations and research about them for as long as is required. The BIJ Managing Editor explains:

Often with my journalists, they come and say “okay, I’m ready to publish this story”. I go “no. You still have more to find. Go and find it out”. So, allowing the time to get to the bottom of it is something we can do. When you give the right to reply, you tell someone this is what we found out about you and they come back and say, “that’s not correct”. You don’t go, “this is what we found. This is what they say”. [...] We are investigating for days, weeks and months because you keep going back until you get to the point that you have the true fact. And that takes time. (BIJ Managing Editor)

This interview extract describes how the newsroom maximises the effectiveness of their newsroom’s key advantage when publishing investigative journalism. It seems that in order to meet the internal standard of a news story, newswriters have to go through several steps at the final stage of the news production. According to the Managing Editor, completion of the iterative processes of gathering evidence for verifying information and substantiating arguments in news stories is essential to getting to the bottom of issues and in establishing facts. Judgements about facts require substantial time and effort in the repeated meticulous procedures of fact-checking. The luxury of such time is not available to everyone in modern-day newsrooms, however, according to its Managing Editor, the BIJ tries to find facts by exploring an issue and obtaining sufficient evidence as much as is needed.

BIJ reporters argue that a wide discrepancy in everyday journalistic activities between the BIJ and a majority of other newsrooms is caused by publication cycles (BIJ 2; BIJ 3). A BIJ newswriter illustrates how the freedom from a fast news cycle at the BIJ benefits the newsroom environment dedicated to investigative journalism, in comparison to a market-driven media organisation:

There’s a lot of click-based journalism where you just write up agency copy put in pictures and put in headlines and you have to write six stories a day. [...] I guess the pros are that you don’t have to be market driven. So, you don’t have to produce stories just for clicks so you can produce things that are in the public interest. [...] There are lots of stories that are in the public interest that should be published. But in a newsroom, that’s market driven, you wouldn’t be able to spend ten days on an investigation because there would be no time because of the churn of daily news. So, the philanthropic model allows the time to pursue these angles. (BIJ 3)

It is suggested that their nonprofit funding model allows newswriters to disentangle from a daily news cycle and from the advertising-related pressures

associated with metrics such as clicks and page views. Market-based newsrooms where a journalist publishes several stories a day necessarily focus more on profitable activities (ibid). The journalist above is critical of Churnalism. This explanation chimes with insights from previous research (Ekström 2002; Matthews 2013).

In order to facilitate such news production, the BIJ aims to undertake a meticulous fact-checking procedure. This strict fact-checking process is identified as a strength of their newsroom at the BIJ (BIJ Investigations Editor; BIJ 3; BIJ 9; BIJ 12). Previous studies have found that generalist journalists have insufficient time for verification of information from news sources (Ekström 2002; Machill and Beiler 2009). For example, journalists at German media outlets, in general, had about 11 minutes a day for fact-checking in terms of “plausibility and correctness” (Machill and Beiler 2009, p.182). Contrarily, my finding here shows that nonprofits follow the investigative journalism tradition of in-depth and intensive research and avoid such a widely conducted malpractice of churning out news stories, differentiating nonprofits from many general media outlets.

My participant observation on journalistic activities at the BIJ reinforced the findings derived from interview materials, namely that a systematised procedure for fact-checking has been established at this newsroom. In order to examine it further in detail, I requested permission to join the fact-checking process when one of the newswriters undertook it, which the BIJ Investigations Editor approved. First, BIJ newswriters are required to create a hard-copy folder for each investigation when writing a news story. The composition of the folder is as follows: 1) The investigative news story is printed and saved on top of files; 2) Each line of arguments stated in the investigation should be supported by evidence such as statistical data, interviews, field research and so on; 3) Each line is numbered, and the same number is marked on the support document to compare. For instance, if a line is extracted from a research report published by an international institution, the report must be printed and stored with the number of the line within the story. When the folder is completed, another newswriter who has not been involved in the investigation reviews the fact-checking folder with “a fresh pair of eyes” (BIJ Investigations Editor). I observed that a multitude of the fact-checking folders were placed on bookshelves and desks throughout the office. The multi-layered verification system for increasing the preciseness of the published stories illustrates

the specific ways that the BIJ pursues evidence-based journalism in original research.

Having sufficient time to implement the right-to-reply process is seen as another essential addition for fastidiously verified and in-depth reporting. Newswriters at the BIJ emphasise that, compared to many of the mainstream media, their newsroom offers a longer period of time for the right-to-reply for the subjects of their investigations (BIJ Investigations Editor; BIJ Food and Agriculture Editor; BIJ 3). One of the BIJ staff compares the right-to-reply practice at the BIJ to their previous newsroom:

The right-to-reply process is a lot lengthier. [...] They email whoever it is going to be about a couple of hours before and say, "I'm going to publish in two hours, get back to me to add your statement". [...] Whereas here you give people usually a week and send them a formal letter and let them respond. And there might be more back and forth. So, I think it is just a different style of journalism. Just slower and more emphasis on accuracy. (BIJ 3)

The journalist argues that the right-to-reply process is more extended at the BIJ than at a more conventional newsroom. For instance, a targeted subject in a news story might get notified by a journalist saying that he/she has just several hours to counterargue the story. However, according to BIJ 3, this nonprofit newsroom offers a relatively longer period of time for people to respond. Similarly, the BIJ Food and Agriculture Editor argues, "it is quicker in the newspapers which might be 24 hours or even 12 hours. But it took usually a week for my stuff, which I think fair". The Editor also says that the BIJ can spend weeks, or even a month, on the process. From multiple interviews, it appears that the BIJ is able to conduct such a lengthy right-to-reply process due to its dedication to investigative journalism that values the veracity of information and the editorial freedom it grants journalists removed from daily routines such as daily deadlines.

The time-consuming verification process sometimes leads to unexpected results for the newswriters:

We put a lot of time into a story last year, but at the end of the day, when we've got the right-to-reply back, we decided not to run the story. [...] We pulled out from it. We were happy with their right-to-reply. Therefore, we don't want to be publishing that story. We are prepared to pull a story even if we've put a lot of investment into it which is good. (BIJ Investigations Editor)

This example clearly shows the ways in which an adequately conducted right-to-reply process affect the publication in real journalistic activity. Although the BIJ had expended time and resources on the investigation, the newsroom made a choice to withdraw the story from publishing at a late stage due to the outcome of the right-to-reply, according to the Editor. Investigative journalism has been considered as uncommercial due to its time-consuming and labour-intensive work. Sometimes, after all resources are spent, a story might not be published. The decision of the BIJ to withdraw from such investigations suggests that nonprofit newsrooms can accept, and even sometimes expect, such risk regardless of how many resources were spent on the investigation.

Insufficient time given to fact-checking and right-to-reply sometimes leads to concerns over the verification and accuracy of reporting and even possibly defamation suits. Therefore, in-depth reporting, including the right-to-reply process, not only increases the veracity of news stories but could also prevent unwanted legal cases. As the BIJ Investigations Editor explains earlier in this chapter, to protect a newsroom, a formal record on the consideration of the public interest when publishing investigations is required at the BIJ (see section 4.4.2). In addition to this, the rigorous fact-checking process is another layer of protection in the BIJ's armoury, which is defended on both instrumental and normative grounds:

Not just because we believe it's important, in terms of solid journalism, but also because we are a small organisation, if we were to have any legal issues, it would be very damaging for us. We don't have the money to fight huge legal battles. We need to make sure we are legally very safe. But also, it's important according to our mission that all of our journalism is very thorough and solid based on facts. (BIJ 4)

According to the reporter, these procedures for aiming to put mission into practice, "solid journalism based on facts", can also help the newsroom. One noteworthy perspective from the interview is that the relatively small size of the BIJ, in fact, encourages dedication to the tradition of investigative journalism. In contrast, many legacy news outlets have chosen to curtail investment in investigative journalism when facing financial difficulties (see section 2.5.2.3). However, the BIJ, with a mission of a watchdog of society, has chosen to protect the newsroom by adhering to the principle of investigative journalism despite having relatively less resources, to the best of my interpretation.

The BIJ argues that they can maintain the principle of journalistic practices without having to consider noneditorial aspects owing to its autonomy, insulated by

organisational structures, funded in a nonprofit way. It appears that the legitimising autonomy at the BIJ newsroom has empowered its professionalism to develop into two principal practices: the fact-checking and right-to-reply processes, which are regulated under the institutional agreement. A prerequisite for conducting these practices seems to be removing journalists from the pressures of the daily news cycle and providing sufficient time for investigating issues. This is an intriguing and significant finding in contrast to the daily news outlets facing an everyday battle against time and cost-efficiency concerns (see section 2.6.2). Restricted routinisation at many conventional media organisations often provides unfavourable working condition to journalists for in-depth reporting, leading to concerns around passive journalism. At the BIJ, its organisational structure and routines has a positive influence on journalistic activities, which provides a favourable working condition for producing in-depth accountability journalism.

4.5.3 Summary: Institutional Dedication to Time-Consuming and Resource-Intensive In-depth Reporting

This section began by examining the ways in which newsrooms can be autonomous in establishing their own institutional aims and journalistic routines at newsrooms, with reference to insights inferred from the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker and Reese 2014). My finding provides an example of how varied organisational structures can affect differently daily activities at newsrooms. As discussed in the literature review (see section 2.6.2), with a dearth of organisational support for original investigative journalism, a high volume of workloads with fewer resources and support at many mainstream media has made it more difficult for practitioners to dedicate themselves to in-depth reporting, in general and investigative news in particular. Under the conventional business model, journalistic value-focused activities have often been increasingly undermined and profitable outcomes are prioritised more and more. Contrarily, according to my observations and interviews, the relative newsroom autonomy underpinned by the nonprofit funding models provides journalism-centric organisational purposes, which are reflected in their daily news production practices.

A key theme that arose from analysis on both the KCIJ and the BIJ is that journalism itself, underpinned by routines which emphasise the importance of in-depth investigation in numerous ways, is considered as the most important element.

The KCIJ staff consider main strengths of their newsroom is to be having time to spend on an investigation and freedom from external influences. It is highlighted that some South Korean news outlets often report news superficially due to insufficient time and resources, in spite of its importance. The KCIJ is able to publish long-term investigations, which can take years of data collection and analysis in order to report multifaceted and complicated issues that cannot be revealed otherwise. Newswriters at the BIJ emphasise their rigorous fact-checking processes and the lengthy right-to-reply procedures for increasing accuracy, as a crucial feature of their newsroom practices, which certainly requires time to complete sufficiently.

As a result, newswriters from both the KCIJ and the BIJ argue that they dedicate themselves entirely to investigating as much as they need to produce in-depth investigative journalism, with adequate time and resources supported by the organisations. In marked contrast with practices that restrict newswriters within confined routinised 24/7 news cycles, these nonprofits publish news stories upon their completion within their own publication standards and without obligation to daily deadlines or fixed schedules. This gives each individual journalist sufficient time and resources for original research and detailed verification. Spending sufficient time on investigating sounds simple, but this has become less possible for journalists at generalist news outlets under the heavy workload constraints over recent years. However, nonprofit investigative journalism newsrooms are conducting traditional investigative journalism within newsrooms and journalistic routines that have been organised specifically in ways which prioritise the normative journalistic values of independence and the public interest. More importantly, it is argued by multiple participants in both newsrooms, and backed up by testimony about their current and previous working practices, that a nonprofit financial model empowers journalists to focus more on the quality of news reporting than its quantity. Ettema and Glasser (1998, p.13) argue that investigative journalists should be able to “go beyond the limits of daily reporting” in order to scrutinise social breakdowns and wrongdoings. My findings show that the new type of funding models encourage journalists to follow the tradition of investigative journalism.

4.6 Collaborative Investigative Journalism and Nonprofit Newsrooms

The final section of this chapter explores the ways in which collaborative investigative journalism is implemented and related to nonprofit funding systems at the KCIJ and the BIJ. As inferred from the hierarchy of influences model by Shoemaker and Reese (2014), it is important to observe how newsworthiness and routines are shaped and implemented when examining the relation between organisational structures and journalistic practices. The previous three sections (4.3, 4.4 and 4.5) analysed in this regard, and found that these nonprofits endeavour to set their own criteria judgements of newsworthiness, stories that only “the KCIJ/BIJ can do” and publish stories based on it by investing the luxury of time and resources.

Collaboration can be one of the examples of how their values, norms and practices are reflected in their journalistic activities. Cross-newsroom collaborations have rapidly risen in the last decade and have brought promising results in the journalism sector across the world (Alfter 2019; Carson 2020; Gearing 2021). Most importantly, collaboration can enhance the accumulated knowledge, skillsets and human resources which can benefit individual reporters and news organisations alike, and may reduce the expense of reporting in general (see section 2.10). As revealed in the literature review, nonprofit organisations are, in fact, inextricably linked with collaborative journalism, contributing to the sector as content providers and collaboration orchestrators (Houston 2010; Edmonds and Mitchell 2014; Carson and Farhall 2018; Konieczna 2018; Alfter 2019; Birnbauer 2019).

My chosen news organisations, the KCIJ and the BIJ, are also profoundly engaged in collaboration in a range of different ways. During my newsroom ethnography at the media organisations in 2018, conversations about collaborative journalism were embedded in everyday work. The KCIJ has been collaborating with multinational newsrooms since the ICIJ’s Offshore Tax investigations in 2013, as the only South Korean partner of the ICIJ. The Global Task Force (TF) at the KCIJ is generally in charge of international collaborations. This study first focuses on the particular aspects of the KCIJ, as a newly established newsroom in 2013, that helped it to achieve a partnership in preference to the other South Korean legacy media outlets. Then, the ways in which the KCIJ has contributed to facilitating collaborative journalism in South Korean society, is explored.

The BIJ operates two main streams of collaboration: co-publishing and intra-national local collaborative journalism projects. First, co-publishing means that the BIJ offers their investigations for co-publication with other media organisations without monetary exchanges taking place. In this case, most reporting is undertaken and written by the BIJ, and the partner newsrooms publish/re-produce the investigation with the BIJ credited. This has been described as “sharing through distribution” (Konieczna 2018) or “cloning” (Birnbauer 2019) at nonprofit newsrooms and has been well studied previously (see section 2.10.1). Second, collaborative journalism projects require more active involvement with collaborators from other media organisations. The Bureau Local, a local-news focused unit, at the BIJ launched in 2017 and is dedicated to collaborating with a wide range of participants in order to boost British local journalism. Because there is less existing literature about such examples this study examines more deeply the latter case, local collaboration.

Whereas extensive academic research has been carried out on collaborative journalism in general, what has not yet examined extensively is an empirical study about nonprofits or investigative journalistic nonprofits. This section seeks to address this research gap. Therefore, this section presents the analysis of collaborative journalism in relation to newsrooms’ funding models. First, it examines the ways in which collaboration is specifically implemented at each investigative journalism organisation. Then, it introduces the overview of perceptions on collaborative journalism concerning nonprofit funding systems.

4.6.1 International Collaborative Projects at the KCIJ

A main kind of collaborative projects undertaken by the KCIJ involves transnational collaboration. Most importantly, the KCIJ is the only South Korean partner of the ICIJ for international collaborations such as the Offshore Leaks investigation 2013, the Panama Papers in 2016 and the Pandora Papers in 2021. When the first collaboration with the ICIJ, the Offshore Leaks investigation in 2013, was released in South Korea, there were two reasons why the South Korean public were surprised. First, as was common across the world, people were impressed by the substantial scale of this novel kind of transnational collaboration. The second is more specific to South Korea in that the collaborative work was carried out by a small and unknown news outlet, which was established just a few months before

the collaboration (KCIJ 4). In fact, partnership opportunities with the ICIJ have often been given to “traditional media outlets” (Carson 2020, p.101) / “traditional media organizations” (Reese 2021, p.116) in many other countries. Therefore, the participation of an organisation like the KCIJ, a small and new nonprofit newsroom, was rare at that time.

Collaboration is vital for the KCIJ in terms of its journalistic values as well as of its finances. Journalistically, the hard-hitting investigation in 2013 revealed that many South Korean people are involved in offshore paper companies, which sparked the government’ investigations into tax evasion⁵². Financially, after the first collaboration in 2013, the number of donors to the KCIJ sharply increased, drawn from various interviews with KCIJ staff. This financial aspect will be discussed further in the next chapter. Since the overall analysis of the ICIJ collaborative work has been extensively studied worldwide (see Sambrook 2018c; Alfter 2019; Gearing 2021), the current research is specifically designed to explore it from the internal perspectives of the KCIJ. It reveals how the newly founded news outlet has become the only South Korean partner of the ICIJ and its impact on South Korean society and evaluates the ways in which cross-border journalism has been developed in relation to the nonprofit funding.

Newswriters consider collaborations such as cross-border ones with the ICIJ important (KCIJ Editor-in-Chief; KCIJ 4; KCIJ 14; KCIJ 30). The KCIJ Editor-in-Chief describes the process of the partnership:

In 2013, we sent a proposal to the ICIJ to work together after seeing an official announcement from the ICIJ that they were looking for a partner. We highlighted that we were a nonprofit, independent newsroom. And although we were a small organisation, we could devote our full capacity into an investigation which could last 1-2 years. We have more capacity to allocate staff onto one project for a longer period than other news outlets. Our reporters are very experienced and skilful investigative journalists. Although there were many large news outlets that wanted to partner with the ICIJ as well, in the end, we became the only South Korean partner of the ICIJ and have been working with them since then. (KCIJ Editor-in-Chief)

According to the KCIJ Editor-in-Chief, when the ICIJ was looking for a South Korean partner for the Offshore Leaks investigation in 2013, the KCIJ was one of the candidates in competition with other media outlets. The KCIJ, despite its short history and small scale, emphasised their veteran journalists and dedication to a

⁵² <https://www.newstapa.org/article/XPr8H> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

long-term and in-depth investigation as an investigative journalism-focused newsroom (ibid). The KCIJ Editor-in-Chief continues, “additionally, they felt a sense of affinity with our organisation’s official title, the Korea Center for Investigative Journalism, since many independent organisations worldwide use this kind of titles”. It is also argued that the title of this nonprofit outlet could have appealed to the ICIJ. He continuously suggests that the KCIJ shares the mission of these similar nonprofit investigative journalism organisations across the world, which could increase the trustworthiness of the newsroom. Trust between partners is critical in collaboration (Sambrook 2018b, p.27), and it seems that the title of the newsroom, as well as the newsroom’s commitment had an influence on establishing trust with the ICIJ. The KCIJ case reflects the argument of the ICIJ’s Deputy Director saying, “we did not pick journalists based solely on their media affiliation – we were much more interested in choosing the right people, the real diggers and the most trustworthy colleagues” (Guevara 2013)

Cross-border collaborative projects are undertaken with high confidentiality. A journalist involved in the ICIJ-led collaboration illustrates the process of the project in this regard:

During the first stage, the level of security for a project is very intense. Not even anyone within the KCIJ knows, except for the Editor-in-Chief. The Editor-in-Chief leaves on a business trip without a specific reason. Then, he obtains information about a project, such as, the kind of data that was leaked and the plan for a project X⁵³. After returning, he then organises a team for the project and lets the ICIJ know who will work on it. We are then given access to the dataset, as we need to examine the datasets and discuss them with the ICIJ. Following this, we either meet with the ICIJ, or discuss through emails or over the phone. This is how the work is conducted. (KCIJ journalist participating ICIJ collaborations⁵⁴)

Due to the nature of investigative journalism, confidentiality is essential. At the early stage of collaboration, only the KCIJ Editor-in-Chief and a few other newswriters contact the ICIJ. Data distribution is certainly conducted stealthily from the ICIJ, but the reporter highlights continued communication with the ICIJ.

The Data Journalism Unit at the KCIJ plays an important role for data-driven investigations such as collaboration with the ICIJ. The Unit has new and emergent

⁵³ To guarantee anonymity of the reporter, the title of the specific project is removed.

⁵⁴ To guarantee anonymity of the reporter, reference has to be changed in relation to the collaboration. Only a limited number of newswriters have worked on the ICIJ collaborative investigations. Therefore, the numbering system for indicating newswriters for the rest of the thesis is adjusted for the quotes above.

journalistic practices and routines in relation to handling, and making sense, of the large data sets involved. Although the data is divided by regions for the ICIJ collaborations, the volume of each newsroom's data is still substantial. Analysing this requires data and computational literacy operating computing programmes for researching, analysing, visualising and reporting. As Sambrook (2018b, p.39) argues, "technology expertise is a crucial component of collaborations"; but not all newsrooms are ready for data-centric investigation. Without these skills to manage big data, the KCIJ would probably have been unable to participate in the ICIJ projects. The newsroom set up a data team since data team at nonprofit investigative journalism plays a crucial role in producing data-related news stories (Ex-Director of Data Journalism Centre at the KCIJ). The hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker and Reese 2014, p.8) highlights that how a newsroom is structured influences on journalistic practices. Although the KCIJ is a small and less resourceful organisation in comparison to many others in South Korea, it prioritises investment in data journalism.

Participating in collaboration with the ICIJ ultimately leads to the KCIJ being acknowledged not only domestically but also globally. International collaboration requests have snowballed not only through the ICIJ, but also directly to the newsroom. A KCIJ Global TF journalist explains how a culture of helping each other out between newsrooms and across geographical borders has gradually embedded into journalists' working routines:

Collaboration requests sometimes come as a project. Sometimes, it is offered through the ICIJ; Or through the Editor-in-Chief, a collaboration proposal is offered. Sometimes, it is offered, not as a group but instead one-to-one, to ask for help and to write a story together. "We are reporting about this. There is something in South Korea. Could you please find this out? How about writing the story together?". If we think it is newsworthy from our perspective, we do it. And vice versa, we need to ask about collaborations with newsrooms in other countries a lot of the time. (KCIJ Global TF journalist)

There has been an increase not only in formal and official ways of collaborating, but also in providing casual assistance to journalists at other media outlets (ibid). According to this journalist, since the KCIJ is recognised internationally with its capability to undertake investigative journalism, it is often contacted as a potential partner for cooperation when foreign newsrooms identify data or angles related to South Korea.

The encrypting function of advanced technologies has enabled journalists to work efficiently and safely (Sambrook 2018b; Alfter 2019). A Global TF journalist at the KCIJ illustrated the everyday use of technologies in the collaborative work:

All of the participants used conference calls. [...] We use Signal, because its encryption system is well established. Also, we use a call programme with well-established encryption. We have to upload data, such as video clips on an encrypted cloud server, to share. Or alternatively we send it through the messenger. (KCIJ Global TF journalist)

Indeed, technological support is rooted across the collaboration process. It can be inferred from the journalist that the encrypted communication messengers and online storage systems are a prerequisite for journalists to conduct high-profile investigations confidentially. This finding further confirms the association between collaboration and significant digital infrastructure, as argued earlier (Sambrook 2018b). Emphasised as “defensive technology” (Sambrook 2018b, p.36), newsrooms could secure confidential data without it being revealed. This is important since such digital protection could avoid any libel or defamation issues in relation to their data. The KCIJ conducts a wide range of collaborations with journalists across the world, including the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) in 2017⁵⁵. In addition, the KCIJ collaborated with 23 newsrooms, including NDR of Germany, to investigate academic conferences in 2018⁵⁶. Another collaboration was conducted with regional media organisations in Asia⁵⁷.

In the chaos and control paradigm, Carson (2020, p.99) highlights that an alternative way of sustaining journalism would encompass traditional journalistic practiced combined with innovative technology. The KCIJ’s collaborations have shown that such combination can produce hard-hitting accountability journalism. Their own criteria for judgements of newsworthiness and dedication to extensive investigation, encouraged by their editorial autonomy, enable the KCIJ to participant in cross-border journalism, which also leading to them publishing news stories that only the KCIJ can do.

⁵⁵ <https://newstapa.org/38861> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁵⁶ <https://newstapa.org/43812> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁵⁷ <https://newstapa.org/article/nNEiU> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

4.6.2 Intra-National Local Collaboration of the BIJ

The BIJ is a leading newsroom, orchestrating collaborations among local journalists, which I describe as intra-national local collaboration. As a local news unit funded by Google with a nonprofit purpose, the Bureau Local at the BIJ launched with a specific intention for boosting local journalism by collaborative work in March 2017. Whereas most recent attention in journalism studies has focused on transnational collaborative projects (see Sambrook 2018c; Alfter 2019), its domestic version of collaboration between local newsrooms is under-researched. This section regarding the intra-national local collaboration led by the Bureau Local, examines its development, mission and practices.

The BIJ has been co-publishing with other British media outlets for a long time. A co-publishing model of collaboration at nonprofit newsrooms is usual, illustrated as “sharing through distribution” (Konieczna 2018) or “cloning” (Birnbauer 2019). While co-publishing with national newsrooms such as the *Guardian* and *Channel 4* of the UK, the BIJ Managing Editor started to realise that “a lot of our stories had a huge relevance on a local level”. Therefore, the Managing Editor thought that it would be more effective if a local-related investigation was undertaken within that particular area by a local reporter:

Surely, it is much better, if the story is relevant to Blackpool, to tell the story in Blackpool, because that’s where the change happens. And at the same time, the same crisis that had happened to our national media in 2010 was happening at a local level because the classified advertising disappeared overnight. Car advertising, housing advertising, job advertising. All moving to new companies, Rightmove⁵⁸, all the recruitment companies online. (BIJ Managing Editor)

The Managing Editor demonstrates the importance of local news to holding local power to account and the difficulty it has faced because of financial pressures. Local journalism has faced challenges in the digital age, particularly caused by the migration of classified advertising from local media to online platforms such as Rightmove. Previous research has also highlighted the financial difficulties associated with local journalism in the UK (Williams et al. 2015; Cairncross 2019). Cairncross (2019, p.79) emphasises, “Local publishers face a tougher financial challenge than nationals”, caused by the digital transition.

⁵⁸ Rightmove is a British house property website.

While developing an idea on how to work together with local news outlets, the Managing Editor identified the importance of data, observing the successful international cross-media collaborations by the ICIJ:

I was thinking about “how can we partner in a better way with local media?”. A lot of our stories are based on data. A lot of the data can be sliced out to a local level. How can we work more effectively with local partners? How can we help to facilitate more investigative journalism on a local level? So that’s the idea about where the Bureau Local came from. (BIJ Managing Editor)

The BIJ Managing Editor had been designing the unit in a way to conduct local collaborative journalism by applying the ICIJ as an exemplar. As she highlights, “the ICIJ but for the UK, for the local”, the plan led to the 2017 establishment of a local unit, the Bureau Local. The purpose of the Bureau Local is facilitating local investigative journalism and holding power to account on a local level, which local media have increasingly struggled to accomplish due to financial difficulties. Since launching, the Bureau Local has been recruiting “Network Members”. It is an extended network of people, including local journalists, academics, students, bloggers, and developers, whose number reached 1,492 as of March 2022⁵⁹.

Previously in this chapter, I identified that a quintessential “BIJ’s story” should be something that only the BIJ can do (see section 4.4.2). The Bureau Local has more specific criteria for what this means. One of the strategies of the Bureau Local for putting the mission into journalistic practice was found during my newsroom ethnography. An offline dashboard hanging in the BIJ office shows that: A Bureau Local story should have “the potential for national AND⁶⁰ local stories”; methodologically, an investigation “could not otherwise be done (time, resource, tech)”; and finally, their story “has a clear public interest that has the potential for change”. The Bureau Local Director explained relevance at both local and national levels to me thus:

It’s not something happening in just one local area, i.e. have a corrupt council person. Sometimes it is just that one person in that one council. That is an important story to tell, but that’s not the goal of our projects. The goal is to look at how you connect the dots. How we understand, how things are happening on the ground, but also things that are happening systemically. (Bureau Local Director)

⁵⁹ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/local> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁶⁰ Emphasis in the original text.

Finding systemic corruption and wrongdoing with widespread relevance is what the BIJ seeks when it comes to newsworthiness, as identified previously (see section 4.4.2). Highlighted in the quote, the Bureau Local accomplishes the mission through investigating connected individual cases across locations.

How the Bureau Local actually applies these criteria to their work was observed at editorial meetings, which I asked to attend as a part of the observation research. The purpose of one of the meetings was to discuss ongoing investigation. The editorial meeting was mainly a question and answer session, where the Bureau Local Director posed a series of questions to the reporters, which related to the aforementioned elements of a Bureau Local story. Reporters explained the reasoning behind the datasets that were being used for the investigation and evidence they had gathered so far. A heated debate culminated in a decision for the journalists to continue working on the investigation. What can be inferred from the observation is that the Bureau Local team strives to ensure a high standard for their news stories.

As the BIJ Managing Editor pointed out at the beginning of this section, what primarily drives intra-national collaborative journalism is datasets that can be sliced into each local area. There are two main procedures of collaboration that the Bureau Local operates. First, the most significant role of the Bureau Local is as a coordinator or orchestrator of collaboration, in the manner of the ICIJ managing transnational collaboration. The Bureau Local provides datasets to each local area and, if needed, professional journalistic expertise in investigating. In this case, a universal investigative technique can be applied to each dataset given to local journalists who work on the same topic, but with specifically localised perspectives. For instance, in terms of the Domestic Violence investigation, 20 network members participated in the collaboration, and approximately 50 local stories were published⁶¹. A Bureau Local journalist who ran the collaboration explains how it worked:

We put the call out via our bulletin and on Slack⁶², and said “if anyone is interested, get in touch with me”. And 20 people did. So, I spoke to each of them and explained, “here’s the rules, you’ve got to respect the embargo, and we’re going to give you a lot of stuff but we’d quite like your help as well”. And they all agreed and signed up to that. I had a private Slack

⁶¹ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/projects/refuges/local-stories>. [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁶² Network Members are invited to join a publicly available Slack Channel of the Bureau Local.

channel for just those guys, and I told them “here’s what we got so far, here’s what I’m doing, and here’s a series of tasks that I would like your help”. (Bureau Local reporter 1)

The role of the Bureau Local as a coordinator of collaborative projects is clearly illustrated in the interview extract above. For collaboration, the Bureau Local first announces an upcoming investigation and recruits partners within the network members on their Slack channel. When collaboration participants are recruited, the next step for the Bureau Local is to create a private Slack channel only accessible to these collaborators. A lead journalist from the Bureau Local outlines the project, including the types and volume of data to be used, the main focus of the investigation, and the terms and conditions such as the embargo (ibid). Previous studies have already identified that advanced technologies such as virtual spaces significantly contribute to collaborative journalism (Heinrich 2012; Sambrook 2018b). This was also the case at the Bureau Local, where a series of steps, made possible by the affordances of readily available secure technology, had already been formalised into a set of bespoke journalistic routines and practices. It seems that from start to end, most of the collaboration communication is conducted through the private Slack channel, according to interviews.

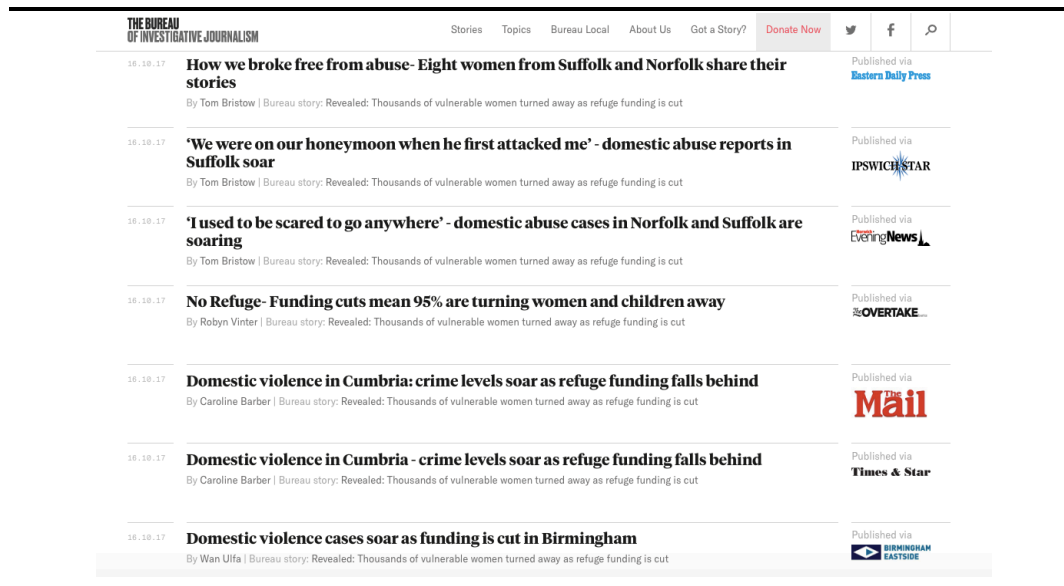
Once collaboration begins, both the Bureau Local and collaborating partners participate actively in sharing resources and skills with each other throughout the work. Bureau Local reporter 1 explains that an ethos for collaboration is often identifiable among collaborators:

It was really interesting to see them digging into that and to do things like talking to each other saying “I just had this thing from somebody about something happening in East London. That’s not really relevant to my reporting but if somebody else wants it, I can share that”. And that went on for several months and then at the end, we pulled all our findings altogether. (Bureau Local reporter 1)

According to this reporter, in the virtual sphere, collaborators including local journalists are willing to share information and help each other and cooperate towards a common goal, which can be seen as unconventional in journalism where a competitive culture used to be more common (Guevara 2013; Sambrook 2018b; Birnbauer 2019). While transnational collaborations have been conducted for several decades, collaboration was relatively new on a local level. My findings show that, although partially, the British journalistic culture is shifting from competitiveness to cooperativeness with the support of the Bureau Local. Several months of collaboration finally generated the publication of a number of news

articles across the UK. Figure 4.2 shows some of the outcomes from of the Domestic Violence partnerships from different parts of the UK such as *Birmingham Eastside* from the West Midland, *Times and Star* from Northern England, *Norwich Evening News* from East of England, *SomersetLive* from South West England.

FIGURE 4.2 The Bureau Local investigations published with local collaboration partners



Source: *The BIJ website*

The second type of collaboration is called “Reporting Recipes” – a publicly available “do it yourself guide”. The recipes describe the data resources and methodology (investigative practices) used for an investigation and is, in most cases, made available to the public after collaborative work is published:

Take an investigation, write “Reporting Recipes” and publish them ahead of our stories. These are for our collaborators, so they have a guide on how to work with us. Then once an investigation is out, the public is able to see how we did the investigation so they can take our investigation to scrutinise their own local areas. (Bureau Local Director)

The “Reporting Recipes” enable partner journalists more clearly to understand the procedures and resources of investigations during collaboration, and also provide resources to news audience which give them an insight into the kinds of work on which news stories are based. Once a collaborative work is published, the “Reporting Recipes” can also offer potential further open source ideas for investigations to anyone interested in examining an issue in their own area. The

“Reporting Recipes” are important for the local journalists in that they can save substantial time and labour when managing data. Data and computational practices, such as finding open data, obtaining data through the Freedom of Information Act, refining data, and making data searchable for analysis, are not only time-consuming and labour intensive but also, more importantly, require digital and technological literacy. These procedures can be particularly challenging for small local newsrooms operating under financial constraints, who may not be able to recruit for an emerging tech-savvy role (which is usually expensive) nor have the resources to allow journalists time to spend extended periods investigating. According to the Bureau Local, it is hoped that the “Reporting Recipes” can encourage more members of the public or local journalists to undertake in-depth and data-based investigations in spite of a paucity of time, resources and expertise. Additionally, the Bureau Local operates “expert round tables, community gatherings, etc” and “Hack Days or Collaborative Reporting Days” (Bureau Local Director). A weekly “Story Clinic” through the Slack channel (open to Network members) is also operated to discuss challenges and to share knowledge on stories shared by members.

Sambrook (2018b, p.34) rightly points out the role of nonprofits in collaboration that the “network of non-competing local outlets, with a non-profit intermediary bringing expertise and resources, embodies the new approach to delivering investigative journalism that would not otherwise be reported”. The Bureau Local, whose idea is based on the British version of the ICIJ, was established particularly to rejuvenate local investigative journalism through the method of collaboration. The Bureau Local Director sums this up as making “the available, accessible to the public”.

Organisational influences have closely related to routines influences, examined in more conventional news organisations (Shoemaker and Reese 2014). Such relation is also found in this nonprofit organisation where the nonprofit’s aim to rejuvenate investigative journalism on a local level introduced new sets of journalistic practices for collaborations to journalists. By acting as an innovator and enabler of new and emergent journalistic practices this nonprofit has played a role as an orchestrator of collaborative work and a provider of resources and skillsets in British journalism. Moreover, its dedication to investigative journalism has shown that how nonprofit newsrooms can be one of the new actors to providing the kind of journalism in society as Carson (2020, p.99) suggests that one of the alternative ways of sustaining investigative journalism would combine tradition and innovative practices.

4.6.3 A Collaborative Ethos: A New Journalism Tradition Among Nonprofits Which Benefits Both Newsrooms and Societies

The most important themes extracted from my field research relate to the ways that collaborative journalism at the KCIJ and BIJ can be facilitated because of the practical advantages, journalistic and financial, of their nonprofit financial models. As revealed earlier in this chapter (see section 4.4), these investigative newsrooms seek to perform investigative journalism that only they can do in their society, and their approaches to collaborative journalism often allow them to meet this standard. I would like to clarify once again that this exclusivity aims to produce “original” reporting that other mainstream media “cannot do” because of their structural financial or managerial systems. It does not aim to break the news or attract clicks with sensational headlines.

The leaders of both investigative journalism nonprofit newsrooms show a broadly similar opinion towards collaboration as an emerging trend in the media sector. It is argued that previously dominant attitudes towards competition and the long-established lone wolf characteristics of many journalists no longer enable a successful approach. Instead, a collaborative ethos is growing among nonprofit media organisations to strengthen journalism as a whole in the public interest (KCIJ Editor-in-Chief; BIJ Managing Editor).

The KCIJ Editor-in-Chief states:

Nonprofit, independent investigative journalism media, like us, consider such competition meaningless and harmful. [...] We exclude competitiveness. This thought is shared generally amongst nonprofit media organisations. Collaboration, rather than competition. “Let’s share important data”. We consider providing better quality information for the information users, by reporting on an issue more profoundly and comprehensively through collaboration with each other is more important than one outlet standing out. (KCIJ Editor-in-Chief).

The BIJ Managing Editor offers a similar opinion of this new ethos:

I think that the not-for-profit world, journalistic world, is a very small community. We are very open, collaborative and we share. [...] I know the whole journalistic world is changing, but you know, traditional newsrooms are very insular and everybody else is a competitor. Even the next desk is a competitor whereas the approach of not-for-profit is about resources. (BIJ Managing Editor)

What can be inferred from both statements, to the best of my understanding, is that the culture of cooperative work and sharing resources has been extensively

embedded within the nonprofit media sector. As the KCIJ Editor-in-Chief says, the aim for them of collaborative journalism is to provide better quality news stories to the public, not to be competing against other newsrooms for exclusivity. Similarly, the BIJ Managing Editor highlights that the nonprofit sector is more open to cooperating and sharing. This finding from nonprofits shows the shifting attitude towards a collaborative ethos and away from a competitive ethos, where the latter has often been normative among some conventional media organisations who are used to protecting their news content from rivals (Guevara 2013; Stonbely 2017; Sambrook 2018a; Birnbauer 2019).

With such a collaborative ethos among nonprofit media organisations, the KCIJ and BIJ have been participating and orchestrating collaborative journalism, as seen above (see section 4.6.1 and 4.6.2). The most advantageous aspect of collaboration is that newswriters at these newsrooms can produce high-profile, original investigative journalism. Three main reasons for the KCIJ and BIJ to undertake collaborative projects are identified from the field research: 1) it enhances newsroom capacity with collective knowledge, human and material resources; 2) nonprofits can obtain more comprehensive insights into issues; and 3) therefore, under-reported issues, despite its importance, can be delivered to the South Korean and the British public.

First and foremost, collaborative work increases the reporting capacity for investigations as a whole. By joining forces and accumulating each newsroom's human and material resources, small nonprofit newsrooms like the KCIJ and the BIJ can report better stories (KCIJ Editor-in-Chief; KCIJ 14; BIJ Managing Editor; Bureau Local Director; BIJ 2; BIJ 9). The KCIJ and BIJ are much smaller newsrooms than mainstream media companies such as KBS in South Korea or the BBC in the UK with their thousands of employees. Through collaboration, these investigative journalism nonprofits can be a part of big international or national investigations, which would otherwise be difficult, or even impossible, to achieve. The BIJ Managing Editor argues that collaborations benefit its newsroom:

As the whole sector has developed, we are much more now about collaborating with other organisations. Working with other organisations right from the beginning of the stories. Pros are you can bring a lot more resources, lots more understanding from different contexts and different cultures to a story. You will get a much better story. (BIJ Managing Editor)

The BIJ Managing Editor indicates that, by embracing collaborative journalism, participant newsrooms have an opportunity to publish "better" stories than they

otherwise would do alone. Such a knowledge-sharing process with various expertise and skills helps each media organisation. The BIJ Managing Editor adds that combining and accumulating resources, and diverse perspectives from multiple backgrounds, can generate a better story.

Second, certain issues require collective knowledge for investigative journalists to obtain comprehensive insights (KCIJ 8; Bureau Local Director). This applies to global as well as to domestic issues. On the one hand, globalisation has enhanced the interconnectivity of crimes requiring the involvement of numerous countries. A KCIJ newswriter acknowledges that:

There are many topics to be covered in collaborative ways. Particularly related to money. There are a lot of topics that you can only see the whole picture of an issue clearly, only when examining it internationally together. Like the ICIJ tax evasion projects related to money, weapon trades, money laundering, or environmental issues. (KCIJ 8)

The reporter above illustrates that issues, especially in relation to money, are better understood and examined comprehensively when cross-national collaboration is conducted. This perception echoes the findings from previous research that, in this globalised era, there are many more issues, such as international organised crime, requiring journalists' cooperation to achieve extensive understanding (Clements 2018; Heft et al. 2019). A Bureau Local story has to have both local and national narratives, which serve to reveal corruption happening across the nation to find out "things that are happening systemically" (Bureau Local Director). Geographically focused local collaborative journalism can raise an issue on a more substantial scale than reporting an individual case, and therefore, can evidence the importance of localised issues not as alienated or isolated but as a national discourse that the governing body needs to deal with nationwide (see section 4.6.2).

Finally, these benefits as mentioned above together can widen a range of investigative issues, which would previously have been impossible and unavailable for a newsroom to undertake alone. The affordances of collaborative journalism, and the journalistic practice that have emerged from them, have encouraged the KCIJ and the BIJ to publish more diverse topics of investigations to South Korean/British society with unconventional but innovative journalistic methods (KCIJ 29; KCIJ 30; BIJ 8). My qualitative data shows that, thematically, newswriters at these investigative journalism nonprofits have become able to report previously unknown or under-researched topics with enhanced reporting capacity. A BIJ reporter emphasises that collaborative journalism is essential because "you are

telling stories that British people aren't used to hearing about" (BIJ 8). It, correspondingly, allows news audiences to experience a more diverse range of news reporting than before.

Also, it seems that this newly introduced journalistic model has further benefited in enabling South Korean practitioners to broaden their perspectives on collaborative journalism in the South Korean journalism sector (KCIJ journalist participating ICIJ collaborations; KCIJ 29). A journalist adds, "the culture of collaborative journalism is not really shared amongst the South Korean media. [...] It is rare for journalists to work with people outside their own newsrooms" (KCIJ 29). Indeed, the illustrated reluctance to collaborate among journalists has been a common convention of journalism in many countries where competitiveness among journalists is more dominant than co-operation between them (Guevara 2013; Stonbely 2017; Sambrook 2018b; Birnbauer 2019). Sambrook (2018b, p.26) once describes, "Collaboration is never going to be straightforward within a journalism tradition which prides itself on exclusivity" and South Korean press has not been exceptional in this regard. However, it is found that within nonprofits, collaboration seems to become a new tradition.

Considering such a traditionally closed culture among South Korean journalists, a KCIJ journalist describes transnational collaborative journalism as "innovative enlightenment" that has changed practitioners' attitudes towards collaboration (KCIJ 29). Since the KCIJ first introduced cross-border collaboration, reporters from other news organisations consult the KCIJ on global issues such as tax avoidance using so-called "paper companies":

Journalists from other newsrooms often ask me things like, "I came across a company while reporting. Is this company one of the paper companies in the Paradise Papers or the Panama Papers that the KCIJ published?". I think this definitely broadened the reporting perceptions and expanded the scope of thinking of journalists from other newsrooms. [...] In terms of international collaboration, it highlights, "you can do it like that". I don't think South Korean journalists have so far thought that "you can report it like that". (KCIJ journalist participating ICIJ collaborations)

According to the interview, the KCIJ-ICIJ collaboration has a meaningful influence on the dominant competitive ethos in the South Korean news media, to the best of my interpretation. Journalists at other media have increasingly become exposed themselves to a range of issues that they previously would not have tackled. For example, KCIJ newswriters were contacted by them to consult about some suspicious corporations or monetary systems overseas (ibid).

Collaborative journalism of the KCIJ and the BIJ also offers clear journalistic benefits as a set of new norms and traditions with a collaborative ethos shared in the nonprofit sector. The collaboration can bring abundant resources and expertise from diverse participants that can supplement the skills and knowledge of each other to produce better investigative journalism. This journalistic methodology broadens a range of investigations topically and methodologically by integrating resources and expertise and provides more comprehensive perspectives on the issue by accumulating diverse perspectives from participants. By working with multiple layers of journalists, nonprofits can obtain a more complete picture of the issue. Consequently, it is possible that more original and higher quality reporting is delivered to the public owing to collaborations. This increases the opportunities for the public to read and hear more in-depth original news reporting, some of which they would never have known about before.

4.6.4 Summary: Inter- and Intra-National Collaboration for Better Journalism

This section discusses collaborative journalism at the KCIJ and the BIJ. Their newswriters highlight the ways in which nonprofit funding systems allow them to participate more actively in collaboration. A collaborative ethos widely shared among nonprofits facilitates collaboration to publish better stories. Although the types of key collaborative projects at the KCIJ and the BIJ are different (in that one is inter- and the other one is intra-national focused collaboration), it is apparent that collaboration is now routinised at these newsrooms. The KCIJ, as the only South Korean partner of the ICIJ, has been establishing their reputation globally with world-famous collaborative journalism since 2013. Their collaborative work has led to more diverse opportunities with international organisations such as OCCRP and media outlets in other countries. New technologies, such as secured communication systems and cloud storage, enable workers to share ideas and resources in a more secure and accessible sphere. The Data Journalism Unit plays an important role in dealing with the substantial amount of data provided, for instance, by the ICIJ. Cross-border journalism is considered an innovative journalistic activity in South Korea, which the KCIJ introduced. The BIJ, in 2017, launched the Bureau Local, a data-driven local unit, a British version of the ICIJ, for intra-national local collaboration. With the aim of boosting local journalism, the Bureau Local has been establishing its network with the public (including local journalists) to conduct

investigations across the UK and has partnered with them for collaborative projects. Two roles of the Bureau Local are involved when it comes to intra-national local collaborative journalism: an orchestrator of collaboration and a provider of Reporting Recipes. The Bureau Local, with its advanced digital literacy, works as a resource and skills provider to enable the release of collaboration partners from preparing data, which is a big part of much modern investigative journalistic work.

As previous researchers have emphasised (Edmonds and Mitchell 2014; Birnbauer 2019), collaborative journalism is imperative to nonprofit newsrooms and vice versa. I argue that the KCIJ and the BIJ play a significant role in introducing and implementing collaborative journalism in their countries as pioneers. Collaborative journalism aggregates individuals' capacity, knowledge and skillsets and enables practitioners to deliver a broader range of investigation, both topically and methodologically. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) highlight the organisational structures and their impact on journalistic practices. Due to the collaborative ethos, encouraged by nonprofit funding models, the KCIJ and the BIJ actively participate in sharing their knowledges and resources rather than constraining them for their own profits. Ultimately, collaborative journalism benefits the newsrooms to be able to deliver high-profile, original investigative journalism to their society, which would not previously have been possible. In Carson's chaos and control paradigm (2020, p.83), it is observed that the role of investigative journalism to bringing unaffiliated and marginal voices to be heard can contribute to its sustainability in the future. Together these results from my thesis provide a meaningful insight into how nonprofit newsrooms can fulfil such contribution to society by participating collaborations.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter explored the KCIJ and the BIJ to answer the research question 1, "What are the perceived driving forces behind the establishment of the KCIJ and the BIJ with nonprofit funding models?", and part of question 2, "What are the affordances and constraints of nonprofit funding systems that allow and/or hinder the newsrooms to conduct investigative journalism?". This study first descriptively examined the development of the KCIJ and the BIJ with their nonprofit funding. Carson's chaos and control paradigm (2020) usefully provided issues and concerns around the ever-changing media ecology in the 21st century where these nonprofits

were established. Carson (2020, p.89) suggested that public's support for journalism, caused by declining trust in elite media, has increased with the example of *ProPublica*, an American nonprofit investigative journalism organisation. Both the KCIJ and the BIJ also launched to be a nonprofit independent news organisation with supports from their society. The KCIJ funding comes from individual donations, which evolved from bottom-up and the BIJ is funded by foundations, mainly.

I argue that the vital aspect differentiating the KCIJ and the BIJ from others is that nonprofit funding systems are more favourable to newswriters to insulate their editorial independence. According to the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker and Reese 2014), autonomy of the editorial department is likely to be influenced by organisational structures. At the KCIJ and the BIJ, I argue that the news outlets were established and structured from the start to be independent from noneditorial influences and endeavoured to keep it. In fact, newswriters emphasise that they have not (consciously) experienced any pressures or influences from external political or economic forces, whereas some mention that they had experienced this at previous workplaces underpinned by government or state funding, private owners and/or advertising revenues. This argument is significant in that journalistic practices in publishing investigative journalism have been negatively influenced by the limited autonomy commonly experienced in some conventional newsrooms, as discussed in the literature review (see section 2.5 and 2.6). My findings are able to demonstrate that their editorial autonomy can provide positive opportunities to newswriters in undertaking investigative journalism.

First, the KCIJ and the BIJ enable newswriters to set their own criteria around newsworthiness, reporting that only they can do, based primarily on journalistic norms and values. For instance, the KCIJ undertakes investigations on certain topics less reported by some legacy media, not because of newsworthiness but because of political and economic influences around news production. The BIJ concentrates much more on systemic and extensive malfeasance of society to publish stories in the public interest. Staff at the KCIJ and the BIJ emphasise that their nonprofit funding models empower them to establish journalism-centric organisational purposes.

Second, workers at these nonprofits argued that they can decide journalistic routines autonomously in a way that newswriters conduct investigations with high levels of professional freedom. Newswriters also argue that slower and flexible

publication schedules, in contrast to the 24/7 fast news cycle at many daily news media, benefit the nonprofits to conduct in-depth investigations. The organisational dedication to creating a journalism-centric environment, with the necessary time and resources for original investigative journalism, is identified at both newsrooms. For example, journalistic and resource support at an institutional level for in-depth and long-term investigations, sometimes requiring years of data collection and analysis, are easily found at the KCIJ newsroom. The BIJ newswriters consider their rigorous fact-checking processes and lengthy right-to-reply procedures for increasing accuracy, to be one of their most fundamental journalistic practices. Previous research, as well as the testimony of my participants, has identified that these practices are decreasingly seen at many news media outlets, but passive journalistic activities such as those related to “PR-isation” (Moloney and McGrath 2020) and Churnalism (Davies 2009) are increasingly present. Contrarily, the KCIJ and the BIJ support their newswriters in the production of independent and often critical accountability journalism. Both nonprofit staff primarily attribute this to nonprofit funding systems, whose methods for achieving financial sustainability render the number of clicks or page views less relevant.

Last, the KCIJ and the BIJ have participated in collaborative journalism as one of the ways of fulfilling their missions and achieving organisational aims. I contend that this is boosted by a collaborative ethos shared widely in the nonprofit sector. The KCIJ has been the only South Korean partner of the ICIJ for cross-border collaborations since 2013. The newly introduced collaborative journalism has helped to broaden the perspectives of South Korean journalists and widen a range of investigations conducted, according to the KCIJ staff. In 2017, the BIJ launched the Bureau Local, a local unit, to be a British version of the ICIJ for intra-national local collaboration. The Bureau Local aims to boost local journalism by collaborating with local journalists and providing a platform for collaborators to share news resources, computational skills and knowledge. Taking this importance into account, collaborative journalism has been rooted in nonprofit investigative journalism organisations aided by new technologies. Collaborations are beneficial in that it empowers the newsrooms to work on high-profile, original investigations that “only the KCIJ/BIJ can do” in their countries. Moreover, nonprofit organisations are contributing in rejuvenating investigative journalism, fulfilling their watchdog role in society.

This thesis has, so far, discussed the ways in which organisational structures within nonprofit funding models affect journalistic practices at the KCIJ and the BIJ, in the main positively. However, as with all other funding models for media organisations, the nonprofit financial models come with constraints for newswriters carrying out investigations. I consider that there is a need to further examine these constraints and the ways in which the nonprofit newsrooms seek to overcome them in order to underpin their performances in achieving their journalistic aims. The following chapter analyses these elements to shed light on the multifaceted characteristics of nonprofit funding models for investigative journalism in relation to the long-term financial sustainability of these nonprofits.

CHAPTER 5

A Nonprofit Pathway: Challenges and Journalism-Centric Solutions

5.1 Introduction

Nonprofit funding systems are beneficial for the *Korea Center for Investigative Journalism* (KCIJ) in South Korea and the *Bureau of Investigative Journalism* (BIJ) in the UK in helping to secure editorial autonomy from external elements like politicisation and commercialisation in conducting investigative journalism, as mentioned by newswriters (see chapter 4). The advantages of actual and perceived editorial autonomy enable the newswriters to make independent editorial judgements of newsworthiness and maintain routine practices with a priority on the journalistic value, which differentiates them from many in state-funded or commercially funded media organisations. However, to succeed in their mission as independent investigative journalism newsrooms, maintaining their businesses is crucial.

The precariousness of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations has been discussed widely in journalism studies research. Monetary donations from individual members of the public have constituted most of the KCIJ's funding since 2012, whereas foundation funding has been the bedrock of the BIJ since 2010. However, since such nonprofit news outlets mostly depend on voluntary donations, there is a risk on long-term assurances around flows of funding (McChesney and Nichols 2010; Requejo-Alemán and Lugo-Ocando 2014; Hamilton 2016; Birnbauer 2019). Some foundation-funded nonprofit newsrooms face difficulty owing to the inability to extend their foundation grants (Birnbauer 2019) whereas other nonprofit news outlets such as the KCIJ and the BIJ have been operating for a longer time, 10 years and 12 years respectively, despite their own challenges in relation to funding uncertainty.

This chapter explores the constraining aspects implied by the research question 2, "What are the affordances and constraints of nonprofit funding systems that allow and/or hinder the newsrooms to conduct investigative journalism?". Constraints identified in this study are closely related to long-term financial sustainability, which

leads to the research question 3, “What are the challenges for the nonprofit newsrooms to achieve long-term financial sustainability?”. First, I examine the challenges faced by the KCIJ and the BIJ in relation to their nonprofit funding systems and their approaches in overcoming them. Then, I move to analyse perceived risks and opportunities around the importance of news impact, and associated emergent practices. Last, my conclusions about the long-term financial sustainability of a nonprofit pathway for investigative journalism will be discussed.

5.2 Funding Insecurity at Nonprofit Newsrooms

Political economy theory analyses political, economic, and related other elements affecting news production, and thus news content. Based on this analytical framework, many scholars in journalism studies have highlighted the negative consequence of prioritising noneditorial considerations over journalistic values at more conventionally funded media organisations (see Murdock and Golding 1973; Herman and Chomsky 2002; Fenton 2007). Adapting the theory, Carson’s control paradigm (2020, p.90) highlights that “political interference, market corruption that can lead to suppression of investigative journalism”. As Picard and Van Weezel (2008, p.23) also argue, varied kinds of ownership and financial sources can have an influence on the journalistic practices differently. Findings from these studies provides useful insights as reference to influential elements on newsrooms when I study nonprofit funding models. Additionally, research on nonprofits has already identified concerns around long-term financial sustainability (McChesney and Nichols 2010; Stetka and Örnebring 2013; Hamilton 2016) and the potential risk of funders’ exerting undue influence on nonprofit newsrooms (Birnbauer 2019).

Therefore, this section analyses; first, the way in which challenges associated with nonprofit funding systems might affect journalistic activities; and second, what are the organisational approaches of the KCIJ and the BIJ to managing this possibility. Since the key funding streams at these nonprofits differ, the analysis is undertaken separately for each newsroom, however the main issues are broadly comparable insofar as they relate to financial insecurity and its effects on journalism practices.

5.2.1 “Just Do Investigations” to Retain Membership Funding at the KCIJ

5.2.1.1 Fluctuations in Membership Figures

The most frequently noted concern among KCIJ newswriters is insecurity of funding caused by the fluctuation in the membership numbers, found in interview materials. Such fluctuation happens when a large number of individual donors withdraw donations after the publication of specific investigations. A majority of participants argue that donation subscriptions show a negative trajectory when the members have a different perspective on certain investigations to that of the KCIJ, in terms of journalistic value and newsworthiness, which is the main issue this section analyses.

This phenomenon is significant to understanding the membership funding system inasmuch as it could be interpreted as a potential external economic influence on news production. As examined in studies based on political economy theory, this is a similarity with issues found at commercial media, where advertisers can withdraw (and have withdrawn) advertising revenues when they do not like news reporting because it does not suit or echo their interests (see section 2.5). The fact that a similar logic is identified to the membership system may seem surprising, especially in the context of newswriters insistence elsewhere in interviews that they have a very high level of autonomy and that this is guaranteed and enabled by their newsroom's nonprofit status.

Before delving into the difficulty of the membership funding model, I would like to return briefly to the development of the membership donation model. When the Conservative candidate won the Presidential Election in December 2012, the membership numbers of the KCIJ increased sharply from 7,000 to approximately 27,000 (see section 4.2.1). This increase is important to consider how the assumed political inclination of some donors can be related to the professional autonomy of journalists under certain circumstances. As Birnbauer (2019, p.72) questions that from perspectives of opposition political supporters, investigations, published by a newsroom that is funded largely by certain party supporters, might not be viewed as impartial.

Drawing on from my observations and diverse interviews, it is shown that since the launch of the KCIJ in 2013, three investigations into topics related to the Democratic

Party caused noticeable decreases in the number of memberships (KCIJ 1; KCIJ 7; KCIJ 23; KCIJ 28; KCIJ 32). Certainly, this does not mean that every piece of reporting related to the Party causes the withdrawal of membership support. Although I was unable to directly observe in detail the aftermath of the first two investigations, since the last one was published whilst I was in the KCIJ newsroom, I was able to directly and indirectly observe the impact of the reporting on the newsroom in relation to the nonprofit funding system.

The third investigation whose topic involved a Democratic Party politician was made public on a Saturday. During the plenary meeting on the following Monday, KCIJ staff discussed the aftermath of the report. Being able to examine the response to the decrease in memberships and approaches in dealing with it, I have focused on the institutional discussion. At this plenary meeting, the Finance, Administration and Security Director (FASD) and Membership Engagement Manager (MEM) shared PowerPoint slides with the newsroom showing the difference in the number of members over the weekend. The slides showed data for members who had cancelled their donations, together with other related information such as membership joining dates. The following extract is from the meeting:

- The FASD: This is the decrease for the last two days. What percentage of these are those that joined in 2012?
- The MEM: About 50 percent. Half of members who cancelled the donation this time had joined in 2012.
- The FASD: The most distinctive feature of members who joined in 2012 is that they joined after [the Conservative Party candidate] won the Presidential Election. [...] the conclusion is that we have to report well.

This plenary meeting shows that the KCIJ is attuned to, and has processes for monitoring, changes in the membership. Among donors withdrew their support over the weekend after the publication, half of whom had joined in 2012. The statistical data supports the correlation, to some extent, drawn between investigations and membership fluctuation, which many newswriters at the KCIJ mentioned in their interviews. It is worth bearing in mind that every member of staff is expected to attend the plenary meeting, including the journalist who conducted the investigation. At the meeting, no one specifically criticised the journalist or talked about the reporting itself, the implication being that the newsroom as a whole is responsible for the fluctuation of memberships, not an individual journalist.

After the plenary meeting, I requested permission from an Editor to attend their unit meeting as I expected further internal debate on the issue. The author of the

investigation did not belong to this unit. As presumed, the unit meeting started with feedback and discussion on the investigation itself such as the method, evidence, research procedures and so on. When starting the meeting, the Unit Editor clarified the purpose of the discussion, adding that “we need to discuss and gather ideas on your reviews, why members reacted on this investigation like this and whether there is anything we’ve missed or not, so we can prepare in the future” (Unit Editor). The debate was critical and heated. The unit examined the quality of the investigation in-depth to determine how they could improve future investigations. Mostly, it was agreed that the topic itself was newsworthy enough to be published and had journalistic value. Still, some of the newswriters argued that the reporting could have been included more detailed supporting evidence in a better way. Also, some staff perceived a gap in judgements of newsworthiness between the internal newsroom perspective and external members of the public on this investigation.

This is a significant finding when it comes to my interest in independence from funders at nonprofit newsrooms. If a newsroom compromises their own standards of newsworthiness in deference to the interests of their audiences and funders, the newsroom can be no longer considered as independent. The unit justified the newsworthiness of the topic, and journalistic shortcomings were highlighted in much more depth than noneditorial aspects. From the observation, it is clear that newswriters see such incidents as multi-faceted and multiply determined, which is influenced by both avoidable aspects such as insufficient supporting evidence and unavoidable aspects such as different criteria for judgements on newsworthiness from the donors.

To sum up this discussion of the limitations of the membership-funded system, memberships can decrease in number if the KCIJ publishes certain investigative reports that members (funders) are not satisfied with. My observations and interviews indicate that fluctuations in memberships are not seen to be caused solely by one specific reason in a linear, cause and effect, way. Instead, associative and multifaceted aspects are seen to influence the fluctuation of donations such as a certain political party focus, insufficient research on the topic (lacking professionalism in some ways), and the differences of opinions between the KCIJ and the public regarding newsworthiness of reporting. First, the political element linked to the Democratic Party is a shared opinion among the KCIJ newswriters, to the best of my understanding. Second, in terms of news quality, it is highlighted that the investigations that caused the fall in membership themselves needed more

research and were professional lacking in some ways, leaving room for criticism. It is also suggested that some news stories deemed problematic by funders have not yet achieved the excellent standard of investigative journalism that KCIJ strives for. Last, many newswriters have considered that there appeared to be a gap between the internal and external perspectives about the criteria for the judgements of newsworthiness. This is emphasised by the fact that the KCIJ publishes investigations which related to their own journalistic norms and values, but donors can then demonstrate their disagreement by terminating their financial support.

5.2.1.2 Organisational Strategies to Insulate Newsroom Autonomy from Member Influence

The financial insecurity present as a result of the fluctuation in donations from members raises an important issue. If the correlation between particular topics of investigations and the subsequent decline of memberships is known to newswriters, a detailed analysis of the newsroom's approach to managing this drawback is needed. The repeated experience in the decrease of membership related to investigations around the certain party might have influence on journalistic independence in line with Davies' metaphor of the "electric fence" (2009, p.145). The electric fence metaphor for journalistic self-censorship captures the hypothesis that if a newswriter continually faces a certain challenge (such as libel cases when reporting a particular topic or target) the accumulated experience can restrain them in future reporting (ibid). To the best of my understanding, if the Democratic Party is believed to be one of the elements causing the decline in memberships at the KCIJ, I wonder that this might discourage journalists from reporting Party-linked news again in order to avoid damaging the KCIJ finances. Given that this relation is widely acknowledged in the newsroom, in what ways is newsroom autonomy secured from these funders exercising their influence? Most journalists argue that to maintain an independent newsroom, the KCIJ needs to keep investigating issues in consonance with its own judgements of newsworthiness without considering external elements such as members.

It is widely held that the KCIJ should continue to expose deliberate malpractice or breakdown of social systems regardless of political parties. They also argue that fluctuations in membership numbers do not curtail their investigations on similar political issues (KCIJ 1; KCIJ 2; KCIJ 5; KCIJ 7; KCIJ 8; KCIJ 22; KCIJ 23; KCIJ 30;

KCIJ 32). One journalist describes KCIJ newswriters as football strikers who do their best to score the goals regardless of opposing teams, contending that “whether it is a Conservative or Democratic goalpost, if we think we need to score the goal, we do” (KCIJ 30). This has long been the ethos of the KCIJ on editorial decision-making processes on news and will continue to be so, according to the reporter. By the same token, another journalist clarifies what the potential donor pressure means to them:

I think the internal consensus was “don’t be swayed by membership pressure. Just do it”. That’s it. [...] I would require stricter standards on the quality of reporting for the Moon administration [Democratic]. I wouldn’t stop investigating when the report seems close enough to be published but would examine more thoroughly and rigorously to write flawless reporting. We’ve never withdrawn or decided not to work on the related topics. But I would be more careful. (KCIJ 22)

The extract summarises most of the answers I got about how the newsroom, as a whole, approaches the issue, member pressure. According to the reporter, their newsworthiness has been and will be maintained in spite of the financial insecurity. This reporter, however, highlights that the reporter would investigate more thoroughly when reporting issues related to the Democratic Party. The reporter suggests that if an investigation is flawless, readers will accept the rationale of the publication regardless of their politics (ibid). Another reporter suggested that such decrease in the numbers was sometimes “unavoidable” since it once happened when there was no problem with an investigation journalistically (KCIJ 7). One reporter expected that after repeated “rises and falls in the membership, I think members would agree with our journalistic norms and values in the end” (KCIJ 8).

As I mentioned in the last chapter (see chapter 4), the argument made by newswriters at the KCIJ that they experience a very high level of editorial independence from external forces was one of the most important aspects that I examined throughout my newsroom ethnography. This is because the level of newsroom independence can also determine approaches towards potential external influences, membership donors in this case. My daily observations of newswriting helped me to verify the interview data in this respect. As far as I observed, the attitude of the KCIJ newswriters toward journalism seemed to remain the same regardless of the event. All the meetings, that I attended, before and after this membership drop revealed that the focus of discussions among newswriters was unchanged in that they only discussed editorial elements for investigations in meetings. In fact, the plenary meeting and unit meeting on the following Monday

after the membership drop were the only times I was able to observe newswriters discussing non-editorial issues.

There are additional opinions regarding this. One reporter says that he might consider the decrease in memberships, but the newsroom “has never withdrawn investigations nor change a tone of argument because of it” (KCIJ 8). Another adds that a newswriter might think about members’ responses on investigations when publishing them, but “a newswriter would need to deal with well both publishing undauntedly in spite of such thoughts and taking the responsibility on the result, theoretically” (KCIJ 7). This suggestion is something to be considered when it comes to professional newsroom autonomy. It is common for a newsroom to receive angry calls from the targets of investigations such as politicians, the PR operatives of private companies, or whoever else may be dissatisfied with the news output, including members of the audience. As revealed in the literature review (see section 2.5), continued pressures from outside forces could affect future news content (Herman and Chomsky 2002; Davies 2009). Unfortunately, a complete analysis on such individual level would require a psychological approach which is beyond the scope of this study. Still, it is noteworthy that during the fieldwork, I was able to observe that newswriters at the KCIJ continued working on the Party-related stories after the decrease and as of writing the thesis in March 2022, the KCIJ has continued to publish investigations on topics related to the Party.

My empirical findings in this study enhance our understanding of a member-donor funding system for nonprofit media organisations. Some US studies have found that, Democratic Party supporters contributed to a marked increase in individual donations for nonprofit media organisations (Hamilton 2016; Birnbauer 2019). However, less is known about the influence of members’ partisanship on donor-based funding, which indicates a need for more in-depth internal newsroom-focused research in the area. With this benefit of close-distance observation, my thesis study is helping to close some of the gaps in this under-researched area of nonprofit newsroom studies.

5.2.2 “Neither Impact-Driven nor Funding-Driven, but Mission-Driven”: Overcoming the Insecurity of Foundation Funding at the BIJ

5.2.2.1 Uncertainty on a Renewal of Term-Based Funding

Unlike the membership funding system at the KCIJ, the foundation funding model at the BIJ has different challenges in terms of sustainability. Most nonprofit organisations in the USA heavily rely on foundation funds (McLellan and Holcomb 2018, p.9). The biggest challenge a news outlet with a foundation funding system faces is the uncertainty of continuing financial support (Birnbauer 2019); the BIJ is not exceptional in this manner. The term-based funding system at the BIJ has one practical and one hypothetical challenge, which this section examines in detail. Firstly, and practically, a short term-based funding system (generally over two or three years) makes it difficult for the organisation to plan for the long-term. Secondly, since the uncertainty of acquiring funding extensions every two to three years requires the BIJ to continually fundraise throughout the year, this may hypothetically increase the power and influence of funders. Term-based funds are likely to cloud the newsroom, and its workers, in insecurity due to the uncertain possibility of funding extension at the end of the fixed term.

The result of this study suggests that the uncertainty over the long term caused by a reliance on foundation funding is one of the major concerns for workers in this nonprofit newsroom (BIJ Managing Editor; BIJ Investigative Editor; BIJ 4). A reporter discusses the unstable funding, adding “the funding will often not be guaranteed over a long period of time, so we are not able to plan with security over what money we are going to have in one year or two years or five-year time” (BIJ 4). I examined this aspect in-depth with the BIJ Managing Editor:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Interviewer: | Whenever funds end, do you try to find more funding? |
| BIJ Managing Editor: | Depends on the story. Sometimes actually there is nothing more to report here. Let’s move on. Look at another area. |
| Interviewer: | However, if you decide not to cover the area, what will be happening to the journalists who were hired to cover the specific area? |
| BIJ Managing Editor: | Either we have to shift these reporters on to different areas. Or we say the area you are specialised in, we do not cover anymore in this specific way. So, contracts come to an end. |

The interview with the Managing Editor brings into sharp focus on the possible impact of the term-based funding on the employment (in)security of newswriters. The newsroom has specific criteria when determining an extension of funding and, accordingly, staff employment. An extension of journalists' contracts depends on the necessity for continuing investigations at the time of funding contract expiry. My findings further provide internal perspectives on the possibility of job insecurity in this newsroom. The BIJ Investigative Editor described the situation in detail:

[We have] Three big funders. Their funding periods all came to an end pretty much at the same time. And if they hadn't renewed, we could have just dropped off the cliff. We would've had to let one or two people go. So, it is very uncertain from that point of view. [...] For instance, a reporter X⁶³ saying, "my funding runs out the end of [month]⁶⁴". Obviously, the problem, we need desperately to find the way to extend the funding. Otherwise the reporter X will now have to start looking at getting another job. (BIJ Investigations Editor)

The foundation-funded model requires the BIJ to be prepared for all outcomes after the contracted term comes to an end. As the Managing Editor says earlier, the worst-case scenario for employees will be the termination of their employment. Reporters are also aware of this kind of funding termination, as described. The employment status of reporter X in the previous quote could be vulnerable if the BIJ were unable to extend funds beyond the funding expiry⁶⁵.

However, more importantly, newswriters do not seem overly concerned about this kind of employment insecurity as it relates to the funding model (BIJ 6; BIJ 9). Asked whether the possibility of unemployment, on expiry of the current project-based funding, causes concern or not, one journalist firmly replied, "No" (BIJ 6) and added:

It doesn't worry me particularly, to be honest. I think we have a team that is really good at fund-raising and they also have a very compelling story to tell. So, I don't worry too much about it. [...] I'm not worried about that at

⁶³ The Investigations Editor mentioned the reporter's name, but it was replaced as it is unnecessary to reveal the actual name here.

⁶⁴ The month is removed for anonymity.

⁶⁵ The interview was conducted in Summer 2018 when they were concerned about the continuity of the journalist's employment. The reporter X was still working at the BIJ after the month that the Investigations Editor mentions, from which it can be inferred that the subsequent funding was granted.

the moment. I think we are quite a resourceful team and what happens happens. I don't think it's a big risk at the moment. (BIJ 6)

This journalist, and a few others, are similarly unworried about the insecurity of their employment. This attitude seems to be rooted in part in high levels of trust in the BIJ's performance at fundraising over time, as well as in confidence in the quality of the journalism being done (which is seen as a major factor in being able to attract future funding, which will be discussed in the next sections) (BIJ 6; BIJ 9). Note that such analysis is based on interview and observation data and it should be borne in mind a methodological limitation is that participants could not always disclose their personal views, especially where there is a risk of embarrassment or insecurity. Presumably, questions still remain about the negative psychological and professional effects of (in)security of employment. Unfortunately, this is beyond this researcher's scope to analyse further. Rather, I focus on the institutional risk management for minimising a negative influence of uncertainty of funding in the long-term on journalistic practice, which follows.

5.2.2.2 Organisational Strategies to Insulate Newsroom Autonomy from Direct and Indirect Funders' Influences

Uncertainty in funding sustainability, primarily caused by term-based contracts, is a seemingly unavoidable drawback for foundation-funded newsrooms and compels the newsroom to focus on fundraising throughout the year. Accordingly, a related potential challenge of this funding model stemming from the uncertainty in funding is that funders may influence news production in different ways. It might, for instance, have an effect on the power dynamic within the organisation, with the funders having the greater influence because their decisions can impact the newsroom as a whole, as well as the work of individual journalists. The BIJ Managing Editor states that although "funders have too much power", the newsroom has "set up systems and our governance in a way to try and build layers" to prevent such potential funder influence.

This section explores these approaches in order to further understand to funders' powers (and what is done to limit it). As discussed in the literature review, commercial or state-funded media organisations are often less willing to publish news reporting that might discomfort their advertisers or government (Benson and Powers 2011; Örnebring 2016; Freedman 2019). A question needing further

investigation here is whether and to what extent such attitudes towards funders are found in nonprofit media organisations among a competitive and limited pool of foundation funders. A predominant ethical concern for the philanthropic business model is that funders might intervene in the editorial process, or otherwise exert undue influence over journalistic practices according to previous studies (Townend 2016).

Several newswriters I interviewed were aware of the potential for funder influence over editorial decisions but argue that the BIJ successfully maintains editorial control of the coverage and that any commercial or political motivations of funders have not outweighed journalistic values in the news production process (BIJ Managing Editor; BIJ Investigations Editor; BIJ 1). A reporter says that “with philanthropy, there is a danger that someone may say ‘you have funding from these philanthropists who have a certain agenda, so therefore, you are writing stories to that agenda’” (BIJ 1). As the newswriter suggests, one criticism on the nonprofit funding system is that news reporting might reflect the funders’ political, economic, or other agendas. However, newswriters at the BIJ argue that there was no such direct influence from funders.

I am also keen, therefore, to focus on possible indirect and subtle means of funder influence at this foundation funded newsroom. My research finds that the long-term precariousness of funding for such organisations may be a factor in encouraging newswriters to focus on either “impact-driven news” (where funders pressure the organisations to have more impact with investigations) or “funding-driven news” (where a newsroom determines to investigate a particular subject because there is funding available for that area). Principally, in order to limit such potential influences, the BIJ seeks neither impact-driven nor funding-driven, but instead focuses on mission-driven investigations as a way to insulate newsroom autonomy (BIJ Managing Editor; BIJ Investigations Editor).

First, one of the prominent potential influences from funders at a foundation-funded media organisation is impact-driven investigations (BIJ Managing Editor; BIJ reporter 5). The BIJ Managing Editor explains the issue of impact-driven news in the nonprofit sector:

I think that’s the biggest way that foundation funders influence the non-for-profit stage. [...] It’s very interesting that there is a huge debate going and still going on in this whole sector: Should the not-for-profit world only focus on impact?. If you do this then impact drives journalism. Because you only

do the stories when you think they make a difference. (BIJ Managing Editor)

The Managing Editor sees impact-driven journalism as a subtle way of influencing the decision-making process in news production and it is essential to understand more fully in order to analyse newsroom autonomy at nonprofits. Indeed, how we understand the impact of news reporting is also a growing area of research across practitioners and academics alike (see Tofel 2013; Lewis and Niles 2013; Simons et al. 2017). One thing I wish to clarify here is when discussing “impact-driven” journalism, a narrow scope of the definition of news impact such as (tangible) societal changes is applied (Birnbauer 2019). A broader description of impact is discussed in section 2.11 and will be analysed based on my empirical data in section 5.3.

The problem of impact-centric journalism is that this could put pressure on newswriters and affect independence. Some of the BIJ newswriters have concerns about such influence:

I think it's because of funding. It's partly funding. I think funders want to see changes. I think that really has its downsides. You don't want the possibility of impact to drive the journalism. Some stories may generate less impact but are still important to tell. [...] Change is going to be slow [for some topics] and I feel like sometimes if you don't generate tangible impact or certain changes haven't happened, it can almost devalue what you have been doing. But progress can simply be slower in your specific area of focus. (BIJ reporter 5)

This quote above shows, in my interpretation, how impact-driven journalism can affect practitioners negatively. Funders often require quick, tangible and societal changes, and sometime other metrics, as an outcome of investigations from nonprofit newsrooms. However, tangible and lasting impact rarely happens so quickly in real life and measuring the value of investigative journalism in this way is difficult (Tofel 2013). Many of the BIJ's project covers issues on a global level such as international financial corruption, global health issues and so on. These areas are even more difficult to achieve such immediate and tangible impact than national and local level. Placing too much emphasis on the narrow scope meaning as understood by many funders could involve crossing an ethical line and open up nonprofit newsrooms to too much external influences. Most importantly, the BIJ reporter above argues that some of their investigations might be undervalued, not based on the journalistic merit but because of the absence of immediate tangible

impacts when, in the real world, impacts can be much more gradual in the emergence, and can manifest in different ways.

Therefore, there is a possibility that an impact-driven attitude can be detrimental to a newsroom in terms of newsroom autonomy. Such environment may affect a decision-making process by pressuring journalists to focus more on topics that are likely to generate fast, tangible, narrowly defined changes. This can cause a lack of diversity and depreciation of investigations on other valuable issues that might not generate such substantial and immediate impacts. Accordingly, a newsroom needs to plan an institutional approach in order to not be led by funders, but to achieve its own mission as an independent media outlet to publish investigations based primarily on their own journalistic standards and values.

The BIJ Managing Editor underlines their own critical intention to maintain the journalistic value as the highest priority in selecting topics. The main strategy to insulate the newsroom from impact-driven influence involves a focus on what they think is the most important in terms of newsworthiness from issue selection to publication:

It is so important you take a story and you are led by the story. And you know we would not have done our Drone work⁶⁶ if all I was interested in was “we have to stop drones killing people”. I wouldn’t have imagined when we started on that, “we are going to stop the CIA using Drones killing people in Pakistan and by the way civilians get killed”. I wouldn’t have thought that at all. (BIJ Managing Editor).

The Managing Editor asserts here that change or impact is not the most important element for choosing a subject, and various criteria are, and should be, applied for appraising investigations. As an example, the Editor highlights the Drone work, developed within the (then) current Shadow War project (as of the fieldwork in 2018), as an investigation primarily conducted based on the journalistic considerations. The newsroom did not start the project about the drones in Afghanistan with the aim of stopping the war; it was initiated because the issue itself warranted investigation but was under-reported in general, according to the

⁶⁶ According to the BIJ website, “Drone Warfare” is described as following: “between 2010 and 2020 the Bureau tracked US drone strikes and other covert actions in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen and Somalia. The comprehensive reporting on civilian deaths helped lead to greater official transparency on targeted killing, and provided the data needed to hold the White House to account”. <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/projects/drone-war> [Accessed: 28 Oct 2021]

Managing Editor. This is an example of how, at an organisational level, the BIJ endeavours to be mission-driven in order to minimise the dangers of an impact-centric attitude.

Second, funding-driven journalism is also one of the subtle ways in which funders could influence the nonprofit newsrooms (BIJ Managing Editor; BIJ Investigations Editor). Funding-driven journalism is where a newsroom chooses to investigate an issue because of the available funding that accompanies it. BIJ newswriters argue that the newsroom avoids funding-driven journalism by eschewing, or at least limiting, funder influence on news content. Nonprofit news outlets are having increasing difficulty in obtaining further funds (see section 2.12). Under these competitive circumstances, it can be tempting for newsrooms to obtain available funding regardless of any accompanying condition on reporting. The following interview extracts illustrate the danger of funding-driven journalism:

The risk I think you've got to be very mindful of is that you can't be guided by funding. It's very easy to go, "oh there is so much funding for the refugees. Let's go and do an investigation on refugees because that's the where the money is". You really got to be very careful about being led by the available funding. And that's a risk that you become led by funding. (BIJ Managing Editor)

You know if a funder comes and says, "I will fund this". It's very tempting to do that. That might not really be the next thing you want to do. Do you see what I mean? Because somebody comes to our team and says, "I'm really interested in doing this area". Even if they are not telling you what stories to do, but that area. (BIJ Investigations Editor)

A common concern shared by the Managing Editor and Investigations Editor stems from the need to protect editorial independence in decision-making processes on investigations, and the risk of such decision becoming compromised and limited by external influence from funders. Moreover, they argue that topics of investigations at the BIJ were not selected because of available funding, but because of their journalistic values. When funding drives journalism, funders can hold more authority to choose a topic (or a topic area) to be published than a newsroom, which takes away journalistic autonomy over judgements of newsworthiness and power over issue selection. In this case, a newsroom could serve the interests of the powerful and wealthy instead of fulfilling its duty as a watchdog to hold power to account, which many political economists have been critical in analysis on conventional media (Herman and Chomsky 2002, p.xi).

An approach for the BIJ takes to avoid the dangers of being too funding-driven is the same as the approach to avoiding being too impact-driven. It is argued that the BIJ chooses the topics it investigates in order to achieve its journalistic mission. Since the BIJ Managing Editor is in charge of fundraising, her decisions on applying for certain grants are highly likely to affect news production. When asked, she highlights that she has steadfast parameters in mind when seeking funds:

We try not to be funder-driven. It's much more about this is an area that we think is important. Nobody else was reporting on where we can bring an asset and make a difference. Let's work on that area and then let's try to raise funds if you want to stick to. (BIJ Managing Editor)

The BIJ Managing Editor expresses a strong denial about money-guided investigations, which, to an outside observer, might appear to involve funders having undue influence over journalism practices. To keep the newsroom independent, she highlights that the newsroom conducts investigations on subjects that they determine to be journalistically valuable and newsworthy to report, that is to say, mission-driven journalism.

In practice, and additionally, the newsroom addresses the matter by establishing a firewall between the newsroom and the external funders. All staff are required to participate actively in respecting this notional firewall. A key aspect of ensuring the firewall effectively is to exclude newswriters from the fundraising process, so that news production can remain more mission-driven (Bureau Local reporter 1; BIJ 9). This approach places the responsibility for fundraising primarily upon managerial level staff such as the BIJ Managing Editor and the Bureau Local Director. Because the Google fund for the Bureau Local was granted for two years from its launch in 2017, I asked a reporter what preparations were being put in place for this:

Interviewer: Google Fund is until next March⁶⁷. Do you have any strategy for getting more funding?

Bureau Local reporter 1: That is all the Director of the Bureau Local's job. I don't do anything on funding [...] But the director is working really hard to source it. That's not my interest or expertise at all. I can't speak to that at all.

This reporter from the Bureau Local emphasises that a fundraising process is the Bureau Local Director's role. Another BIJ journalist broadly supports this argument,

⁶⁷ Since this interview was conducted in Summer 2018, "next March" in the interview meant March 2019, two years from the Bureau Local launch.

while also noting that they sometimes collaborate with funding bids for journalistic matters: “there’s a fundraising consultancy works with the Bureau. Obviously Rachel⁶⁸ does. I might help the pitch, providing content. But I’m not involved in the funding” (BIJ 9). As identified in section 4.2.2, journalists who involved in a project outline explaining the project on the grant application form. Although they do the journalistic part of work on the application, according to the findings here, they are excluded in the financial part, such as seeking for available funding.

Although the funding is partially linked to individual reporters’ employment, the commonly shared view I encountered is that the exclusion of reporters in fundraising and this separation is an important point to note. Throughout journalism history (especially more recently), we have observed the erosion of firewalls between editorial and commercial department, leading to the detriment of the professional working conditions of journalists and the independence of their news outputs (see section 2.5 and 2.6). According to findings from my study, separation of news production from the fundraising process is needed for insulating newsroom independence in the nonprofit newsroom, and the BIJ tries to achieve this.

5.2.3 Summary: Journalism-Based Approach to Overcoming Financial Insecurity

Previous media studies adopting political economy theory have produced useful insights into how funders and related external interests can influence newsroom autonomy (Herman and Chomsky 2002; Hardy 2014; Carson 2020). Referencing of analysis on such influences, this section examined the ways in which funding insecurity and subsequent funder influences have an impact on newswriters at nonprofits. Although the KCIJ and the BIJ have different types of nonprofit funding systems, both are similarly concerned over their funding inconstancy and potential funder influences. At the KCIJ newsroom, a membership-funded organisation, funding instability is caused by the fluctuation of membership numbers. A significant drop in the number has happened a few times, and when it does occur, it seems that the newsroom discusses the issue to prevent recurrence in the future. On an individual level, a majority of the newswriters emphasise that this has never

⁶⁸ Rachel Oldroyd is the Managing Editor and CEO at the BIJ at the time of this field research.

discouraged them from investigating certain topics. On an institutional (values-based) and practical (practice-based) level, the newsroom's internal approach focuses on publishing investigative journalism without being swayed by external forces. The BIJ, a foundation-funded organisation, faces challenges in the form of term-based funding contracts, which are also likely to affect staff employment security. As most of the foundation funding contracts come with an expiry date, the newsroom requires constant fundraising. Newswriters at the BIJ reveal that they are aware of the potential risk of funders' influence, but insist that their editorial independence has not been compromised. The newsroom strives to be mission-driven, and not funding-driven nor impact-driven, and has implemented processes which seek to maintain a firewall between journalism practice and the economics of the newsroom.

Workers in both nonprofits believe that producing in-depth, original investigative journalism and constantly improving their practice and output, are the best things they can do to overcome the disadvantages of their funding systems. Newswriters at the KCIJ and the BIJ commonly mention that their newsroom autonomy is insulated from external forces such as funders, as revealed in the previous chapter (see section 4.3). However, in this chapter, it is found that such autonomy was not freely available to the newsrooms, but instead that they continuously strive to insulate themselves from potential forms of funder influence. This is because maintaining independence is directly linked to their credibility and through that to their long-term financial sustainability. The rationale behind this belief, concentrating on the Fourth Estate function of investigative journalism, will be discussed in the next sections, which discusses the roles played by the increasing need among investigative journalists to demonstrate and archive news impact.

5.3 New Practices for News Impact

Before delving further into the sustainability of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations, the shared norms and practices around the issue of news impact among newswriters at the KCIJ and the BIJ need to be more clearly understood. As discussed in section 2.11.1 of the literature review, due to the variety of definitions of news impact, as well as its emergent and relatively new importance to the practice and political economy of news production, no single all-encompassing criteria and measurement tool for understanding or measuring news impact exists.

Accordingly, for example, many organisations have attempted the nascent development of tools for measuring and charting impact such as ProPublica's Impact Tracker, CIR's Impact Tracker, NewsLynx by Tor Center for Digital Journalism, and MORI by Chalkbeat (see Tofel 2013; Keller and Abelson 2015; Schiffrin and Zuckerman 2015).

Reaching a consensus on defining news impact is almost impossible, and therefore, this thesis does not intend to set a definition of news impact written in a few sentences. Instead, the research took an open, exploratory approach and here provides a range of descriptions of news impact generated from internal perspectives at the KCIJ and the BIJ. It is significant to obtain such internal perspectives for a number of reasons. First, how impact is understood at the coalface potentially affects journalistic norms, practices, and activities in undertaking investigative journalism in the public interest. Second, this provides background knowledge (or opinions) for us to gain more insight into the long-term sustainability of nonprofit funding systems in relation to news impact, which I will discuss in the following sections (5.4 and 5.5). To find out more, I included specific questions in interview schedules about their opinions on which investigations have generated news impact. This section examines how the KCIJ and the BIJ deal with the issue of, and challenges presented by, news impact from internal perspectives. It starts with a discussion of the range of investigations and their news impacts that interviewees provided. Additionally, systems for tracking and recording news impact at nonprofits will be explored. Owing to the nature of the topic, which is organisationally specific, the findings are presented by each newsroom.

5.3.1 Sharing Follow-up Stories on Impact through the Website at the KCIJ

To get the thoughts of actual practitioners about news impact, I asked individual interviewees. Unsurprisingly, when asked, newswriters suggested a wide range of examples from societal changes to expressions of personal gratitude, as shown in Table 5.1. For instance, societal changes included political and legal actors becoming involved in official investigations, a new regulation being introduced, or the dismissal of powerful people from their jobs, were often indicated as examples of news impact by my participants. Moreover, journalists often consider abstract indicators of impact to be just as meaningful as tangible societal changes. It was

suggested to me that even though an investigation has not generated a tangible societal change, when it addressed under-explored, but important topics, it can be considered as impacts upon journalistic values. It is common for newswriters here to argue that they aim to investigate issues that other media outlets cannot publish owing to political, economic and/or practical reasons in South Korea (see section 4.4.1). Reporting issues related to specific topics itself can be crucial, and therefore, this finding on news impact reflects the KCIJ’s aforementioned organisational mission.

TABLE 5.1 Investigative reporting and its news impact stated by the KCIJ staff⁶⁹

Investigations	Impact generated by the investigations	Mentioned
Documentary “Spy Nation” ⁷⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court taking action 	7
ICIJ Offshore Leaks ⁷¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government initiating investigations and imposing additional taxes • A Special Act proposed by the Parliament • Raised awareness of tax avoidance 	7
Sewol Ferry Disaster ⁷²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised awareness of the malpractices of news media • Addressing an under-explored but journalistically valuable topic 	6
Who Twisted the Policeman’s Arm ⁷³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court taking action 	5
Corruption of Catholic Priest ⁷⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosecutors initiating an investigation • The Priest was withdrawn from the church 	3
National Medal and Power ⁷⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliamentary debate 	2

Source: Author collected

⁶⁹ Most of the investigations listed here were published in series, sometimes over the years, so I linked one of the stories. This was an open-end question, so one journalist might provide more than one examples.

⁷⁰ <https://newstapa.org/article/qZFDC> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁷¹ <https://newstapa.org/tags/파나마페이퍼스> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁷² <https://newstapa.org/article/GFzBQ> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

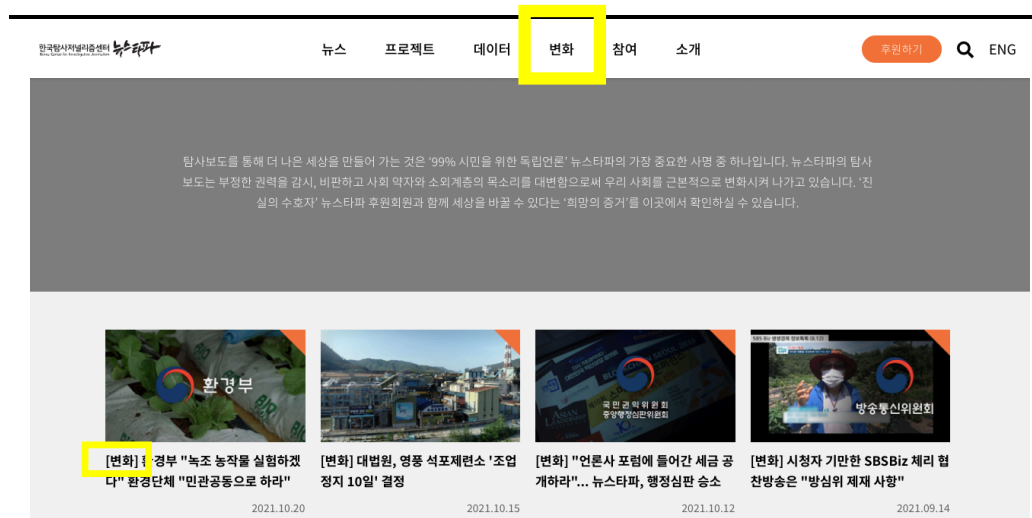
⁷³ <https://newstapa.org/22653> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁷⁴ <https://newstapa.org/42663> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁷⁵ <https://www.newstapa.org/article/Oi2vE> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

Lastly, some journalists say that when a victim or news source shows gratitude to a reporter, this can be seen as a form of news impact. This is worth noting as such human- or micro-level impact has rarely been discussed in previous studies but is valued by the journalists in the field. As discussed in the literature review (see section 2.6.1), diversity in news sources, by embracing an unaffiliated group of people and giving them a voice, is one of the essential elements for original reporting in the public interest, which mainstream media often neglects.

FIGURE 5.1 News Impact published on the KCIJ website⁷⁶



Source: The KCIJ website

Another way that we can get an idea of news impact at the KCIJ is by analysing the information about how their work has changed things presented to the public (and potential funders/members), on their website. The KCIJ website includes a “Change”⁷⁷ category, as shown in Figure 5.1. The description section on this webpage states that:

By checking the corrupt power and giving a voice to the voiceless and the weak in society, the newsroom has been changing society fundamentally. You can find the ‘evidence of hope’ that we can change the society with ‘the guardians of truth’, members supporting the KCIJ.

⁷⁶ “변화” (highlighted with a yellow box in the screenshot) in Korean literally means “Changes” in English.

⁷⁷ <https://www.newstapa.org/tags/변화> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

When it comes to social movements against social injustice, it is suggested that, “To enthuse individuals to act, the emotion of hope is also needed” in addition to “overcoming fear” caused by challenging social injustice (Sreedharan et al. 2020, p.134). Individual donors, who may consider news impacts as “the evidence of hope”, can be encouraged to act (i.e. supporting the kind of journalism revealing social injustice and malfeasances, in this case). One KCIJ reporter also highlights that showing a hope to the audiences that the world can be changed for making their lives better can be the reason for them to donate to the newsroom (KCIJ18). In addition to this perspective, such potential future donations related to news impact will be analysed further in the next section (see section 5.5).

By publishing these follow-up stories, the KCIJ shares their practices with audiences, some of whom are funders. For instance, a story headlined, “Ministry of Food and Drug Safety expanding a more range of information on the ‘medical device’ available after the KCIJ’s investigation⁷⁸”, highlights the change made in a range of publicly available information. Moreover, the KCIJ also considers a change happening to an individual adding a story entitled, “‘He didn’t twist policeman’s arm’... Supreme Court declared innocent⁷⁹”. Whereas the former is an example of impact on an institutional level, the latter is on an individual level, which reflects the newsrooms’ criteria both for being a check on systemic wrongdoings and the powerful as well as championing the socially powerless in their news reporting. A KCIJ researcher highlights the value of the webpage adding, “I think it is worth informing our donation members because this can be the reason to donate to the KCIJ, or because this could make them think that the KCIJ deserves their donations” (KCIJ R&D Researcher). According to the researcher, communicating about news impact is considered a significant element for funding because societally valuable returns on donations can provide more motivation for the donors. This argument about impact as “returns” will be discussed in detail in the next section (see section 5.5).

The procedure to formally develop an impact evaluator (tracking tool) was an ongoing process as of my field research in Spring 2018. An R&D researcher in charge of developing the tool explains that none of the currently available impact trackers is suitable for the KCIJ. This is because all newsrooms operate under different circumstances in terms of size, purpose and funding systems (R&D

⁷⁸ <https://www.newstapa.org/article/26567> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁷⁹ <https://www.newstapa.org/article/O1KFi> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

Researcher). The researcher’s plan for an impact tool is to encompass all of macro, meso and micro levels of changes in both quantitative and qualitative ways as much as possible (KCIJ R&D Researcher).

5.3.2 Purposive Use of Impact Trackers at the BIJ

To find out more about the internal perspectives at the BIJ on news impact, I took the same bottom-up approach of first asking individual interviewees. Similar to the KCIJ, diverse example of investigations and their impacts were provided, as indicated in Table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2 Investigative reporting and its news impact stated by the BIJ staff

Investigations	Impact generated by the investigations	Mentioned
Superbugs, the use of Antibiotics ⁸⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indian Government taking an action on the use of antibiotics for making livestock grow faster Raised awareness around the issue of antibiotics use 	6
Drone Project ⁸¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging the transparency regarding the matter Investigations cited by world-wide media 	4
Homelessness Project ⁸²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government implementing official statistics Raised awareness on the topic 	3
Intensive Pig and Poultry Farming ⁸³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government inquiry Environmental Secretary mentioning about the issue Raised awareness on the issue A news story itself is impact 	3
Domestic Violence ⁸⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parliamentary debate 	2
Joint Enterprise ⁸⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Justice Select Committee initiated an investigation into the law 	2

Source: Author collected

⁸⁰ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2018-01-30/a-game-of-chicken-how-indian-poultry-farming-is-creating-global-superbugs> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁸¹ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/projects/drone-war> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁸² <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/projects/homelessness> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁸³ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/projects/food-and-farming-industry> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁸⁴ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/projects/refuges> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁸⁵ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/projects/joint-enterprise> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

Government actions such as the introduction of new law/regulations or parliamentary debates are frequently mentioned. Publishing investigations on under-researched topics themselves can be considered as crucial news impact regardless of tangible changes in society. Also, by doing so, investigations can introduce new issues, and possibly raise awareness of the issues. The BIJ has argued that the newsroom aims to publish under-reported issues that other media could not report (see section 4.4.2). This is also probably one of the reasons why raising an awareness is suggested as impact.

My observation reveals that the BIJ constantly discusses news impact in the newsroom. At one of the BIJ's plenary Monday meetings that I attended, the BIJ Managing Editor shared the news impact of their investigations as an example of what the newsroom could achieve with their news stories. An impact tracking tool has already been put in place at the BIJ. Previous research, mainly on foundation-funded nonprofits, explains that demands from funders are primary reasons for nonprofits to chart news impact (Lewis and Niles 2013; Simons et al. 2017; Birnbauer 2019). This applies to the BIJ as well, and therefore, news impact is embedded more closely into daily activities.

The BIJ uses an "Impact Tracker" for tracking and archiving news impact that was created at and shared by the CIR:

We have an impact tracker. It records small developments, like the story being cited by a media outlet but also bigger changes. You log the development depending on what sort of level of impact you had. [...] It immediately picks up citations by other news organisations. So, if a news report comes out and cites the Bureau's work, it picks it up automatically. (BIJ 12)

The Impact Tracker is populated both manually by individual reporters who find news impact generated by their investigations and automatically by picking up citations of BIJ's investigations in other media. According to the CIR, the provider of the Impact Tracker, it is designed as an "interactive database" with which a newsroom can "create records for all the real-world change associated with your work" (Green-Barber 2016).

FIGURE 5.2 The main screen of the Impact Tracker

Create Outcome

Please record deliberate distribution of your projects, organic pick-up of and response to stories, and impact stemming from your content.

Description of Impact *

Date of Impact

E.g., 08/30/2016

Macro

Macro outcomes are those changes that happen at the level of an institution or power holder, resulting in structural change.

Meso

Meso outcomes are those changes that happen at the level of a group.

Micro

Micro changes are those that happen at the level of an individual.

Source: "Impact Tracker" by The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR) (Green-Barber 2016)

I asked one of the BIJ staff to demonstrate the Impact Tracker from a laptop. Even though the screenshot of the Impact Tracker shown in Figure 5.2 is collected from the CIR website, the BIJ uses the same one. This tracker divides news impact into four categories: Macro, Meso, Micro, and Media. These subcategories are explained further by Green-Barber (2016) in the system's guideline:

- Macro:** Government investigation, Hearing, Institutional action (firing, reorganization, etc.), and Law passed, Law proposed, Policy change
- Meso:** Award, Content used in public meeting, Content used in research, Lawsuit filed, Network formation/strengthening, Organization uses content
- Micro:** Attitude changes, Benefit to source, Increased awareness/knowledge, Increased trust as source of news & information, Individual takes action
- Media:** Copycat story, Editorial, Full story, Mention/Citation, Staff attend conference, Staff gives interview

Macro refers to institutional level changes, Micro is individual-level change, Meso is between Macro and Micro and Media category includes how investigations are used around the media industry. As illustrated, the Impact Tracker is developed to collect and collate a wide range of news impact generated by news reporting.

Despite this nuanced approach, which echoes many of the ways impact is imagined by the BIJ workers, there are limitations to the Impact Tracker. According to one newsworker, archiving impact with a seemingly deliberately designed tracker still leaves gaps where some of the many diverse types of news impact are not included:

You do this and there's a Parliament hearing. You know that works in the impact tracker. There might be other things the impact tracker can't calculate. [...] The Twitterbot story about South Africa and the Twitter industry came out in December. I think it is one of the best published exposés of how fake accounts on Twitter function. But I don't necessarily think it had an impact. (BIJ reporter 2)

The journalist above points out that the tracker could miss some vital and well-constructed investigations just because it did not generate certain kinds of measurable and recordable impact. It is argued that the Impact Tracker captures as many diverse news impacts that can be triggered by investigative news, but not all important news reporting can be documented under the pre-set categories of the Impact Tracker (ibid). For instance, several newsworkers emphasise that certain investigations are valuable as they are, without sparking real-world changes.

Another important finding with regard to the Impact Tracker is that the Bureau Local did not use this tool, and was developing their own impact tracking tool, at the time of my field research. This seems because the Impact Tracker is not suitable for gauging the less national or global journalistic practices and outputs of the Bureau Local. At the time, the team used a temporary tracking tool in an Excel form with impact categories heretofore such as "Local coverage, National coverage, Local Story Fund, Coverage of BL⁸⁶, Refuge Woman Impact, Awards, BL speaking events, BL events/meetups, Feedback, Network Support, Political Impact". Due to the nature of the Bureau Local, collaboration with its network (together with the education and training of network members) is probably one of its primary functions and an enabler of its reporting in many important ways. Therefore, measuring impacts in relation to such a category is essential for them (whereas this would not

⁸⁶ BL means the Bureau Local.

be relevant to the rest of the BIJ newsroom). One Bureau Local newsworker describes:

It's been tricky because a lot of the stuff, you know we see "impact" as things like someone saying "I have got a problem with this I can't work out how to do the data visualisation with this" and someone else saying "oh well, I've got a few spare hours, I will help you". [...] And this kind of stuff is not captured in the impact tracker as it is. So yeah, we are kind of doing our own slightly more targeted version of it. (Bureau Local Reporter 1)

This is a clear expression of the differentiation of impact criteria applied to the Bureau Local compared with the rest of the newsroom. The Bureau Local was established with the aim of facilitating local news by collaborating with professional and amateur local news producers in the regional, local, community and hyperlocal news sectors (see section 4.6.2). Therefore, it is crucial to gather data on education and skills-development related impacts among the newsworkers and introduce collaboration-focused criteria that the current Impact Tracker cannot track.

5.4 The Journalistic Value of News impact: Developing the Newsroom's Recognition and Reputation as a Watchdog of Society

Potential funding insecurity at nonprofit media organisations comes from the fluctuation of membership numbers (KCIJ) and the termination of current foundation funding contracts (BIJ). Such insecure financial streams could be a substantial disadvantage for investigative newsrooms by affecting newsroom autonomy. The organisational plan for overcoming these challenges, commonly found in both nonprofits, is simpler than I expected. The two nonprofits are focusing more and more on the news production elements of investigative journalism in order to achieve news impact. For the sake of clarity, from now on in this thesis, news impact – impactful investigative journalism – generally refers to a broader scope of meaning of news impact that hitherto provided by newsworkers at the KCIJ and the BIJ. Publishing journalistic value-driven, impactful reporting aims to overcome possible interventions from external forces such as influence-seeking members (KCIJ) and funding-driven or impact-driven (in the narrower scope of meaning of impact) journalism. This section examines the rationale behind establishing such an institutional journalism-driven approach to increasing long-term financial sustainability, which will be continuously analysed in the next section (see section 5.5).

My findings reveal that publishing hard-hitting investigative journalism guided by their own journalistic norms and values, and constantly generating news impact, are imperative for nonprofit newsrooms to build their initial recognition as well as a long-term brand reputation as investigative journalism organisations. As journalism academics have commonly discussed, a key role of journalism in society is its watchdog role as an agent of the Fourth Estate (Schultz 1998; Aucoin 2005; Matheson 2012; Carson 2020). It is widely highlighted that journalism contributes to society by changing that society for the better by uncovering hidden malfeasance. The definition of investigative journalism also includes news impact as an essential element, as explored in the previous chapter (see section 1.3). It therefore follows that investigative journalism newsrooms can increase their brand recognition and reputation by fulfilling this societal duty. For instance, the Watergate investigation “helped establish *The Washington Post’s* reputation as a serious national newspaper and a rival to *The New York Times*” (Schudson 2004, p.1234). Both the KCIJ and the BIJ seem to have adopted this principle as a critical practice since their foundation in the 2010s and have been building newsroom recognition and developing reputations as investigative journalism organisations by producing impactful investigative reporting continuously in order to sustain their newsrooms both journalistically and financially.

In the early days, these newsrooms faced challenges when mainstream media in South Korea and the UK used their investigations without appropriately crediting them (KCIJ Investigative Unit 3 Editor; KCIJ 22; KCIJ 29; BIJ 12). The KCIJ Investigative Unit 3 Editor says, “it has happened a lot of times. I can’t even count this because there were so many times”. For instance, one news organisation produced reporting with an “exclusive” headline, which was very similar to what the KCIJ published a few days before (ibid). A similar experience can be seen at the BIJ. Their investigations were sometimes used without the BIJ’s by-line. One BIJ journalist describes the phenomenon:

I think we’ve done a lot of work on trying to get our name recognised for a long time. No one knew what the Bureau of Investigative Journalism really was. So, we had to push for partners to cite us properly when using our work and ensure they link to our website. When they don’t, it can be quite disastrous for us because we’ve done the work, but you know we don’t get the recognition. (BIJ 12)

What can be inferred from the interview is that the BIJ has made efforts to ensure that their organisation is correctly cited when their work is published by other bodies. More importantly, such unprofessional behaviour negatively affects the

practitioners whose work is taken. It seems that inappropriate use of investigations by other newsrooms offers a challenge to the newsroom institutionally, but also to newswriters individually.

The evidence above shows that as newly established and small news outlets, the KCIJ and the BIJ, have experienced the unprofessional use of their work by more prominent media organisations without the proper citations. Both nonprofit newsrooms went through this phase but have gradually been establishing newsroom recognition by continuously playing a watchdog role in society, building their credibility over time, and assuring other news outlets learn the importance of citing their organisations correctly. Such professional endeavour in accomplishing the mission of investigative journalism seems to help in developing the KCIJ and the BIJ recognition and reputation within journalism sectors in their respective countries. Over several years, such activities at legacy media have gradually declined, according to my participants. A BIJ reporter says, “really that has changed, and we have publishing partnerships that understand what we need now. I think we have made big steps in terms of recognition and I think it’s getting better and better as we strengthen our partnerships” (BIJ 12). Both news outlets emphasise that other news media were getting better at crediting these nonprofits and were less concerned about such malpractice by the time of this study. During the field research, I was also able to observe that the KCIJ and the BIJ were correctly cited in all relevant cases.

Due to the aforementioned efforts, the KCIJ and the BIJ state that they are getting more recognised as investigative journalism organisations. However, both newsrooms argue that they are striving to build stronger reputations by producing impactful reporting, particularly among the public. A KCIJ journalist states:

Well-made investigations help us to build reputation. I think that lots of people have heard about the KCIJ by now, but still we are not widely known. [...] It is really great for the organisation that members of the public get to know about the KCIJ when we produce hard-hitting impactful reporting. They can think of us when they have some tip-off. (KCIJ 22)

According to the reporter, the more the newsroom publishes hard-hitting investigative reporting, the more reputation they can get from the public. During my observation at the KCIJ newsroom in Spring 2018, I often heard journalists describing what the KCIJ was to informants over the phone. For instance, they usually said, “I’m X [their names], a journalist from an investigative journalism organisation called the KCIJ”. It seems that the KCIJ is still less familiar nationwide

than major media organisations, so newswriters often need to have a further explanation that “the KCIJ” is a news outlet specialising in investigative journalism. Embedding in the public is probably important for the KCIJ as it can benefit from broader public knowledge of its work by potentially attracting more members.

The BIJ staff argue that the BIJ is well-known among journalism peers and experts in the media industry and has obtained more recognition in the journalism sector with their impactful investigative work (BIJ Investigations Editor). The BIJ Investigations Editor told me that while the status of his newsroom in the British media was well established, it was less known among news audiences, adding “journalists do know who we are – we don’t have to explain – but the general public don’t”. The BIJ Managing Editor added:

Is the organisation embedded in the British public? No. I don’t think so. The only issue we have to deal with now is how do I tell the person on the street that it is really important in this world for an organisation like the Bureau to exist, you need to care about the state of journalism, you need to care that there is an independent media focusing on investigative journalism. (BIJ Managing Editor)

The BIJ Managing Editor and Investigations Editor identify that the newsroom has not yet been widely rooted in the public consciousness, just like the KCIJ. The issue at stake here is how the newsroom encourages the public to understand the importance of investigative journalism as well as the nonprofit newsrooms working specifically for it for their society.

Together these results provide important insights into the journalistic practice for establishing brand recognition and reputation of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. Previously, and in mainstream news media context, journalistic success, and accordingly that of its media outlet, has often been judged by circulations, clicks, page views, or other audience metrics. Operating in very different political economic context, the KCIJ and the BIJ have been able to establish recognition largely by achieving their professional goals of carrying out independent investigative journalism in the public interest. Although in the past both newsrooms faced challenges in being properly cited for their news product, years of effort in producing hard-hitting accountability journalism have helped them to become more recognised and to establish favourable reputations.

This finding offers meaningful implications for the long-term business sustainability of nonprofit newsrooms. I argue that analysis of the link between publishing

investigative journalism and building newsroom recognition is a prerequisite before discussing the relationship between news impact and funding at nonprofit newsrooms. However, the latter has often been analysed with less emphasis on the former (see section 2.11). Having discussed the importance of establishing reputation by producing investigative journalism as a precondition for the business continuity of nonprofit newsrooms, the following section moves on to discuss the ways in which news impact (as a by-product of impactful news reporting) is important to nonprofits in relation to long-term financial sustainability.

5.5 Financial Value of News Impact: Funding in the Long-Term

As revealed in section 5.2, the KCIJ and the BIJ take an organisational approach in concentrating more on publishing investigative journalism, in order to overcome their funding insecurity. Producing impactful investigative journalism, in other words fulfilling a watchdog function in society, has supported these nonprofits in establishing a brand reputation as investigative journalism organisations. In addition to such a journalistic value, previous studies highlight the financial value of assessments of news impact to nonprofit organisations. With the chaos and control paradigm, Carson (2020, p.84) has proposed that “the civic function (chaos) and market imperatives (control) of the media need not be mutually exclusive, but that they can coexist on a conceptual continuum where there is potential for overlap”. She highlights that a certain condition, achieving civic function, can also fulfil market imperatives. She argues that commercial newsrooms can make profits by publishing investigative journalism that the public would not be able to see elsewhere (ibid, p.103).

Although this analysis is regarding more conventional organisations, the insights are useful for this research to explore a long-term financial sustainability of nonprofits. In terms of nonprofit, the profits seem to be replaced to donations from individuals or foundations. The long-term financial sustainability of nonprofit investigative newsrooms depends on “their ability to repair the field of journalism by infusing it with public service journalism. That ability is augmented by engaging in news sharing behaviors” (Konieczna 2018, p.131). Generating news impact can also help with fundraising (Birnbauer 2019). Therefore, how effectively nonprofits fulfil the function as the Fourth Estate matters because it can affect fundraising. Turning now to the financial sustainability of the KCIJ and the BIJ, specifically in relation to news

impact, this thesis explores the ways in which established brand reputation, and hence assumed news impact, can support these nonprofits to survive in the long-term.

5.5.1 Impact as a Transactional Return on Funders' Investments

First and foremost, newswriters at the KCIJ and the BIJ argue that news impact is important as an outcome of donated funds to present to individual members at the KCIJ and foundations at the BIJ (KCIJ R&D Researcher; BIJ Investigations Editor; BIJ 6; BIJ 7; BIJ 10; BIJ 12). For instance, one of the principal reasons for publishing news impact on the website (KCIJ) and tracing out news impact with the Impact Tracker (BIJ) is to share information in relation to news impact with their funders (KCIJ R&D Researcher; BIJ Investigations Editor). The KCIJ R&D researcher describes the importance of news impact in terms of funders. During my newsroom ethnography in 2018, the KCIJ held a “Symposium for the 5th Anniversary of the Korea Centre for Investigative Journalism: Sustainable Nonprofit Media Organisations”. The symposium focused on the long-term sustainability of nonprofit news outlets. The researcher, in charge of organising the symposium, encapsulated discussions from the symposium related to news impact:

News reporting that helps “my life”. Although there were diverse opinions at the symposium, one key theme consistently mentioned by the panels was that there should be a “give and take” between funders and funded newsrooms. If you received money, you have to return the equivalent value of that money. [...] What they argue was, ultimately, you need to make people feel that the news media organisation deserves their donation. (KCIJ R&D Researcher)

What the researcher and the panels at the symposium view as a return for donation is a valuable outcome of investigations. For instance, returns can vary from sparking resignations of politicians or changing policies to informing citizens of potential life-threatening danger (ibid). Both socially impactful and informative investigations can make donors feel that the newsroom is working for the public to improve their community, according to the researcher.

Similarly, at the BIJ, one newswriter describes the relationship between funding and news impact as a “transaction agreement”:

Journalism is, to some extent, a transactional arrangement. So, whoever funds you wants something back. And the question is just what the

transaction is. Is it revenue? Or is it impact? Everyone wants something, you don't get funding for nothing. So, your funders always ask for something back. In the case of a nonprofit news organisation, it tends to be impact. The funders want to see real measurable change in the world. Whereas an ad-based system, they are more interested in you know "do they get rich engagement", which generates revenue. So, it's different, but the underlying similarity is the transactional arrangement. (BIJ 7)

What this journalist explains is that transaction agreements take place in media organisations with all types of financial models in different forms. For a nonprofit organisation like the BIJ, according to this participant, news impact can be considered a return on funders' investment, whereas at commercial media companies, high engagement related to revenues can be seen the most common return. Similarly, the BIJ Investigations Editor expresses the reason for the newsroom to adopt its impact tracking tool:

This is because funders really want to know what our impact is [...] Funders are getting more and more into impact. They want to know how widely dispersed your story was and whether it made – for instance – MPs talk about it. (BIJ Investigations Editor)

This is a clear illustration that the Impact Tracker is utilised because funders want to know the outcome of their investigations. The tracker can be evidence that journalistic activities have been performed in a particular way, promised to funders by the newsroom, and have influenced societal changes commensurate with their investments. Additionally, the BIJ has published a research paper⁸⁷ on the impact in 2018, also for funders (BIJ Investigations Editor), publicly available through its website. The BIJ Investigations Editor summarised it thus, "If you put money in, this is what you get out. It's something useful for funders really".

Not only managers, but workers at the coalface have internalised this high regard for news impact. The BIJ Investigations Editor argues that "I've always tried to maximise the impact of my work. We had Michael Rezendes here from the *Boston Globe* spotlight team a couple of months back. It was quite influential with the team making them think". Additionally, in July 2019, the BIJ appointed a new role of the Impact Editor to "make sure we create, recognise and seize every opportunity for our reporting to do good", according to its website⁸⁸. It seems judicious that this nonprofit is making more efforts in news impact given how crucial it is to the foundation-funded newsroom. However, focusing on news impact can lead to

⁸⁷ <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4638466-Impactreport-AUG-18.html> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁸⁸ <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/about-us/impact> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

impact-driven journalism and a form of indirect funder influence on news, as a part of funders' influences, as discussed earlier in this chapter (see section 5.2.2). This is probably why the BIJ Managing Editor has asserted that the newsroom is trying to avoid impact-driven news (impact as a narrower scope of meaning) when selecting issues to cover by placing a firewall between editorial department and external forces, but to be mission-driven to generate, a wider range of meaning of news impact (see section 5.2.2).

5.5.2 Impact and Potential Future Funding

Another theme emerged from my findings on the financial sustainability in relation to news impact is that of potential funding opportunities in the future (KCIJ 4; KCIJ 18; BIJ Investigations Editor; Bureau Local Community Organiser). So far, I have discussed how even though the KCIJ and the BIJ are not-for-profit media outlets, an exchange relationship analogous to those at for-profit organisations still exists in that they both need to provide something in return for funding they attract. For attracting future funders, news impact seems to be an important element for nonprofits.

TABLE 5.3 Investigative reporting and the approximate increase in the number of memberships of the KCIJ in chronological order

Topics of Investigations	Increased number
ICIJ Offshore Leaks Project	3,000
Documentary "Spy Nations"	1,000
Documentary "Criminal Conspiracy"	4,000

Source: Author collected⁸⁹

KCIJ newswriters have noticed that they see an increase in memberships whenever they are consistently publishing impactful investigative journalism. The newsroom had observed sharp increases in the number of donations when they published hard-hitting exposés after launching the Newstapa project in 2012. Such data on membership figures support the arguments from the KCIJ newswriters about the primacy of focusing on their journalistic mission as a way of sustaining

⁸⁹ This data is based on rough numbers given by newswriters in the verbal interview, not based on exact written statistical data. Therefore, there might be slight differences between actual numbers and the given numbers.

themselves financially. For example, the first KCIJ-ICIJ collaboration, the “Offshore Leak Project” in 2013, made the KCIJ stand out in the journalism sector. This worldwide collaboration provided the KCIJ with an opportunity to publish exclusive news stories in South Korea, apparently motivating approximately 3,000 people to start donating to the KCIJ, according to the newsroom. Some of the investigations that led to a sharp increase in membership numbers are listed in the Table 5.3. Some of them have been already mentioned by the KCIJ newswriters regarding news impact (see section 5.3). These data present a compelling correlation between hard-hitting investigative journalism and a sharp increase in memberships.

The newsroom has had some years of fluctuation in membership numbers but has learned from experience that large numbers of new funders often join after being inspired by their impactful investigative reporting. One KCIJ journalist thinks that the newsroom considers news impact as a significant feature for nonprofits because:

First of all, the purpose of journalists is to change public attitudes regarding issues and improve social irregularities by revealing ethical and moral corruptions in society. Also, I guess that the KCIJ is hoping that such impactful reporting will result in further donations. (KCIJ 4)

Although the journalist expresses the expectation of an increase in funding in the future, the journalist also argues that producing impactful investigative journalism is a priority. In other words, the data show that, for such nonprofit newsrooms, without journalistic achievement financial sustainability seems unfeasible.

The BIJ also has a similar view of future funding. One journalist adds the difficulty in fundraising:

The disadvantages are that there's not that many of those pots of funding around. [...] You can go to the Guardian website and read it all. And the BBC to read all stuff for free every day. There's the BBC license fee if you have TV, but there's so much for free, then why would you pay for it? So, we're trying to convince people that there is value in this work, yes, which is tricky. (BIJ 2)

According to the reporter above, an unexpected renewal of funding has been a challenge for the BIJ newsroom, and unlimited funding is not available all of the time. Additionally, it is difficult for the newsroom to make the public, which includes potential future funders such as foundations or individual citizens, understand the importance of “paid news” when numerous news stories are available free of charge (ibid). The interview extract above infers that the BIJ needs to show that investigative journalism is valuable enough to be supported financially.

An expectation of possible funding was carefully discussed in relation to collaboration projects at the BIJ newsroom. I obtained permission to attend one of the editorial meetings that was discussing the next investigative reporting project for the Global Superbug project. One unanticipated, but thought-provoking, conversation started by the Investigations Editor. The Investigations Editor mentioned that the collaboration with CNN would be “useful for American fundraisers”. After the meeting, I asked the Health and Science Editor for further clarification:

So, in order for our stories to have any impact or viewed, read by lots of people, we have to find publishing partners and the more targeted partners so we can find more people to read our stories and more people can engage with them. [...] I think I don't think he meant we need to publish in order to get fundraising, but we just at that point, we were going for American fundraisers, so I think he just meant that it's good that if we've got American publications as well as British ones. (Health and Science Editor)

This reporter mentions that collaboration is not intended for obtaining funding, but for more impact. In terms of funding, it might be helpful if the BIJ seeks to fundraise in the USA since (possibly) more people would know about the nonprofit before collaboration. Co-publishing with CNN places the BIJ in a good position to become recognised among American audiences, according to the Editor.

Moreover, although the BIJ is funded mainly by foundations at the time of my fieldwork in Summer 2018, diversifying funding streams has been discussed internally. The Community Organiser of the Bureau Local suggests that news impact would be even more critical for the BIJ if it were eliciting and receiving donations from individual citizens:

Because we have to prove ourselves to funders, to show that we are doing what we say we're going to do. They need some way of measuring the success of their funding. Also, I think it's really important to feed back to the public, especially members of our network, if in the future we have paying members. It means that we can tell them what we've been doing, what we've achieving with our support. I think proving impact from stories within our newsroom is also important, to show that things we are doing are working. (Bureau Local Community Organiser)

According to the Bureau Local Community Organiser, the Bureau Local surveyed its Network members in Summer 2018, with one of the questionnaires asked about willingness of donate. They added, “a lot of people saying £10, £5. Some people say less, but the general response on that was pretty positive actually” (ibid). In order to implement individual donations, a newsroom's contribution to society,

including news impact, needs to be provided to the members of the public as evidence of the value of journalistic activities of the BIJ (Bureau Local Community Organiser). This is another way I found that news impact is seen as meaningful both to pleasing the current funders and attracting the potential funders.

In summary, the observation of two different newsrooms is significant owing to their similar suppositions about future funding, which stems from news impact of the investigation. This expectation should be taken seriously in relation to nonprofit finances. The accumulated journalistic performances of nonprofit newsrooms naturally become critical assets for newsrooms' business sustainability. For instance, although some members terminated their support after certain investigations, the KCIJ has found that when the newsroom publishes well-made and hard-hitting investigative reporting, a sharp increase in their membership numbers has often followed. This is probably why the KCIJ doubled down on a journalistic solution to its insecure financial position and adopted the motto of "just do investigations" as a strategy to overcome the disadvantages of their membership funding model. Similarly, the BIJ argues that by consistently producing impactful news, the organisation gets more well-known in the society, and so is more likely to better opportunities to bring about an extension of current funding or expansion to new funders. Again, despite the financial insecurity of term-based grants, the BIJ has also chosen a journalistic "mission-driven" approach which focuses on accountability journalism since it will eventually contribute to increasing the financial sustainability.

These findings suggest a virtuous circle between the production of hard-hitting investigative watchdog journalism in the public interest, the generation of diverse impact on society, individuals, journalism and politics, and the attraction of funding to nonprofit investigative journalism organisations which has been little discussed in previous research. I do not argue that publishing impactful investigative journalism solely would automatically guarantee an increase in the long-term financial sustainability. In fact, though this thesis would not discuss in depth, both nonprofits carry out many social involvements. The KCIJ implements free social contribution programmes as returns of public's donations such as Newstapa Journalism School⁹⁰, Data Journalism School, and Investigative Journalism Training

⁹⁰ Newstapa Journalism School, newly started in 2022, aims to generate a next generation of independent newsrooms. The programme consists of 12 weeks of education; 6-12 months of actual journalistic experience in the field; a year-long support for the

Programme (which I participated, explained in the methodology chapter) and holds membership related events such as Membership Premiere, inviting members to show investigative reporting offline and have Q&A time with journalists, or the end-of-year annual Member's Night. The BIJ also holds such activities like Story Clinic (open to Network members) and Collaborative Reporting Day to share journalistic ideas and skills with the public. All these multifarious efforts probably contribute to the long-term sustainability although this thesis did not include in the analysis, since it appears that the central element on long-term financial sustainability comes from the journalistic performance of the newsrooms.

5.6 Conclusion: A Virtuous Circle of Long-Term Sustainability at Nonprofits

This chapter was designed primarily to answer the second and third research questions: "What are the affordances and constraints of nonprofit funding systems that allow and/or hinder the newsrooms to conduct investigative journalism?"; and "What are the challenges for the nonprofit newsrooms to achieve long-term financial sustainability?". As with any type of financial models for funding news media, newsroom independence from financial sources has always been an important issue. A long-standing, well-established political economy theory has provided useful insights for this research in terms of issues around financial models of news media and its impact on news content (Herman and Chomsky 2002; Fenton 2007). To sustain the newsrooms at conventional media outlets, journalistic values relating to editorial independence sometimes have to be compromised (see section 2.5 and 2.6). For instance, state-funded organisations are prone to exposure from political pressure and commercial media have to struggle with influences from owners and advertisers, which can lead to the prioritisation of news reporting in the private over the public interest.

My findings reveal that the most crucial issue at stake is the instability of funding in nonprofit media organisations regardless of differences between key funding streams (i.e. the membership-donation model or the foundation-funded model). In terms of the KCIJ supported by member donations, it is found that the number of

establishment of new independent newsrooms, according to the KCIJ. <https://kcij.org/notice/u/v9y6x> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

memberships might drop if investigations are: 1) a specific political party related; 2) lacking in terms of journalistic professionalism in some ways; 3) or based on the criteria for newsworthiness which vary from those of the public. Regardless of this decrease, however, the KCIJ maintains that it has to investigate malpractice and corruption from any political parties, since doing independent, non-partisan investigative journalism is the most effective way to sustain the newsroom in the long term. For the BIJ, a foundation funded newsroom, the insecurity of term-based funding (including employment insecurity for newswriters) and the potential influences of funders on editorial decisions in an indirect way, are identified as major challenges. This newsroom has to prove the importance of the topics of investigations regardless of attempted influence from external forces, partly so that it can maintain its reputation and potential future funders can recognize its continued credibility.

As we have observed in journalism history, external political economic powers often intervened in news production and to sustain long-term finance at conventional media outlets, journalistic value, that is to say, editorial independence, sometimes has to be compromised (see section 2.5 and 2.6). However, my study reveals that in the emergent nonprofit investigative news sector, the instability of funding rather encourages the newsrooms to boost journalistic activities, doubling down on traditional normative journalistic values around independence rather than buckling under pressure. The structure of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations itself cannot help the newsroom insulating editorial independence from external forces and encourages newswriters to focus on journalistic value and norms.

To sustain themselves in the long-term, it appears that the most important action that the KCIJ and the BIJ can take, according to newswriters at both, differently funded, organisations, is to not compromise (like conventional media), but to prioritise journalistic values and conduct investigative journalism in the public interest. This is because failing to meet journalistic standard of their work is likely to cause not only damage to their reputation, but also financial difficulty. In order to overcome the financial insecurity and sustain themselves in the long-term, the KCIJ takes the “just do investigations” approach and the BIJ pursues the “neither impact-driven nor funding-driven, but mission-driven” ethos to help overcome the disadvantages of nonprofit funding systems and to sustain their organisations. In both cases, maintaining journalistic credibility, and a reputation for independent, non-partisan investigative journalism in the public interest, is seen as important to

long-term organisational sustainability. Impactful investigative journalism becomes a core ingredient for the KCIJ to underpin the retention and recruitment of their membership and for the BIJ to make itself a more competitive candidate when applying for foundation grants.

With the example of *ProPublica*, Carson (2020, p.97-98) has mentioned:

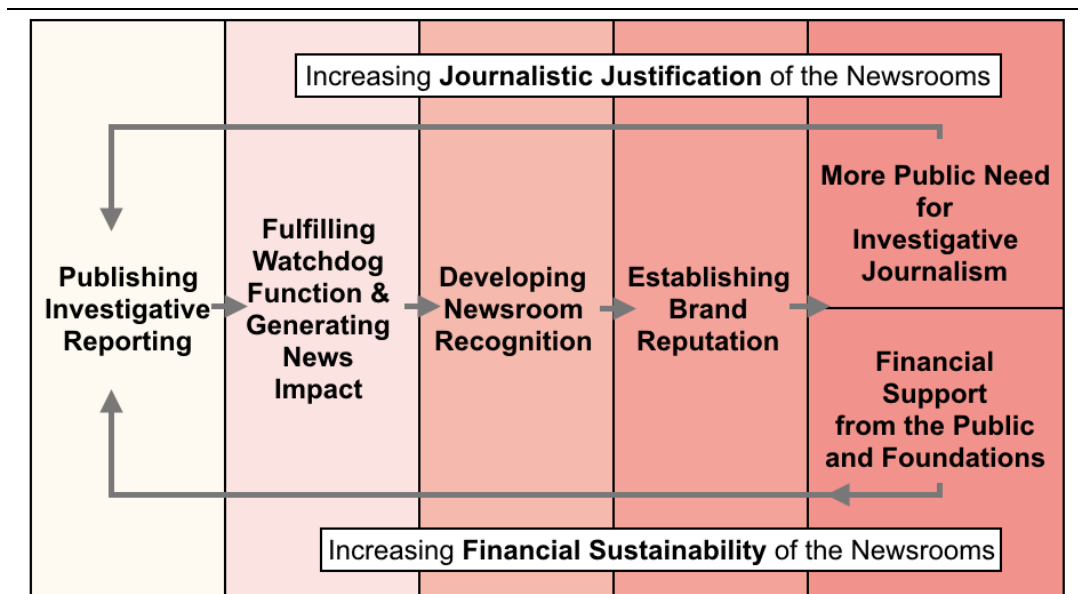
some media organisations profess a commitment to investigative journalism for its civic functions rather than as a branding strategy designed for market success. [...] As a non-profit organisation, its mission is not to impress the market but to enlighten its readers about misuses of power.

My study supports the idea that nonprofit newsrooms dedicate themselves to holding power to account for a combination of civic and instrumental reasons. At the KCIJ and the BIJ the “branding strategy”, from Carson’s quote above, overlaps very largely with perceived civic and democratic missions. What I would like to add is that although it is true that nonprofit newsrooms do not need to “impress the market”, but they still need to impress society (audiences, members of the public or philanthropists) for their financial sustainability in the long-term by achieving news impact (a wider range of meaning). Certainly, this should not be interpreted as the newsrooms seeking to publish investigative journalism in order to “brand their name” since the brand reputation is seen to naturally follow on from successful journalistic investigations, especially where they achieve accumulated news impact of different kinds.

Tofel (2013, p.2) highlights that a virtuous circle at commercial media organisations where “better content led to higher circulation (or higher prices for the same circulation) which led to greater demand for advertising (or higher rates for the same advertising) which created profits that could fuel more and better content”, has “broken in recent years”. According to my findings in this thesis, a new virtuous circle is identified under nonprofit funding systems for investigative journalism. Figure 5.3 shows the simplified virtuous circle of norms, values, and practices that make the newsroom sustainable with a nonprofit funding system. The sustainable virtuous circle starts from publishing investigative journalism in the public interest, drawing on a range of traditional and newer, emergent journalistic practices. By doing so, these investigative journalism organisations can achieve their missions to fulfil their duty as a watchdog of society and can generate (and capture, as well as communicate about) news impacts. Although each news impacts cannot be immediately monetized like the income streams of commercial media, accumulated

journalistic success, and its ripples across society, media, politics, and the lives of affected people, can build brand recognition and reputation. This, on the one hand, leads to more perceived need among the public for investigative journalism from these organisations, which can further justify their journalistic role in society. On the other hand, this encourages members of the public (including individuals and philanthropic foundations) to support the newsrooms financially. This is supported by the views of participants in both newsrooms as well as empirical evidence I gathered about investigations and economic trends over time. Ultimately, organisations can increase their likelihood of obtaining more funding, thus enabling newswriters to continuously do the expensive work of conducting investigative journalism.

FIGURE 5.3 A virtuous circle of practices that make the newsroom sustainable in the long-term



This circle explains why both newsrooms have adopted a strategy of focusing and doubling down on investigative journalism in order to overcome funding instability. I would like to make clear that the long-term financial sustainability of an organisation is certainly more complicated and multi-dimensional than this simplified version of the diagram. However, this visualisation of the virtuous circle is developed in order to achieve an initial understanding of nonprofit funding systems for investigative journalism and how their continued profitability is understood from within. Further

research into each stage is recommended for encompassing more diverse variables and complexities. My empirical data have supported that as far as the KCIJ and the BIJ are concerned, the newswriters believe (and their practices, routines, and norms reflect the belief) that such journalistic success is the best way of achieving long-term funding sustainability. Carson (2020, p.84) has proposed that “the civic function (chaos) and market imperatives (control) of the media need not be mutually exclusive, but that they can coexist on a conceptual continuum where there is potential for overlap”. She highlights that a certain condition, achieving civic functions, can also fulfil market imperatives. The “market imperatives” at nonprofit media organisations are continuing public and/or philanthropical funding opportunities. With findings from this thesis, I further suggest that in terms of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations, the civic function and market imperatives overlap significantly. The “control” element encourages newswriters at nonprofit newsrooms to focus more on the “chaos” element (journalism’s civic function as a watchdog), which is understood as the most important way for them to sustain themselves in the longer term.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The initial idea on the research of this thesis began in 2012 when the speed of change in a media ecology was rapidly accelerating. A key theme in journalism studies was the crisis of journalism. Particularly in terms of investigative journalism, decreasing resources and editorial autonomy had led to a discussion about new and alternative funding models to support this kind of journalism. It has become increasingly clear since then that nonprofit financial models are one of the primary pathways for investigative journalism to survive. Experiencing the turmoil in media circumstances, I faced a set of questions in relation to the nonprofit news organisations: How do such nonprofit news outlets produce investigative journalism that many in the mainstream media are decreasingly to do?; Given what we know about the links between the economics of news and journalism practice in legacy news media, in what ways do new funding models influence journalistic activities?; How can they ensure stable funding from voluntary donations, which can fluctuate or dry up entirely?; What are nonprofits doing to prepare for, and guard against, such precarious funding over the long-term sustainability? This research discusses how two nonprofit investigative journalism organisations are established and operate investigative journalism with consideration of journalistic autonomy. Analytically, this thesis examines the ways in which nonprofit financial models affect these journalistic, and associated, practices in these newsrooms (specifically around collaboration and demonstrating impact) and how these relate to their long-term sustainability.

6.2 Summary of Key Arguments and Discussion

The thesis furthers and deepens our understanding of nonprofit pathways for investigative journalism, which have contributed to its rejuvenation after a downturn in media circumstances. I adopted a newsroom ethnography approach to contribute bottom-up, inside-out perspectives to existing knowledge about journalistic practices and challenges of newswriters at nonprofit media organisations. Throughout

journalism history, studies adopting the ethnographic approach have yielded significant findings owing to the advantages afforded by close observation. However, such opportunities for researchers to stay and research in newsrooms usually prove difficult to negotiate. Even what is rarer is an ethnography study in investigative journalism newsrooms, because confidentiality lies at the heart of their practices due to the sensitive and often necessarily secretive nature of investigations. In spite of this difficulty, I persevered in attempts to get permission for the access to the newsrooms and was successful. My newsroom ethnographic research included 330 hours of daily observations, including 14 editorial meeting observations, and 47 in-depth semi-structured interviews at two nonprofit newsrooms, the *Korea Center for Investigative Journalism* (KCIJ) in South Korea and the *Bureau of Investigative Journalism* (BIJ) in the UK. In its review of pertinent scholarship, the chaos-and control paradigm approach (Carson 2020) is shown to be helpful to explore issues and concerns in the nonprofit sector regarding the crisis in conventional funding models for sustaining investigative journalism. On the one hand, the chaos paradigm helps us to understand the continued public need for the watchdog role of investigative journalism in society, and to interpret my findings related to the long-term sustainability of nonprofit organisations. On the other hand, the control paradigm, including political economy theory, also helps me to discuss external controlling elements that can affect newsroom independence and, accordingly, news content. Another key theoretical agenda was the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker and Reese 2014). This similarly proves useful for studying journalistic practices in relation to organisational structures, aims and routinisations at nonprofit newsrooms. Adopting two analytic perspectives allowed me to explore both external and internal influences affecting news production of investigative journalism at media organisations with nonprofit funding models. As a result, this dual approach helped me to understand in what ways these nonprofits managed advantages and disadvantages of their funding models to sustain operations in the long-term.

The findings help to fill gaps in our knowledge about influences of nonprofit funding models on news production in terms of both affordances and constraints. Despite several previous studies focusing on American-based nonprofits, organisations outside the USA, and especially those in Asia, have been under-explored. Research about journalist practices at organisations funded mainly by individual donations, as one of its nonprofit funding streams, is even rarer whereas individual donations were rapidly growing in supporting the nonprofit sector. Therefore, two nonprofit

investigative journalism organisations were selected for case studies with a consideration of both the geographical aspect and key funding streams. The KCIJ, officially established in 2013, is funded primarily by donations from individuals, whom the newsroom calls as “members”. The BIJ in the UK, established in 2010, is funded by philanthropical foundations, and is one of a kind in its country.

A critical knowledge gap in journalism studies included a paucity of empirical research about the ways in which the internal and/or external forces of nonprofit media organisations affected journalistic practices in producing investigative journalism. Therefore, the importance and strength of this present study lies in its empirical ethnographic research on internal newswriters’ perspectives about the ways in which the nonprofit funding systems affect the production of investigative journalism.

Newswriters at the KCIJ and the BIJ argued that they had a very high level of editorial independence, and my observations of their day-to-day routines largely confirmed their interviews. This perceived autonomy shielded the newsroom from external forces, so newswriters could fulfil their purposes as a watchdog of society. In terms of news production, the KCIJ and the BIJ generally followed traditional investigative journalistic practices such as time-consuming and resource-intensive work, which many in mainstream media are increasingly unable to do. Newswriters (often drawing on their previous journalistic experience) argued that their journalistic value practices differentiated themselves from other newsrooms, which encouraged them to focus on holding power to account by publishing investigations that only they can do. One unconventional, emergent set of practices was the introduction of innovative forms of collaborative journalism. As pioneers in collaborative work in their countries, newswriters from both the KCIJ and the BIJ highlighted that this was possible due to a sharing, collaborative ethos generally accepted in the nonprofit sector. Their active participation in collaborations can only be understood in the context of these new funding models. Their nonprofit funding model, freeing them as it does from the need to compete with their colleagues at other organisations, helped the newsrooms to be involved in various collaborations as described.

The thesis also found that the impressive high level of newsroom autonomy observed in my newsroom ethnography was not freely given. Instead, newswriters had to continuously negotiate their practices in order to insulate newsrooms from both internal and external control elements. It was found that there were somewhat

inevitable funder influences at the KCIJ and the BIJ. The KCIJ experienced sharp drops in membership numbers when certain investigations were published. The BIJ found that there was a possible danger for nonprofits to seek impact-driven or funding-driven journalism to get more grants. Although the identified reasons for financial insecurity at both newsrooms were different, the approach to deal with these matters was not dissimilar. These nonprofits tried to overcome the challenges by doubling down to produce journalistic mission-driven investigations in spite of potential external influences. Whereas political economic conditions at commercial and public service media have often been criticised for negative influences on journalistic practices, in stark contrast to previous studies, my research found that potential influences from funders at these nonprofits have rather encouraged further newswriters to concentrate on publishing mission-driven investigative journalism. The endeavour for maintaining journalistic-value focused practices for reporting in the public interest, supported by nonprofit funding, in turn, helped these nonprofit to establish their brand recognition and reputation over time. Ultimately, this has brought about both journalistic and financial supports from the public, which increased these newsrooms' long-term financial sustainability. With such public support, the KCIJ and the BIJ were continuously able to work on investigative journalism, which was the first step of the virtuous circle of the long-term sustainability of nonprofit newsrooms.

6.2.1 The Perceived Public's Need for Investigative Journalism, Encouraging the Establishment of the KCIJ and the BIJ

Research question 1, "What are the perceived driving forces behind the establishment of the KCIJ and the BIJ with nonprofit funding models?", focused on the societal and journalistic context where these nonprofit newsrooms were established in 2013 and 2010, respectively. Newsroom ethnography, including participant observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews, revealed a strong focus among newswriters of the perceived need for investigative journalism from the members of the public, discussed in section 4.2. Analysing the sustainability of investigative journalism with the chaos and control paradigm, Carson (2020, p.89) has highlighted that the fact that "public trust in the media has fallen" with prevalent misinformation has somewhat encouraged the public's support in in-depth reporting, shown as increased "[s]ales of quality newspapers and donations to investigative outlets in the United States". Funding for *ProPublica* increased approximately three

times from 2016 to 2017 (ibid, p.89). Both the KCIJ and the BIJ were established to be a nonprofit independent news organisation. Under such media circumstance, similar findings were identified in my study newsrooms in that the perceived loss of accountability journalism was considered as the driving forces behind the establishment of these nonprofits from the internal perspectives.

The KCIJ, based in Seoul, South Korea, evolved from a journalistic project called “Newstapa”, initiated in 2012, consisting of former-investigative journalists with an initial support from the National Union of Media Workers. The Newstapa project gained a public following thanks to its hard-hitting news stories about the malpractice and wrongdoing of political and economic elites, which the public was decreasingly able to obtain from many other mainstream media. What was more intriguing about the project, however, was the member-based donation system. The process was never a top-down operation (wherein the newsroom set up the system, then started eliciting donations), but a bottom-up, community-centred response in supporting precisely this kind of journalism. Citizens who appreciated Newstapa’s reporting then wanted to support, so they started contacting Newstapa to ask how to donate and support the project. Accumulated donations throughout “Season 1” and “Season 2” in 2012 became sufficient for the Newstapa team, in 2013, to establish a news outlet, the KCIJ, with an aim to be a nonprofit, non-partisan and independent news organisation. The KCIJ is still one of a few outlets whose key funding stream is individual donations from public members.

The BIJ is a foundation funded investigative journalism organisation, a pioneer amongst its kind in the UK, aiming to be an independent public interest news organisation, reinstating investigative journalism back and holding power to account. The newsroom, based in London, was founded by the David and Elaine Potter Foundation. Elaine Potter was a former investigative journalist with decades-long experience in British journalism. The founders believed that the society needed an independent and investigative journalism-oriented newsroom. It was also identified that the need for robust fact-based journalism encouraged the founders to support investigative journalism in British society. Along with the core funding, the BIJ elicited and received funds for each project it worked on.

The research has helped to fill the knowledge gaps left by previous studies on nonprofit investigative journalism organisations, which made little attention to those in Asia and Europe. Much of the literature focuses on American nonprofit newsrooms (Konieczna 2018; Birnbauer 2019), though new type of media

organisations outside the USA are mushrooming rapidly. Moreover, empirical studies on the individual membership model were rare despite its increasing contribution to the nonprofit sector. The findings revealed that the perceived public need for investigative journalism as a watchdog on a healthy democratic society encouraged the launch of the nonprofits.

6.2.2 Insulating Relative Newsroom Autonomy under Nonprofit Funding Models and its Influences on Publishing Stories “Only the KCIJ/BIJ Can Do”

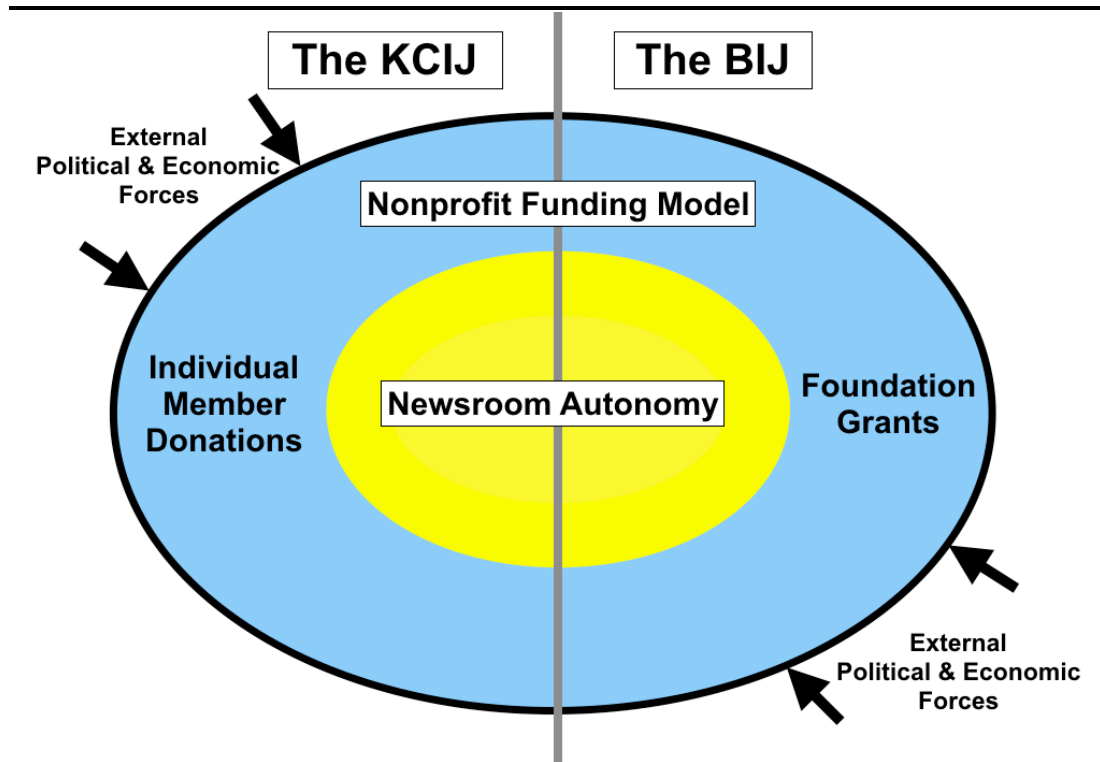
In answer to part of research question 2, “What are the affordances and constraints of nonprofit funding systems that allow and/or hinder the newsrooms to conduct investigative journalism?”, I explored a beneficial aspect of the nonprofit funding systems for newswriters to undertake investigative journalism, as investigated in chapter 4. A part of Carson’s chaos and control paradigm (2020), the control paradigm has highlighted that non-journalistic considerations such as political and economic interests could affect newsrooms’ autonomous decision-making processes. Scholars identified issues and concerns around such influences on news outlets based on the long-standing political economy theory (Herman and Chomsky 2002; Fenton 2007). Although these studies focused mainly on more conventional media, they were useful in offering meaningful factors to understand the relations between newsrooms’ financial models and their editorial independence. My findings also identified the close relationship between nonprofit funding models and their newsroom autonomy from the internal newswriters’ perspectives. This analysis was further investigated by exploring how such editorial independence was reflected in daily journalistic practices at nonprofits. Here, the “*routines*⁹¹ level”, including “immediate constraining and enabling structures, larger patterns, or routines” and the “*organizational*⁹² level”, including “occupational roles, organizational policy, and how the enterprise itself is structured” in the hierarchy of influences model (Shoemaker and Reese 2014, p.8), were useful in studying internal influences within media organisations. With the implication from these theoretical agendas, my findings showed that organisational structures under the perceived relative newsroom autonomy, significantly influenced their newswriters’

⁹¹ Emphasis in the original text.

⁹² Emphasis in the original text.

practices such as judgement on newsworthiness and routinisation to publish news stories in ways to facilitate investigative journalism.

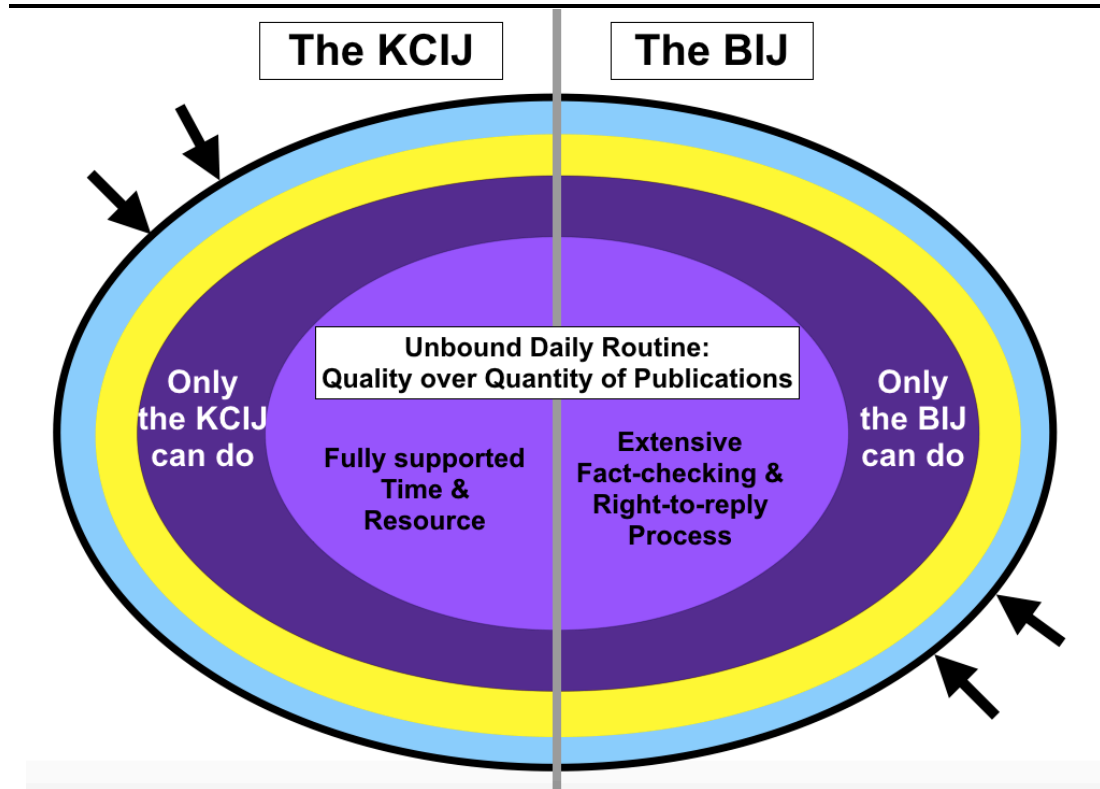
FIGURE 6.1 Newsroom autonomy insulated by nonprofit funding models



Newsworkers at both media organisations argued that their newsrooms were independent from external political and economic forces, including funders and were able to substantiate this in different ways (section 4.2-4.6). Most importantly, they believed that this was possible because of their nonprofit funding systems. As Figure 6.1 describes, insulating newsroom autonomy from undue influence from external political and economic forces was crucial for a media organisation to perform journalistic activities for organisational journalistic purposes. In the case of nonprofits here, the objective of the newsrooms was to be an independent investigative journalism organisation that could produce in-depth accountability journalism which prioritises journalistic values and norms. I would like to clarify that these diagrams are designed to help understanding on the findings of this thesis, so they are simplified in a way to maximise their effectiveness. For example, firewalls between external forces and the newsroom are represented by the solid line in the diagram, but the KCIJ and the BIJ showed their continued endeavour to achieve

their high level of autonomy (according to newswriters), as found in the findings (see chapter 5).

FIGURE 6.2 Organisational structures and their influences on daily journalistic activities



Throughout journalism history, it has often been observed that funders intervene in newsrooms, by regardless of governments, private owners or advertisers. The consequence of failure at shielding editorial independence at many legacy news organisations amid deterioration of working conditions for newswriters to conduct investigative journalism, led to the crisis in independent accountability journalism (Barnett 2005; Davies 2009; Osborne 2015; Örnebring 2016). My findings identified that news outlets could be more independent from political and commercial pressure with nonprofit financial models since their funding sources were not unduly influenced by private interests. My findings about the insulation of editorial independence in the KCIJ and the BIJ was key to understand much of the rest of what I found in relation to journalism practice at these nonprofits. Since these nonprofits were insulated from undue external political and economic influences, stated by the KCIJ and the BIJ, they became autonomous 1) in organisational

decision-making processes around journalistic values, norms and judgements of newsworthiness and 2) other daily routines and practices, as Figure 6.2 illustrates.

According to Shoemaker and Reese (2014, p.12), newsworthiness and journalistic routines are routine level factors that can be influenced by organisational level factors. This thesis found that the nonprofits were able to make their own decisions on issue selection and news production thanks to their nonprofit funding systems, prioritising journalistic values over other factors. Therefore, to meet their own standards of investigative journalism, both newsrooms supported newswriters with usually extensive time and resources, which has become rare at many in mainstream media organisations.

First, it was vital to explore the details of autonomous decision-making processes around issue selection and judgements of “newsworthiness” for nonprofit newsrooms, especially when newsrooms aimed to cover stories “only the KCIJ/BIJ can do” in their societies. The KCIJ, as a neither partisan nor commercial organisation, aimed to reveal under-reported issues in South Korea. They argued, based on their own experiences of working elsewhere, that certain issues were banned from publishing, not because of journalistic values or newsworthiness but because of direct or indirect influences from external political or economic forces on news content. In fact, I encountered one case where a newswriter was able to publish a critical investigation about a political issue at the KCIJ after the newswriter began to work at this nonprofit, which had once been censored at a public service broadcaster. The newswriter who worked on the investigation asserted that this was possible only because the KCIJ, owing to its funding model, was protected from such undue external influences. Also, newswriters highlighted the way in which their newsroom was able to publish stories about commercial companies, whose advertising funds supported a large number of South Korean media organisations.

The BIJ took a similar approach to determining newsworthiness in the public interest when publishing investigations. Newswriters chose under-reported issues that were crucial for the public with a focus on the systemic injustice (whereas focus on an individual injustice was often less emphasised). Although this type of story required an extensive range of resources, journalism-centric working conditions supported newswriters to undertake comprehensive and multifaceted investigations of issues in the public interest. Owing to the nonprofit funding system, independent journalism was the most important criterion at the BIJ. Whereas, again,

based on their own previous experience working at a range of legacy news organisations, newswriters showed how some other newsrooms had to consider external elements such as political stances, profitability and audiences much more.

Second, the organisational decision of the KCIJ and the BIJ to publish costly and resource-intensive investigative journalism solely based on journalistic standards subsequently affected the less constrained routines of news production (section 4.5). This is one of the most significant findings to emerge from this study in that this clearly showed the differences between nonprofit investigative journalism organisations and other types of mainstream media organisations. Previous studies have identified that routinised restrictions, such as those imposed by 24/7 news cycles and competitions for clicks and page views, have hindered journalists from dedicating themselves to long-term investigations, feeding into improper journalistic practices causing journalistic malpractices such as Churnalism, PR-isation and a relative lack of research and verification of information (Davies 2009; Franklin et al. 2010; Moloney and McGrath 2020).

Contrarily to these worsening working conditions at mainstream media, the nonprofits encouraged newswriters to conduct investigations until their reporting could reach at high levels of internally agreed journalistic standards. KCIJ newswriters emphasised that a key advantage of their newsroom, differentiating themselves from other legacy media, was having the time and freedom to investigate any topic, even when it took a long time. For example, one newswriter highlighted that it took four years to obtain datasets and several months to analyse them for an investigation. The BIJ's approach to the "journalism-centric newsroom" was the established and fundamental practice of journalism, and prioritised sufficient time for fact-checking, for which there was a rigorous procedure to be followed, and right-to-reply processes until all information and news sources were confirmed. Observation and interview data confirmed that placing such a high priority on the quality over quantity of news liberated their newswriters from the fast news cycle and enabled them to investigate in depth and detail. Newswriters were satisfied with such rigorous work and argued that spending extended time on investigations was only possible because the newsroom was autonomous due to nonprofit funding systems. This part of research extended our knowledge of the journalistic practices of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. A few studies about these newsrooms have closely examined how they put their mission and organisational purposes into journalistic activities to produce what they said

they did. Revealing this was important to prove the fact that nonprofits, structurally founded to be different from legacy media, were actually undertaking their journalism in a different way, to some extent.

6.2.3 Nonprofits' Participation in Collaborations with a Collaborative and Sharing Ethos

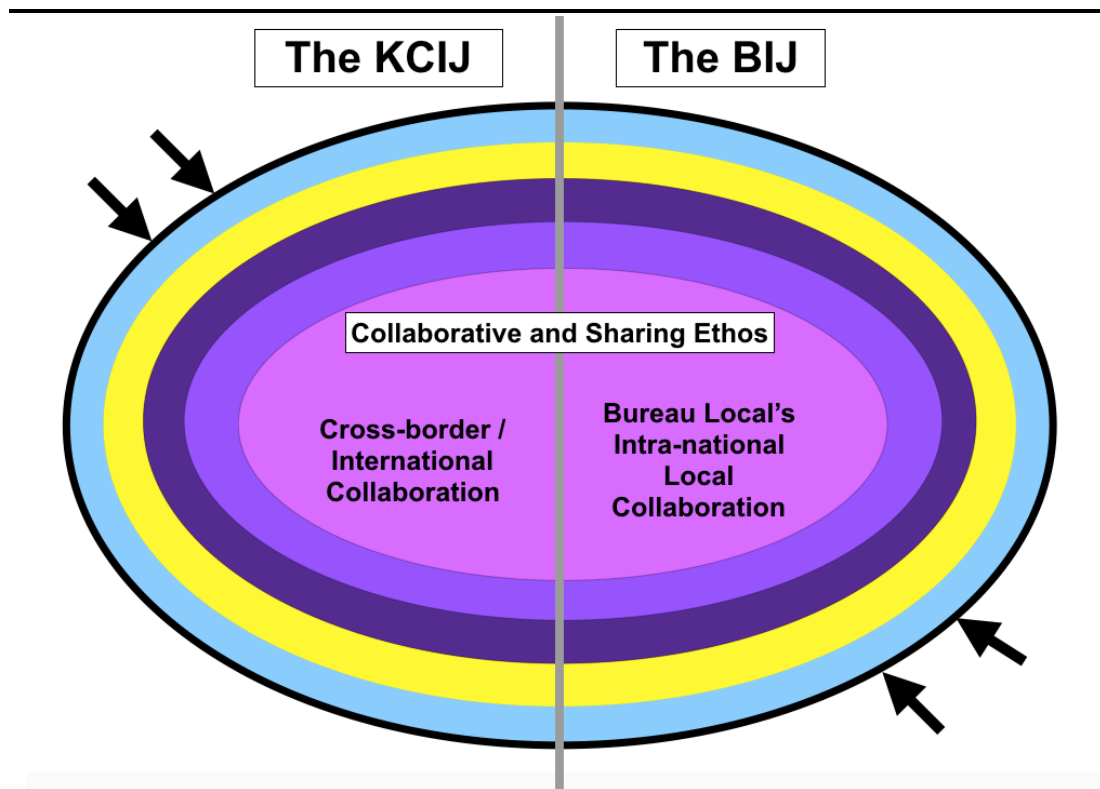
With the identified answer to part of research question 2, "What are the affordances and constraints of nonprofit funding systems that allow and/or hinder the newsrooms to conduct investigative journalism?" in previous section (6.2.2), this section explored collaborations as an example of how these identified journalistic norms, values and practices were reflected in their journalistic activities.

Collaborative journalism has played an essential role in reconstructing investigative journalism in the second decade of the 21st century (Edmonds and Mitchell 2014; Carson and Farhall 2018; Konieczna 2018; Alfter 2019; Birnbauer 2019). What was more important for this research was examining how the nonprofit newsrooms became one of the key participants in collaborative projects across the world. The KCIJ and the BIJ were not exceptional, as studied in section 4.6. Both newsrooms actively engaged in collaborations in diverse ways. In line with putting their organisational missions into journalistic practice, collaborative journalism contributed to produce stories "only the KCIJ/BIJ can do". The most meaningful impetus for the newsrooms to pursue collaborative projects was a sharing, collaborative ethos encouraged by their nonprofit funding systems. The nonprofit sector valued sharing resources and such a collaborative ethos far more than the competitive approaches which have previously dominated journalism. Figure 6.3 summarises how and what type of collaborations the nonprofits were taking part in.

The KCIJ, as the only South Korean partner of the ICIJ, has been participating in cross-border investigative projects since 2013, such as Panama Papers and Pandora Papers. A main kind of collaborations I encountered there was, consequently, transnational collaborations. When the first collaboration was published in 2013, what astonished both the public and journalistic practitioners in South Korea, were both the role played by a newly established, unrecognised and small newsroom in addition to the nature and findings of the investigation itself. Newswriters explained that the newsroom's institutional dedication to in-depth investigations was the key aspect for the KCIJ being selected by the ICIJ. Cross-

border collaborative journalism became a signature project of the KCIJ since only this outlet in South Korea undertook transnational collaboration with the ICIJ, generating news impact. The KCIJ's cross-border journalism was considered an innovative journalistic activity in South Korea. According to the practitioners at the KCIJ, this has had an influence on practitioners in other mainstream media by broadening their perspectives on such new journalistic technique and practices. More importantly, collaborations played a crucial role in the development of the recognition and reputation of the KCIJ newsroom.

FIGURE 6.3 Collaborative journalism at nonprofit newsrooms



Whereas the KCIJ focused on transnational collaboration, the BIJ's focus was on intra-national local collaborations (in addition to their co-publishing investigations with other newsrooms). In Spring 2017, the BIJ established the Bureau Local, a local unit to be a British version of the ICIJ for nationwide collaborations. By doing so, the nonprofit aimed to boost local journalism, a sector which had suffered severe financial difficulties. Sharing resources and skillsets was the key journalistic activities of the Bureau Local. Despite its short history, the Bureau Local has orchestrated a substantial scale of impactful collaborations with local journalists

across the UK. For instance, in terms of the Domestic Violence investigation, 20 collaborators participated, and approximately 50 local stories were published. Owing to the nature of collaboratively oriented publication, a Bureau Local story necessitated element associated with both local and national levels. Methodologically, investigations need to be conducted with the aid of collaborative techniques (generally with data-driven resources), otherwise they would not have been possible. The Bureau Local also published “Reporting Recipes”, a Do-it-yourself (DIY) guide for investigations including datasets and methods for investigations, which was accessible free of charge.

These findings about the benefits of collaborative journalism, such as increasing capacity, obtaining comprehensive insights, broadening the topics of investigations and benefiting society, accord with those of earlier studies (Heinrich 2012; Bryant 2017; Gearing 2021). Additionally, a more significant finding here was that this research broadened the related knowledge on collaborative journalism specifically for nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. A large number of previous studies about collaborations in relation to nonprofits focus more on the benefits of co-publishing (where nonprofits work on an investigation and legacy/larger media then publishes that work together, free of charge) (Edmonds and Mitchell 2014; Birnbauer 2019).

However, this thesis examined the direct participation of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations in mostly collaborative journalism projects. For instance, my research studied thoroughly about how a small and newly established news outlet being chosen as the only South Korean partner of the ICIJ, and how a specifically nonprofit funding system enabled such a success. Also, this thesis conducted research about how the Bureau Local, the British version of the ICIJ, was established, and what it meant to the BIJ and to the British journalism sector. Collaborations helped the nonprofit news media to produce more comprehensive investigations by collating human resources, often at small news organisations; in turn, the critical information could benefit society. In line with my wish to understand the influence of the nonprofit funding model on journalistic practices at such organisations, this emphasis at both newsrooms on the emergent practices of collaborative journalism could be seen in different ways as both a necessity, but also an affordance, of the economic funding model which sustains the organisations.

Shoemaker and Reese (2014) highlight that how media organisations are structured affects their judgements on newsworthiness and routinisations. Collaboration was one of the most important practices that was available for newswriters at the KCIJ and the BIJ owing to their organisational characteristics, that is, being nonprofit. For example, particularly, commercial media organisations often try to retain their resources and protect their news to compete with other newsrooms. By stark contrast, these nonprofit newsrooms did not close their doors, but were open for sharing their knowledge, skillsets and resources with others. These nonprofits seemed to believe that they could achieve their organisational purpose as a watchdog on society, and generate greater benefits to society, with collaborations. Newswriters at both organisations argued that a collaborative and sharing ethos was widely accepted among nonprofits. Owing to the identified collaborative ethos, empowered by nonprofit funding models, the KCIJ and the BIJ were able to share their knowledges and resources rather than constraining them for their own profits. Consequently, collaborations played an important role for these nonprofits to investigate under-reported issues and bring more unaffiliated and marginal voices to be heard. In Carson's chaos and control paradigm (2020, p.83), it is suggested that such normative function of investigative journalism would contribute to its survival in the digital age and my study nonprofits actively participated in collaborations with institutional supports.

What we learn from this study about the nonprofit pathway of journalism needs to be reflected on, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic has substantially inflicted economic damage on countries across the world. International organisations such as the World Bank and OECD have predicted economic downturn caused by the pandemic (OECD 2020; World Bank 2020). Such detrimental impacts on individual newswriters as well as media organisations have already identified (Mulcahey 2020; Sreedharan et al. 2021). History has already observed the consequences of the financial crisis in the journalism sector, early in the 21st century: a combination of redundancies among investigative journalists and increased private political and economic influences over news content, resulted in crisis in the ability of journalists to act as watchdogs on a democratic society in many countries (Starkman 2014; Cagé 2016).

Under such circumstances, nonprofits have played an important role in investigative journalism by collaborating with many other outlets. Their contribution to the journalism sector is to be expanded during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. For

example, the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN)⁹³, a nonprofit organisation based in the USA, has provided data, resources and training programs to investigate COVID-19 pandemic related issues. A free Webinar series “investigating the Pandemic” and workshops is offered to journalists so that they can adopt new ways of reporting under such circumstances (GIJN Staff 2020). The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP)⁹⁴, a nonprofit global network of investigative journalists, has orchestrated pan-nation collaboration with newsrooms from 37 countries across Europe, focusing on transparency of money flowing with regard to pandemic related supplies (Homolova and Lyndell 2020). Based on my empirical studies and the journalistic activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, I argue that a collaborative and sharing ethos supported by newsrooms with nonprofit funding models seems to be, and is likely to continue to be, one of the driving forces to sustain investigative journalism during financially challenging times.

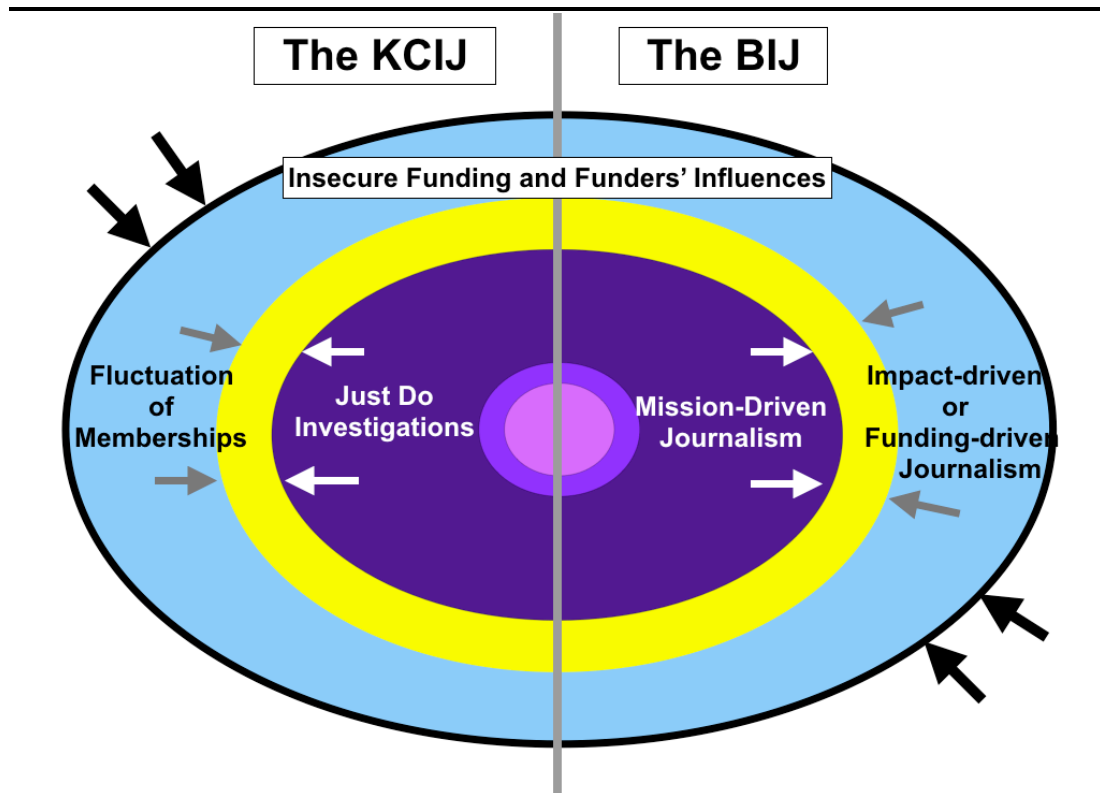
6.2.4 Minimising the Dangers of Precarious Finances by Focusing on Mission-Driven Journalism

A part of research question 2, “What are the affordances and constraints of nonprofit funding systems that allow and/or hinder the newsrooms to conduct investigative journalism?”, explored a disadvantageous aspect of the nonprofit funding systems for newswriters to undertake investigative journalism and how they manage them to minimise, or to overcome these identified concerns, as presented in section 5.2. Previous research around political economy theory on more conventional media organisations has revealed the impacts of noneditorial consideration such as political, economic, and related other elements on news production in terms of newsroom autonomy (Herman and Chomsky 2002; Fenton 2007). More specifically to the kind of journalism this thesis deals with, Carson (2020, p.90) emphasises that political and economic influences “can lead to suppression of investigative journalism” in her chaos and control paradigm. As discussed, external controlling elements have been considered an important aspect to be analysed when it comes to journalistic practices, which influenced this research by looking at such influences.

⁹³ <https://gijn.org/about/about-us/> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

⁹⁴ <https://www.occrp.org/en/aboutus/who-supports-our-work> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

FIGURE 6.4 Disadvantageous aspects of nonprofit funding systems and organisational approaches to overcoming them



One criticism in much of the literature on nonprofit funding models is of the insecurity of continuous funding and the (related) risk of undue influences from funders on newsrooms (Townend 2016; Birnbauer 2019). The analysis of the BIJ corroborated the previous studies about foundation-funded news media in terms of the precariousness of relying on grant contracts with a short-term period. This was not found in relation to the membership funding system at the KCIJ, as individual donations were granted without a pre-set period and were generally made monthly (like subscriptions). However, this membership model showed its peculiar limitation in terms of the fluctuation of donations. Both media outlets were aware of these challenges and actively set up organisational governance and routine practices, to minimise and overcome them, as shown in Figure 6.4.

The KCIJ was operated mainly by individual donations with members making monthly payments. The challenge came from the fluctuation in donations when large numbers of donors would withdraw monetary support following publication of specific investigations. Since 2013, it was seen to have happened three times between that year and 2018. Still, it was important for me to investigate what had

happened and how the newsroom managed it because my research offered one of the in-depth attempts to enhance our understanding of a funding model funded by individual donations and how they formed and shaped nonprofit investigative journalistic practice.

I was able to observe a decrease in memberships during my field research at the KCIJ. Being able to examine the newsroom's response on a sharp decrease in memberships and the approach to managing it, I focused on the organisational approach rather than the individual one. First, they dealt with the issue at a plenary meeting where all newswriters were supposed to attend. The plenary meeting was more about the membership drop itself, not explicitly about the investigation, where administrative officers explained a decrease in numbers of members. Newswriters, at a subsequent Unit meeting (of a different one from the journalist who wrote the investigation), discussed more critically and heatedly the investigation in terms of which elements could possibly have caused the decrease in membership. Based on my interviews and observations of meetings, I analysed the way in which the fluctuation was not perceived to have been caused solely by one specific reason (a certain political Party related topic) in a linear way. Instead, associative and multifaceted aspects influenced the fluctuation of memberships including the choice of topic itself, insufficient professional research, as well as the discrepancy in judgements of newsworthiness between the newsroom and the public. This multi-causal approach, I argue, was probably correct and this was backed up by the fact that only three out of many more investigative stories about the Party related topic caused such fluctuation, to the best of my understanding.

The newsroom's organisational response to approaching to the rise-and-fall of memberships was to double down on its mission, improve its journalism and "just do investigations" which continue to expose deliberate malpractices or systemic breakdown regardless of thinking about potentially detrimental economic effects. Furthermore, a majority of newswriters at the KCIJ argued that the political interests of their donors had not affected their journalistic activities, in spite of fluctuations. They argued that, as they had learned from such experiences in the past, short-term falls in membership were always made up by significant rises shortly after future impactful investigations were published. A few American studies has found that a majority of individual donors at nonprofit newsrooms can be seen as Democratic Party supporters (Powers and Yaros 2012; Hamilton 2016). However, less is known about the influence of members' partisanship on donor-

based funding, which indicates the need for in-depth, internal perspectives to further understand the issue. My thesis study helps filling gaps in this under-researched area of nonprofit newsroom studies from an inside-out, qualitative, observational perspective. In particular, an increasing number of foundation-funded nonprofits try to expand and diversify their funding streams, including membership ones, the findings from this study provide useful insights for them to prepare for the kinds of possible advantages and challenges of individual donations in the future. The appropriate method I used for this research may be applied to other media organisations elsewhere in the world for obtaining further perspectives into the risks and opportunities of donation-funded financial models.

The BIJ, whose funding was mainly fixed term and came from foundations, faced different difficulties from those of the KCIJ. As discussed in previous studies, the most frequently found disadvantage of this funding model is uncertainty around the renewal of grants (Houston 2010; Hamilton 2016; Birnbauer 2019). In the same vein, I examined how the BIJ's reliance on term-based foundation grants brought about uncertainty on financial sustainability in the longer term. Decisions about whether to try and extend funding on a project, I found, were made principally on journalistic grounds and on the newsroom's perceived need for further investigation on the topic. According to interviews, individual newswriters did not seem to focus, or at least in conversations with me, care much about job insecurity.

In terms of the related danger of funders' influence over journalism practice or news content, none of the newswriters at the BIJ said they had experienced any direct intervention from funders. Instead, the newsroom paid more attention on the indirect ways in which funders might affect the news they produce. The uncertainty of funding could influence newswriters to conduct "impact-driven news" (where funders pressure organisations to produce news which is likely to generate more, or only specific kinds of tangible societal changes, impact) or "funding-driven news" (where a newsroom determines to investigate a particular subject only, or partly, because there is funding available for the area), rather than relying wholly on internal and professional judgements at the issue selection stage of journalism. In general, a major problem with this kind of approaches to journalism is that this can pressure newswriters to prioritise external economic elements over principal journalistic values and norms. A related issue around impact-driven news is that reporters might have chosen a narrow range of topics with the potential to generate tangible kinds of impact, despite this rarely happening in real life, leaving more

important issues uncovered. Similarly, with funding-driven journalism, reporters may have decided to investigate an issue, not because of its perceived editorial importance, but because of the availability of funding to specifically investigate the issue.

The BIJ's organisational approach to overcoming the challenges of indirect funders' influence was to undertake "neither impact-driven nor funding-driven, but mission-driven" investigations. The Managing Editor was aware of the unbalanced power relations between grant funders and grantees. Consequently, the organisation had set up governance structures to implement a firewall between the editorial department and external funders to minimise both direct and indirect influences from outside the newsroom. Particularly, reporters were (in the main, based on my observations and interviews) excluded from finding funds although they outlined their own projects explained in funding applications. In so doing they were encouraged to concentrate on journalism-related activities. In other contexts, it has become common to note that economic pressures can be endanger editorial independence (McNair 2009; Starkman 2014; Cagé 2016).

As discussed in Chapter 2, previous researchers in journalism studies have identified that an organisational structure in relation to funding systems have often *negatively* affected traditional journalistic practices (Herman and Chomsky 2002). At some public service media organisations, journalistic values were often overridden by partisanship or governmental and political interests (Benson and Powers 2011; Kim and Han 2014). At some commercial media organisations, owners and funders (including advertisers) have intervened in, or indirectly influenced, news production because profits are prioritised over journalistic values (Davies 2009). Owing to these external influences, news practitioners had to face a number of threats restricting their capability to fulfil the civic function of investigative journalism (Wahl-Jorgensen et al. 2016, p.802).

It was found that both the KCIJ and the BIJ were aware of external influences on newsrooms in relation to financial insecurity. The KCIJ had experienced a membership drop in relation to certain investigations and the BIJ understood the potential danger of impact-driven and funding-driven journalism. Although the challenge itself was different at these newsrooms, the way they dealt with it appeared to be similar in that the nonprofits chose to focus on in-depth reporting regardless of such influence. Therefore, in a broad sense, this study agrees to the previous findings from studies based on political economy theory that funding

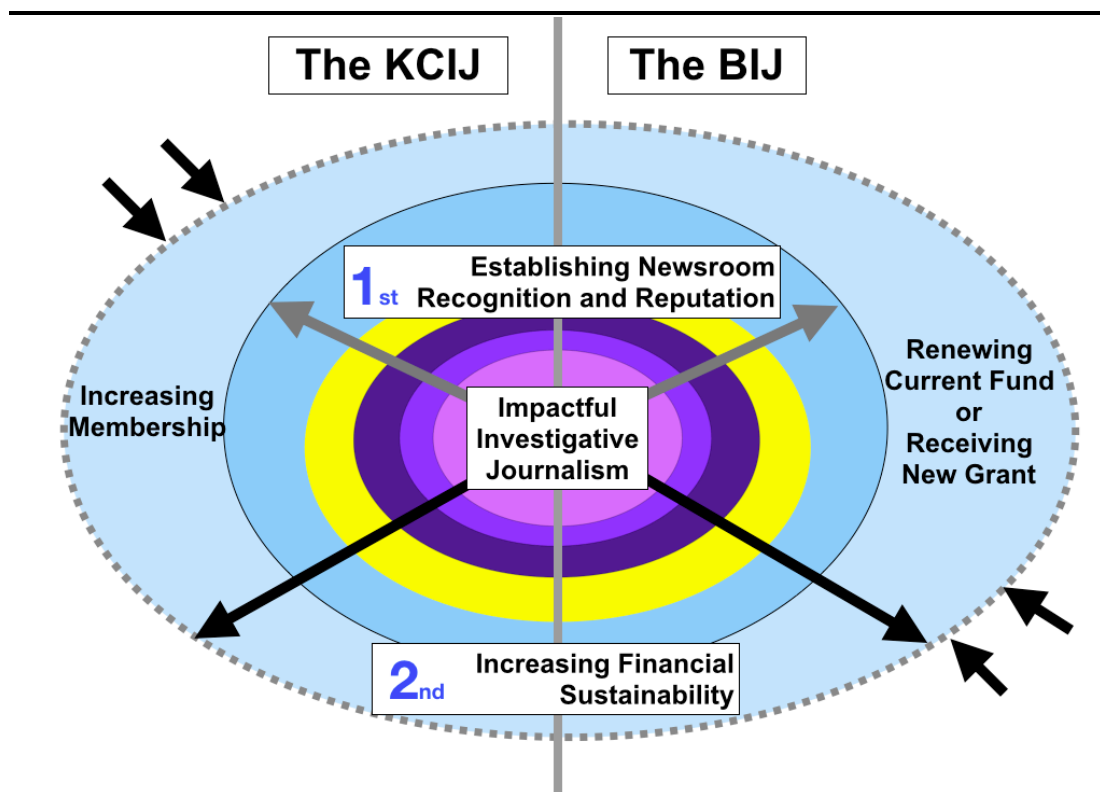
models of media organisations have significantly influenced journalistic practices, in most cases *negatively*. However, in stark contrast to the earlier studies, my findings indicated that external political economic forces such as members and foundation funders at the KCIJ and the BIJ with nonprofit funding systems *positively* affected newsrooms (in the way that they enable a focus on publishing mission-driven investigative journalism).

6.2.5 Generating Impactful Investigative Journalism: Enhancing Both Journalistic and Financial Sustainability in the Long-Term

Research question 3, “What are the challenges for the nonprofit newsrooms to achieve long-term financial sustainability?”, was central to investigating the perception of newswriters involved in the nonprofit investigative journalism organisations in order to identify factors affecting sustainability and the ways in which the KCIJ and the BIJ managed these. I found that the nonprofits undertook investigations in the public interest and contributed to the new investigative journalistic media ecology in new ways, particularly in relation to energising and encouraging collaboration. However, to do this continuously, nonprofit organisations needed to find a way to sustain themselves in the long-term. A primary concern on these nonprofits has been a lack of ongoing funding assurances (McChesney and Nichols 2010; Requejo-Alemán and Lugo-Ocando 2014; Hamilton 2016; Birnbauer 2019). Despite the challenge, the KCIJ and the BIJ have operated for 10 and 12 years, respectively. Therefore, I investigated them to obtain insights into the long-term financial sustainability of their nonprofit funding models. I began the analysis by conceptualising the range of ways in which news impact was understood and incorporated into journalistic practice among internal newswriters, in section 5.3. As mentioned in the previous section, news impact was closely related to the nonprofits’ funding. When it came to understand “impact-driven” news, definitions of impact generally encompassed a narrow range of tangible news impacts such as the resignation of politicians. However, a much wider range of understanding news impact also offered by newswriters from both newsrooms, spanning societal changes to individual ones (for example, personal expressions of appreciation from news sources and affected individuals). More importantly, both newsrooms highlighted that investigations about certain topics (usually under-reported, but important) could be impactful as they stood.

The KCIJ shared news impact with the public, and its members through its website by publishing follow-up stories in relation to news impact. However, despite applying many tools of computer-assisted reporting in other aspects of its work, it did not yet use any computer software tools to track and archive news impact at the time of my observation. The BIJ applied the “Impact Tracker”, developed by the CIR, to track news impact from most of their work, but the Bureau Local used its own provisional one on Microsoft Excel, at the time of my observation. Since investigations from the Bureau Local had a specific relation to local issues, localisation and collaboration related, bespoke impact categories, such as “network support” were included.

FIGURE 6.5 Sustainability of nonprofits in relation to news impact



I argue that publishing impactful investigative journalism was crucial for the KCIJ and the BIJ for both journalistic and financial reasons, and these motivations cannot be seen separately from each other. Possibly this is why these nonprofits archived and shared the data with the public, including member donors and foundation funders, as illustrated in Figure 6.5. First, in section 5.4, I found that accumulated news impact helped the nonprofits establish and maintain reputations as investigative journalism organisations in both professional milieu as well as

among the public. The meanings of news impact here implied the broader range of descriptions provided by newswriters at both nonprofit newsrooms. Impactful investigations were essential for both nonprofits to build their initial newsroom recognition and to further develop their brand reputation. Journalism serves society as the Fourth Estate by publishing important news and, consequently, generating impact (Schultz 1998; Aucoin 2005; Gentzkow et al. 2006; Matheson 2012; Lanosga and Houston 2016; Carson 2020). This principle also applied to the KCIJ and the BIJ as well by helping them fulfilling their mission as independent investigative journalism organisations.

In the early days, these newsrooms had experienced the situation where many other media in South Korea and the UK used their investigations without crediting them appropriately. After making substantial efforts to be properly cited, and by continuously publishing impactful investigations, they gained recognition as investigative journalism organisations and these problems decreased. Still, these nonprofits both considered it important to continue publishing impactful investigative journalism to help with gaining public recognition and reputation more.

These findings provide an opportunity for me to advance the understanding of journalistic sustainability at nonprofit investigative journalism organisations. In other types of news outlets, organisational success has often been evaluated by diverse noneditorial elements such as the number of circulations, clicks or viewing rates. However, at nonprofit newsrooms, journalism-centric performance was most important, which has often been neglected in the journalism sector in favour of over political or economic values (Aucoin 2005; Bromley 2005; Bradshaw 2008; Davies 2009; McChesney and Nichols 2010).

Institutional reputations, established by in-depth investigative journalism and its impact, became both a kind of non-economic return on investment for current funders and a fundamental asset for the KCIJ and the BIJ to sustain themselves in the future. I analysed such journalistic success because the institutional reputations are closely related to financial sustainability in the long term. Section 5.5 illustrated the financial value of news impact in relation to long-term sustainability. I argued that at these nonprofit news organisations, news impact was considered as a return for funders. The primary reason for the KCIJ publishing follow-up news stories about news impact and the BIJ assigning the Impact Tracker, was to share the perceived impact of reporting with their funders who, participants argued, both deserved and wanted this kind of assessment (although there were slight

differences between individual donors and foundations). Some newswriters at the nonprofits had internalised understanding of their funding-news relationship as based on “give-and-take” and a “transaction agreement”. For instance, in commercial media, funders invest money and receive a return with profits (in general). In nonprofit media, in-depth investigative journalism and its news impact replaces the monetary return.

Furthermore, strong evidence of the relationship between news impact and sustainability was found in terms of future funding. Publishing impactful investigations was seen to bring more attention to the nonprofits from the public, which, based on their past experience, could increase the likelihood of successful fundraising. For instance, the KCIJ had observed a sharp increase in memberships following publication of hard-hitting investigations (like its collaborations with the ICIJ). At the BIJ, for diversifying funding streams in the future, including individual donations, demonstrating and communicating about their contribution to improving society with impactful investigations was suggested as evidence of their journalistic activities.

Finally, I concluded by analysing the continuum of nonprofits’ sustainability with practices making the nonprofit newsrooms journalistically and financially in section 5.6. The virtuous circle of long-term sustainability started with the newsrooms’ producing hard-hitting original reporting with which nonprofits could achieve their missions and fulfil a watchdog function as independent investigative journalism organisations. With the consistent endeavour to publish impactful investigative journalism, these nonprofits were able to build initial newsroom recognition and to establish brand reputations. Their journalistic achievement cemented their reputation among funders (both in general public and among foundations), increasing their financial sustainability. Then the virtuous circle returns back at the beginning and organisations could continue to conduct investigative journalism, which as we know, entails high costs and resources, secured by more nonprofit funding.

It is important to note that my study has found that the journalistic value can bring about financial value for nonprofit newsrooms. Impactful investigative journalism could actually yield monetary benefit to the nonprofit newsrooms in South Korea and the UK in addition to the benefit to their society. Their continued efforts in producing quality investigative journalism, in fact, led to an increase in financial donations to these newsrooms. Hamilton (2016, p.114) also stated that some for-

profit media organisations, in spite of financial hardship, still choose and endeavour to keep working on costly investigative journalism. One of the reasons for this is to build reputation through impactful exclusive reporting and, as a result, to differentiate themselves in the market, which can lead to long-term financial sustainability at such commercial organisations (ibid). As identified in my findings, retaining a strong reputation through investigative journalism is not only applicable to for-profit media organisations, but also to nonprofits. Anderson et al. (2015, p.87) suggests that “news organizations will probably get new forms of funding from a number of sources”. These new types include a “digital subscription” like the KCIJ funding model, and “foundation grants” like the BIJ’s. More importantly, the researchers (ibid, p.107) highlight that the “value of reputation” becomes more important. They add, “any publication with a reputation for accuracy, probity or rigor has an advantage over the run-of-the-mill competition” (ibid, p.107). My findings empirically corroborated the idea of Anderson’s team, who suggest the increased value of brand reputation, particularly at nonprofit investigative journalism organisations in South Korea and the UK. To be sustainable in the long-term, retaining and extending their reputation as investigative journalism experts was crucial for these newsrooms with the new forms of funding.

With the chaos and control paradigm, Carson (2020) has proposed that “the civic function (chaos) and market imperatives (control) of the media need not be mutually exclusive, but that they can coexist on a conceptual continuum where there is potential for overlap” (2020, p.84). The researcher argues that accomplishing civic function can also bring market imperatives at more conventional media, highlighting the “overlap helps explain why investigative reporting remains viable in the digital age” (ibid, p.84). My findings show that at the KCIJ and the BIJ the journalistic function of the newsrooms (civic function) overlaps very largely with ability to increase financial sustainability in the long-term (market imperatives). Moreover, as Carson (2020, p.98) has argued, it is true that nonprofit organisations are not required to “impress the market”, but my study identified that these nonprofits still need to impress society with their investigations for long-term sustainability.

My PhD thesis research began by seeking to examine how the diverse practices of investigative journalism have developed in newsrooms supported by nonprofit funding models. By analysing investigative journalism in the 21st century with the chaos and control paradigm, Carson (2020, p.99) asks that “the question of *how* it [investigative journalism] continues, beyond its obvious requirements for funding

and staff, [...], brings us back to the question of the means for producing investigative journalism". With my findings, I can answer that one of the means for producing investigative journalism is a newsroom supported by a nonprofit funding model. There have been concerns about the crisis in investigative journalism in the first decade of the 21st century. However, I argue that, in some places like South Korea and the UK, newsrooms with nonprofit funding models have, more recently, been rejuvenating investigative journalism. This seems likely to be continued if they keep fulfilling their duty in a manner consistent with a Fourth Estate role. A way to do this for newswriters at the KCIJ and the BIJ seemed to be consistently publishing impactful investigative journalism in spite of potential influences from members or philanthropic funders. In turn, the nonprofit model was able to get the public support journalistically and financially, which helped these newsrooms enhance the prospects for sustainability in the long-term.

6.3 The Contribution to Knowledge of This Thesis

There are several noteworthy areas where this PhD thesis makes an original contribution to the field of journalism studies. The research expands the knowledge and understanding of the operation of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations amidst rapidly changes in the media ecologies in South Korea and the UK.

6.3.1 Contribution to the Academic Knowledge of this Thesis

Most importantly, this thesis reveals that journalistic practices, journalistically and financially supported by the KCIJ and the BIJ, are closely in relation to their sustainability and respective economic funding models. A virtuous circle of the sustainability of nonprofit investigative journalism organisations explains that the public's perceived need for investigative journalism functions as a motivation to both support and fund this kind of journalism. In return, the nonprofits publish investigative journalism, which can engender more perceived need for this kind of journalism from the public. Nonprofit funding systems provide a newsroom an ability to insulate newsroom autonomy from external forces in order to undertake investigations based on their own journalistic values and norms. Therefore, the funding system can positively affect editorial independence by providing working conditions conducive to in-depth original reporting, which itself then ultimately

enhances the likelihood of future sustainability for nonprofits. This study empirically examines and suggests the possibility of an additional way of funding investigative journalism to the existing, and historic conventional news business models to allow it to continue to play a watchdog role in society.

The evidence obtained by my newsroom ethnography at two nonprofits offer further insights into characteristics of the two financial models for funding news media in the nonprofit sector. Broadly, the mission and organisational purposes of both newsrooms are very similar, with any differences found in detailed aspects, such as issues around funders. Instead, it is meaningful that this study expands the geographical limits of previous research to Asia and Europe because a majority of previous studies focus on organisations based in North America. The research does not make an assertion to represent all nonprofit investigative journalism organisations.

The methodological approach adopted in this research yields rich and in-depth data on the relationship between funding models and investigative journalistic practices. Through newsroom ethnography including participant observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews, this research project offers reliable data from insiders' perspectives contextualised by my own independent observations. Additionally, my painstaking and time-consuming procedures for preparing for newsroom ethnography, including my process of gaining access to the newsrooms and the lengths to which I went to train myself in investigative journalistic skills to make myself competent, knowledgeable and useful participant and observer, offer an example of good practice for novice observers, especially those who wish to enter the specialist, security-conscious, and difficult to access world of journalism. However, this preparatory work was very worthwhile. Owing to my fieldwork, I was able to obtain valuable datasets which could not be done otherwise. Therefore, I hope that this thesis can inspire more novice researchers like me to not give up, but to endeavour to conduct newsroom ethnography when they think, as I did, that newsroom ethnography is the most appropriate method for their research.

6.3.2 Implication for the News Industry of this Thesis

The findings from this thesis offer important insights to the news industry as well. As discussed in the literature review (see chapter 2), many of mainstream media

organisations have compromised original and in-depth investigative journalism for other noneditorial factors to sustain their operations. Public service media funded by governments are often closely related to political power, which can have a deleterious effect on such organisations' ability to maintain independence. Some commercial media choose to cut or reduce support for investigative journalism when facing financial difficulty and allow a focus on attracting and retaining advertising revenues to reduce their capacity for producing news in the public interest.

However, my findings from nonprofit investigative journalism organisations showed that the most important practice the KCIJ and the BIJ employed to maintain long-term stability was focusing more on producing investigative journalism to fulfil its watchdog role in society. Although they were relatively small and less resourced newsrooms than many mainstream media organisations in their countries, they spent sufficient time and efforts into single investigations in order to publish reporting that met their own, as well as widely-agreed, criteria for effective Fourth Estate journalism. The accumulated efforts helped them to build their reputations, and eventually, to get support from the public financially and journalistically. The KCIJ directly observed the sharp increase of membership support when hard-hitting investigative news stories were published. Overall, the results of this study indicate that it is significant for newsrooms not to forget the primary role of journalism for the long-term sustainability since prioritising journalistic values over noneditorial values can in fact help newsrooms to be more sustainable.

Moreover, findings from the two newsrooms may offer useful insights into other nonprofits. Funding and managerial systems can be applied to new nonprofit initiatives in the future. As discussed earlier in the thesis, the Membership Puzzle Project analysed the current newsrooms with membership funding systems and shared guidelines and strategies to set up such funding stream⁹⁵. This study has examined closely one example of a membership funding system of the KCIJ, which was initially voluntarily established by the public. So far, a few attempts have been made to study this model empirically. Although it is based in Asia, the findings from my study can provide significant implications to nonprofits in the rest of the world since increasing numbers of foundation funded nonprofits are finding ways of diversifying their revenue streams, including individual donations. Also, the findings on the Bureau Local's operational system of intra-national collaboration can be helpful to organisations in other countries. Although this thesis is based on

⁹⁵ <https://membershippuzzle.org> [Accessed: 21 March 2022].

academic research, I believe that its findings are also useful to practitioners in the journalism field by identifying and examining the actual journalistic practices and challenges from internal voices of newswriters at nonprofit newsrooms.

6.4 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this thesis provide insights into the journalistic practices and challenges at media organisations with nonprofit funding models, the KCIJ in South Korea and the BIJ in the UK, in producing investigative journalism. Through newsroom ethnography including participant observation and in-depth interviews at these newsrooms, I was able to obtain a detailed, and qualitative outlook and explore empirically the ways in which a nonprofit funding system helped to insulate editorial independence and to enable the production of accountability journalism in the public interest. However, this PhD research has limitations, as do all studies. Studying two media organisations was challenging for the PhD thesis for practical reasons. Notwithstanding, it was an unavoidable choice as a pioneer researcher to initiate a study about nonprofit investigative journalism organisations with different nonprofit funding models and also consideration of broadening knowledge on this subject outside the Northern American perspective. In fact, my research yield evidence of many more journalistic practices and challenges of the KCIJ and the BIJ than those written in this thesis due to practical restrictions on word counts. Therefore, I suggest that future studies will examine these excluded elements, including the ways in which new technologies contribute to nonprofit investigative journalistic practices, in detail, and in the context of each country's media environment. Additionally, there might have been more suitable theoretical frameworks that could explain the emergence of nonprofit investigative journalism and their practices in different ways.

Moreover, future research can also expand its empirical studies into the continued, if diminished, investigative journalism practices of legacy media organisations which have themselves undergone big changes in recent years. Since investigative journalism is vital for a democratic society and, though facing challenges, it is of interest to analyse changes in the practice of, and attitudes towards, investigative journalism at mainstream media. Due to time and spatial limits in conducting this thesis's study, I was unable to include consideration of these mainstream media in

the analysis but had to study the aspect only from the previous literature, and through the lens of my participants' previous professional experience. Future studies can emphasise such specific cases of how mainstream media respond to the emergence of nonprofit newsrooms. Overall, this will be useful in helping to understand the broader context of the journalism sector in each country. I also suggest that future research will extend its focus to funders' perspectives, such as those of individual members or workers at charitable foundations when it comes to sustainability. Reasons of donations provided by funders can provide significant data for nonprofit newsrooms to approach the potential financial sustainability in the long-term.

Finally, it can be beneficial to conduct a study about planning and developing diversified funding streams as part of maintaining a more stable status of finances at nonprofit organisations. Obtaining funding from various sources such as individual donations, foundation grants or sales of news content is closely linked to each country's journalism cultures, so future research will be likely to generate interesting findings on the topic. The analysis of these activities will be important to improving nonprofit funding systems for investigative journalism as well as further adding to the stock of knowledge within journalism studies.

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