

**“Back to the Studio”**

**National News Coverage in NOS Foreign Correspondence on the COVID-19 Pandemic**

MA Thesis

Vera de Ruiten (5126797)

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Supervisor: Dr. van Gorp

Second reader: Dr. Keilbach

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**Abstract**

This research examines the function of foreign correspondent items of *NOS Journaal* in constructing national news on the global COVID-19 pandemic. It focuses on the main national news organisation of the Netherlands and the transnational event of the spread of the Coronavirus disease in 2020. In doing so, this study explores the presence of the inherent tension between nationality and transnationality of television as theorised in recent television studies. Moreover, it considers what this tension means for the news coverage of a global health crisis.

Through a textual analysis of foreign correspondence items, this study demonstrates that these items provide information about distant places with varying degrees of familiarity and novelty to the national audience. This proves that *NOS Journaal* oscillated between the national and the transnational in its broadcasts. For coverage of COVID-19, this fluctuation facilitated access to information of high importance to public health while accommodating this public's televisual experience.

*Keywords:* foreign correspondence, national news, transnational news, television broadcasting, COVID-19 pandemic, NOS Journaal

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## 1. Introduction

In December 2019, a virus called COVID-19 was identified in the Chinese city of Wuhan.<sup>1</sup> Its identification sparked worldwide concern about its containment. However, hopes for swift resolution were in vain as the virus rapidly spread and a global pandemic was set in motion.<sup>2</sup> Considering the virus' severity and novelty, access to accurate and timely information became crucial.<sup>3</sup> In their research into audience engagement with COVID-19 news, Mihelj, Kondor and Štětka identified a sharp rise in the volume of news consumption as people turned to the media for the latest information about the still-unknown disease.<sup>4</sup> A popular source of information was the internet, which was soon flooded with articles and social media posts about COVID-19.<sup>5</sup> However, the quality of this information was questionable as it became increasingly difficult to distinguish reliable news from "fake news".<sup>6</sup> Consequently, many individuals gravitated towards television as a more reliable source of information, elevating its role in shaping public understanding of the virus.<sup>7</sup>

The case of COVID-19 illustrates an interesting paradox of television regarding nationality versus transnationality. On the one hand, news about COVID-19 was of foreign nature, particularly when the virus was spreading across the world for the first time.<sup>8</sup> Foreign correspondents were employed to cover news from abroad and present it to their audience.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, "Coronavirus," January 10, 2022, <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization, "Coronavirus."

<sup>3</sup> Philipp Dominik Keidl et al., eds., *Pandemic Media : Preliminary Notes Toward an Inventory* (Lüneburg: Meson Press, 2020), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Sabina Mihelj, Katherine Kondor, and Václav Štětka, "Audience Engagement With COVID-19 News: The Impact of Lockdown and Live Coverage, and the Role of Polarization," *Journalism Studies* 23, no. 5–6 (May 25, 2021): 569, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670x.2021.1931410>.

<sup>5</sup> Miguel Túñez-López, Francisco Campos-Freire, and Marta Rodríguez-Castro, eds., *The Values of Public Service Media in the Internet Society, Palgrave Global Media Policy and Business* (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2021), 10-11.

<sup>6</sup> Túñez-López, Campos-Freire, and Rodríguez-Castro, *The Values of Public Service Media in the Internet Society*, 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> Mihelj, Kondor, and Štětka, "Audience Engagement With COVID-19 News: The Impact of Lockdown and Live Coverage, and the Role of Polarization," 571.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Hanitzsch et al., "Interest in Foreign News," in *Foreign News on Television: Where in the World Is the Global Village?* (Peter Lang, 2013), 171.

<sup>9</sup> Kristina Riegert, "Pondering the future for foreign news on national television," *International Journal of Communication* 5 (September 2011): 1567.

On the other hand, this audience was often of national nature as television tends to broadcast on a national level.<sup>10</sup> So, while having an inherently national broadcasting scope, television can serve as a conduit for transnational news coverage. This interplay prompts critical inquiry into the function of foreign correspondence, raising the question: *In what ways do the foreign correspondence items of NOS Journaal broadcasts construct national news on the global COVID-19 pandemic?*

This study focuses on the NOS, which is the Dutch public news broadcasting foundation.<sup>11</sup> The Dutch government put it in place to provide news for the entire population of the Netherlands.<sup>12</sup> *NOS Journaal* is the broadcaster's news show and the most popular news source in the Netherlands.<sup>13</sup> The programme had a significant increase in viewers since the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>14</sup> Considering its establishment and viewership, *NOS Journaal* can be considered an inherently national news outlet. Simultaneously, the public news broadcaster provides its audience with foreign news via foreign correspondents. These correspondents are prominently featured in the news broadcasts, often presenting their news on-screen. *NOS Journaal's* national focus and inclusion of transnational news make it a relevant case study to research the construction of national news on a global event.

Previous research into *NOS Journaal* has focussed on the programme's audience members, looking at their media usage, its journalists, studying their audience perceptions, and its content, looking at coverage of disasters and politics.<sup>15</sup> This research will contribute to

<sup>10</sup> Graeme Turner, "Television and the Nation: Does This Matter Any More?," in *Television Studies After TV: Understanding Television in the Post-Broadcast Era* (Routledge, 2009), 54, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203878316>.

<sup>11</sup> Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, "Media Act: Rules for Broadcasters and Programming," Government.nl, July 1, 2015, <https://www.government.nl/topics/the-media-and-broadcasting/media-act-rules-for-broadcasters-and-programming>.

<sup>12</sup> Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, "Media Act: Rules for Broadcasters and Programming."

<sup>13</sup> Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, "Media Act: Rules for Broadcasters and Programming."

<sup>14</sup> "Kijkcijfers NOS 2020," Kijkonderzoek, 2020, accessed April 24, 2024, <https://kijkonderzoek.nl/component/kijkcijfers/file.n1-3-1-p>.

<sup>15</sup> Tim Groot Kormelink and Irene Costera Meijer, "Material and Sensory Dimensions of Everyday News Use," *Media, Culture & Society* 41, no. 5 (February 5, 2019): 637–53, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718810910>; Kees Brants and Yael De Haan, "Taking the Public Seriously: Three Models of Responsiveness in Media and Journalism," *Media, Culture & Society* 32, no. 3 (May 1, 2010): 411–28,

the latter, content-centered outlook through a textual analysis of foreign correspondence items in NOS' 20.00 Journaal broadcasts about COVID-19, closely examining textual elements that indicate the foreign correspondence item's function. In doing so, this study aims to explore further the nuanced ways in which the nationality and transnationality of television as a medium intertwine and what this means for news coverage on, in this instance, a global health crisis.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 National and Transnational Television

In television studies and related academic fields, particularly in Europe, a significant debate revolves around the characterisation of television as a national or transnational medium. While traditionally perceived as inherently national due to its origins, production context, and audience composition, recent scholarship challenges this notion by emphasising the medium's evolving nature in response to technological advancements and globalisation. Historically, as cultural studies scholar Turner notes in studying the relationship between television and the nation around the 2010s, the television medium was meant to be national, as it was introduced to address an audience of national citizens.<sup>16</sup> Democratic governments recognised the potential of the mass communication means to reach the entirety of their citizenship.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, this national outlook was rooted in technological capacities and economic rationale. According to communications scholars Blondheim and Liebes, who were concerned with the topic Turner around the same time Turner was, the technology had yet to

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<https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443709361170>; Joost Lammers, "Burgemeesters aan het Televisiefront: Het NOS Journaal en de Rampburgemeester van Enschede en van Volendam," *Tijdschrift Voor Mediageschiedenis* 5, no. 2 (December 2002): 110–34, <https://doi.org/10.18146/tmg.527>; Hilken Tiggeloven, "Met De Poten in Bluswater En Tranen. Het NOS-Journaal En De Branden in Amsterdam (1977) En Volendam (2001)," *Tijdschrift Voor Mediageschiedenis* 8, no. 2 (December 1, 2005): 95–110, <https://doi.org/10.18146/tmg.543>; Philip Van Praag, "Het Journaal En De Haagse Politiek. Van Angstige Volger Tot Actieve Hoofdrolspeler," *Tijdschrift Voor Mediageschiedenis* 8, no. 2 (December 1, 2005): 61–78, <https://doi.org/10.18146/tmg.541>.

<sup>16</sup> Turner, "Television and the Nation: Does This Matter Any More?," 54.

<sup>17</sup> Turner, "Television and the Nation: Does This Matter Any More?," 54.

reach beyond the borders of a nation, airwaves were scarce, and television broadcasting was too expensive to be taken on by private companies.<sup>18</sup> To ensure citizens could still access content of interest and relevance to all, communications historian McChesney writes that democratic governments took control of the airwaves and put in place a public broadcasting system.<sup>19</sup> From a production standpoint, public broadcasting strengthens the perception of television as a national medium. Cultural scholar Hodkinson explains public service broadcasting entails non-profit, full-service broadcasting that informs, educates, and entertains the public.<sup>20</sup> Although scarcity is no longer an issue due to technological advances, many public broadcasting services have remained in place to, according to journalism scholars Túñez-López, Campos-Freire and Rodríguez-Castro, serve their nation's communication needs.<sup>21</sup>

Television can also be seen as inherently national due to its nation-building properties among these nations. Communications scholar Holtz-Bacha, who has studied the role of public service media in nation-building in the mid-2010s, defines a nation as a socially constructed imagined community, based on internal identification with fellow members.<sup>22</sup> The community is imagined, according to American anthropologist and political scientist Anderson, because all members of the nation are unlikely to know one another but their commonalities will drive them to view themselves as a coherent group.<sup>23</sup> Around the same time as Holtz-Bacha's study, television scholar Jenner states that television is a site where the

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<sup>18</sup> Menahem Blondheim and Tamar Liebes, "Television News and the Nation: The End?," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 625, no. 1 (September 2009): 190, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716209338574>.

<sup>19</sup> Robert McChesney, "Public broadcasting: Past, present, and future," in *Public Broadcasting and the Public Interest* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), 10.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Hodkinson, "Public service or personal entertainment? Controlling media orientation," in *Media, Culture, and Society: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (SAGE, 2017), 140.

<sup>21</sup> Túñez-López, Campos-Freire, and Rodríguez-Castro, *The Values of Public Service Media in the Internet Society*, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Christina Holtz-Bacha, "The Role of Public Service Media in Nation-Building," in *Public Service Media in Europe: A Comparative Approach* (Routledge, 2015), 2002–3.

<sup>23</sup> Benedict Anderson, "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.," *Pacific Affairs* 58, no. 3 (2006): 500, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2759245>.

community of the nation is imagined and socially constructed.<sup>24</sup> This construction stems from television being a mass medium, disseminating the same information to many people at the same time. This simultaneity brings about a sense of unity among audiences which, according to communications scholar Scannell in a study on time and television in 2009, can lead to a feeling of belonging to the community of viewers.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, such belonging can be strengthened when, as media scholar Van den Bulck writes, television broadcasters address the audience as citizens of the nation-state.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the broadcasters create an in-group of national citizens whom audiences become likely to identify with. Combined, the origin, production practices, and reception of television broadcasting make a strong case for the medium to be national.

At the same time, television can be understood as a transnational medium rooted in globalisation processes, particularly according to journalism and media scholars who have focussed on these processes and their implications. In 2004, media and globalisation scholar Rantanen defines globalisation as the intensification of worldwide relations and growing interconnectedness among nations across time and space.<sup>27</sup> The process of globalisation has been enabled by developments such as modes of travel, world trade, and communication, which influenced television production and viewership. Globalisation has been found to greatly have affected journalism as scholars like international journalism theorist Williams explain that producers can access information beyond their direct environment by travelling to or contacting distant places.<sup>28</sup> What's more, television producers can broadcast the

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<sup>24</sup> Mareike Jenner, "The Transnational, the National and Television," in *Netflix and the Re-Invention of Television* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 202, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94316-9\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94316-9_11).

<sup>25</sup> Paddy Scannell, "The Dialectic of Time and Television," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 625, no. 1 (September 2009): 225, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716209339153>.

<sup>26</sup> Hilde Van Den Bulck, "Public Service Television and National Identity as a Project of Modernity: The Example of Flemish Television," *Media, Culture & Society* 23, no. 1 (2001): 57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016344301023001003>.

<sup>27</sup> Terhi Rantanen, *The media and globalization* (SAGE Publications, 2004), 5-6, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221198>.

<sup>28</sup> Kevin Williams, *International journalism*, 1st ed. (SAGE Publications, 2011), 28, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446251133>.



information from elsewhere to anywhere. Together, these observations demonstrate television is a global medium.

The two different outlooks on television should be regarded as complementary, as television can be considered a national and transnational medium at the same time. Understanding television as inherently national, write media historians Fickers and Johnson at the dawn of the 2010s, ignores the global flows that have always been at play during the lifetime of television.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, viewing television as inherently global fails to acknowledge the medium's rootedness in nationality. Combining the outlooks presents a television as a dichotomy between the national and the transnational. This research will further investigate this dichotomy by looking at the remarkable case of the news.

## ***2.2 National and Transnational Television News***

The interplay between the nationality of news organisations and the global flows of the news shapes television news, of which foreign news is the pinnacle. As defined by foreign correspondence scholars Bebawi and Evans in 2019, foreign news entails news that occurs across and beyond the borders of an area populated by a nation.<sup>30</sup> This definition points to a duality whereby foreign news cannot exist without the notion of domestic news.<sup>31</sup> This duality, according to Williams, presents an Us (the nation, the inside, the known, the familiar) and Them (the foreign, the outside, the strange, the unfamiliar) duality. The known, write journalism scholars Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch at the end of the 2000s, is represented by the national news organisation.<sup>32</sup> These organisations are either commercial or public service news programmes that bring news to their targeted national audience.

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<sup>29</sup> Andreas Fickers and Catherine Johnson, "Transnational Television History: A Comparative Approach," *Media History* 16, no. 1 (January 5, 2010): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688800903395411>.

<sup>30</sup> Saba Bebawi and Mark Evans, *The future foreign correspondent*, Springer eBooks, 1st ed. (Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2019), 25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-01668-5>.

<sup>31</sup> Williams, *International Journalism*, 23.

<sup>32</sup> Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch, eds., *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, Routledge eBooks (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1-15.

Considering the interplay between the national news organisation and the global nature of the news broadcast, foreign news coverage can be considered inherently transnational from a production perspective. Whether this coverage reaches its audience, however, is also of importance.

Audience engagement is important because it is crucial to the continuation of television news. Commercial news organisations, according to Hodkinson, must attract audiences to remain profitable and, thus, on air, while for public service news organisations, Wahl-Jorgenson and Hanitzsch state, audience attraction is also a priority because of their assigned task to cater to citizen's information needs.<sup>33</sup> Audience engagement is what renders public news broadcasts legitimate. Having established the importance of audience engagement, journalism scholar Broersma, in his 2019 theorisation of audience engagement, defines it as the audience's active and intentional temporal, cognitive, and emotional investment in media content.<sup>34</sup> As a result of this investment, audiences internalise the media message, stimulating loyalty, attentiveness, thought formation, and even behaviour, which journalism scholar Nelson states in 2019, leads to more news consumption.<sup>35</sup> Nelson does add that this understanding of audience engagement is rather audience-oriented.<sup>36</sup> So, how producers approach news coverage should be examined to fully comprehend the relationship between national news producers and their audience when broadcasting foreign news.

Looking at transnational news research, several approaches to news coverage emerge. One approach entails national news organisations portraying the global as far away in their foreign news coverage. According to Hanitzsch et al. in their 2013 study on foreign news in television broadcasting, news tends to represent the world as a dangerous place that can

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<sup>33</sup> Hodkinson, "Public Service or Personal Entertainment? Controlling Media Orientation," 139-42; Wahl-Jorgenson and Hanitzsch, *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, 1-15.

<sup>34</sup> Marcel Broersma, "Audience Engagement," *The International Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies*, April 2019, 1-6, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118841570.iejs0060>.

<sup>35</sup> Jacob Nelson, "The Next Media Regime: The Pursuit of 'Audience Engagement' in Journalism," *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism* 22, no. 9 (July 2019): 2350-67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919862375>.

<sup>36</sup> Nelson, "The Next Media Regime: The Pursuit of 'Audience Engagement' in Journalism," 2356.

disrupt the stability of the audience's lives.<sup>37</sup> However, national news television, Blondheim and Liebes explain, can provide a sense of security among audience members through containment, which is the news' attempt to control reality.<sup>38</sup> They elaborate that national news television makes its news manageable and trustworthy by offering designated moments and places to access the news, being predictable in its broadcasting schedule, creating distance between the disruptive news and the audience via authoritative figures like the anchor, and using familiar narrative structures to cover the news.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, distance is created between the global event and the national audience, showcasing that "there" is not "here".

Conversely, an alternative approach entails national news organisations portraying the global as close by in their foreign news coverage. According to Williams, news organisations can bring the transnational near using a global lens, which entails the broadcasting of culturally distant places with the same treatment as local news.<sup>40</sup> Such treatment of transnational news, as found in a large-scale public opinion survey Hanitzsch et al. point to, can substantially affect the knowledge, perception, and attitude of audiences toward other nations.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, audiences can cultivate a sense of belonging in the world and even consider themselves as part of a global community.<sup>42</sup> "There" is now also "here". The effectiveness of applying a global lens to foreign events by television news organisations has been scrutinised by scholars like journalism theorist Tanikawa, as they state that audiences are relatively uninterested in global news.<sup>43</sup> Tanikawa supports this observation by writing that civilisations are differentiated by history, language, culture, and religion in such a

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<sup>37</sup> Hanitzsch et al., "Interest in Foreign News, 172."

<sup>38</sup> Blondheim and Liebes, "Television News and the Nation: The End?," 183.

<sup>39</sup> Blondheim and Liebes, "Television News and the Nation: The End?," 183.

<sup>40</sup> Williams, *International Journalism*, 22.

<sup>41</sup> Hanitzsch et al., "Interest in Foreign News," 171.

<sup>42</sup> Hanitzsch et al., "Interest in Foreign News," 171.

<sup>43</sup> Miki Tanikawa, "Is 'Global Journalism' Truly Global?," *Journalism Studies* 20, no. 10 (September 19, 2018): 1435, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670x.2018.1520610>.

fundamental way that globalisation is unlikely to even out these differences to the extent that everyone can relate to one another.<sup>44</sup>

Considering national news organisations do want to introduce audiences to different cultures, a third approach to the portrayal of the global in transnational television news coverage must be identified. This approach relates to the concept of cultural proximity. Communications and journalism scholar Straubhaar defines cultural proximity as the idea that audiences prefer news programming closest to their own culture in his 2021 theorisation of the concept.<sup>45</sup> He continues that cultural proximity is created by a sense of closeness and similarity.<sup>46</sup> The consequential feelings of familiarity and comfort make cultural proximity engaging.<sup>47</sup> So, to successfully engage a national audience, news organisations should use an approach involving familiarity.

To do so, transnational media scholar Riegert writes in 2010 that national news organisations have been found using a national lens, whereby global events are explained from a familiar point of view to the audience and by people the audience can best identify with.<sup>48</sup> This familiar point of view, states international communications theorist Clausen in the mid-2000s, refers to the news audience's dominant cultures and ideologies.<sup>49</sup> However, these dominant cultures and ideologies might not resonate with the entirety of an audience and will, therefore, according to Fiske, not always be effective for audience engagement.<sup>50</sup> Still, through a national lens, globalisation becomes a process audiences can relate to the transnational area while still connecting with their national community.

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<sup>44</sup> Tanikawa, "Is 'Global Journalism' Truly Global?," 1435.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph Straubhaar, "Cultural Proximity," in *The Routledge Handbook of Digital Media and Globalization* (Routledge, 2021), 24–33, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367816742>.

<sup>46</sup> Straubhaar, "Cultural Proximity," 26.

<sup>47</sup> Straubhaar, "Cultural Proximity," 26.

<sup>48</sup> Kristina Riegert, "National Television News of the World: Challenges and Consequences," *Communicating the Nation: National Topographies of Global Media Landscapes*, 2010, 201.

<sup>49</sup> Lisbeth Clausen, "Localizing the Global: 'Domestication' Processes in International News Production," *Media, Culture & Society* 26, no. 1 (January 2004): 27–28, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443704038203>.

<sup>50</sup> John Fiske, *Television Culture* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 52, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203837153>.

A noteworthy way national news outlets can cover foreign news from a familiar point of view is through the employment of the foreign correspondent. The diverse approaches to foreign news coverage underscore the tension and interplay between the nationality of news organisations and the global flows of foreign news. To further explore this duality, this research will consider the different approaches to framing and foreign news construction with a particular focus on the function of the foreign correspondence item.

### ***2.3 Foreign Correspondence in Television News***

Foreign correspondence has long been considered an indispensable element of news broadcasting.<sup>51</sup> The practice, defined by Clausen as the coverage of events that happened elsewhere in the world than where the journalist's news organisation is located, allowed audiences to be informed about the world around them.<sup>52</sup> Such informing happens, writes Williams, via foreign correspondents who reside in the foreign area they cover, to gather, organise, and present foreign news to their mostly national audience.<sup>53</sup>

In recent foreign correspondence research, a debate has emerged about the relevance of the foreign correspondent in the current media landscape. On the one hand, scholars have ascribed great importance to the role of the foreign correspondent in television news.<sup>54</sup> The main reason for this perceived relevance is their proximity to the news event. Bebawi and Evans write that the amount of information available in the current media landscape has become overwhelming, and that verifying its factuality is becoming increasingly intricate as misinformation and disinformation thrive online.<sup>55</sup> They point to foreign correspondents as pivotal nodes in the news system to provide reliable information as they are physically present while the events they cover unfold.<sup>56</sup> Another way their proximity makes foreign

<sup>51</sup> Clausen, "Localizing the Global: 'Domestication' Processes in International News Production," 27-28.

<sup>52</sup> Clausen, "Localizing the Global: 'Domestication' Processes in International News Production," 27-28.

<sup>53</sup> Williams, *International Journalism*, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Bebawi and Evans, *The Future Foreign Correspondent*; Fiske, *Television Culture*.

<sup>55</sup> Bebawi and Evans, *The Future Foreign Correspondent*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> Bebawi and Evans, *The Future Foreign Correspondent*, 61.

correspondents relevant is their role as gatekeepers. Foreign correspondents' proximity allows them to determine what information to select and dismiss and from what sources, as noted by Fiske.<sup>57</sup> He goes on to explain that this practice of inclusion and exclusion of news, called gatekeeping, means foreign correspondents get to determine what information national news audiences can access about the world.<sup>58</sup> So, proximity gives foreign correspondents significant cultural power.

Furthermore, foreign correspondents are considered important in television news because of their ability to contextualise international events for national audiences. This practice is called cultural translation, which cultural translation theorist Conway defines in 2012 as the bridging of cultural gaps between the global and the local.<sup>59</sup> Foreign correspondents can be considered cultural translators when, as Bebawi and Evans explain, they interpret and frame a news event in such a way that it makes the familiar unfamiliar to their national audience whilst taking the event's local social, political, and historical nuances into account.<sup>60</sup> Considering foreign correspondents reside in the foreign area and belong to the national culture of their audience, they have a twofold positionality. This positionality places them in the unique position to connect foreign news to a national audience.

On the other hand, with the intensification of globalisation processes, foreign correspondence practices are declining to the extent that academics question their relevance. The reason for this decline, according to Williams, is that the rise of the internet has challenged the role of the foreign correspondent as the main witness to and source of foreign news events.<sup>61</sup> With access to the internet, anyone can share anything from anywhere, including news.<sup>62</sup> People who participate in this practice, citizen journalists, can be argued to

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<sup>57</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 292.

<sup>58</sup> Fiske, *Television Culture*, 292.

<sup>59</sup> Kyle Conway, "A conceptual and empirical approach to cultural translation," *Translation Studies* 5, no. 3 (September 2012): 265, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2012.701938>.

<sup>60</sup> Bebawi and Evans, *The Future Foreign Correspondent*, 67.

<sup>61</sup> Williams, *International Journalism*, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Williams, *International Journalism*, 5-6.

be better equipped to cover foreign news than foreign correspondents as these people are native to the culture wherein the events they cover occur.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, the internet hinders the relevance of foreign correspondence as television news organisations have to compete with online news sources. Riegert supports this claim by stating that, due to the internet's ability to provide every user with a personalised experience, it becomes difficult for television news to maintain people's attention.<sup>64</sup>

Considering these competing perspectives, the debate surrounding the foreign correspondent's relevance in television news broadcasting remains unresolved. Consequently, it raises questions about the current function of foreign correspondence broadcasting items in television broadcasting. This research will contribute to the debate regarding the relevance of the foreign correspondent by analysing the role of the foreign correspondence item in the construction of news about a foreign event for a national audience.

### 3. Method

To study in what ways foreign correspondence items contribute to the construction of national news on a transnational event in *NOS Journaal* broadcasts, the corpus consists of 25 foreign correspondent items in Dutch public news broadcaster NOS' *20.00 Journaal* broadcasts about COVID-19 during the first two months of the pandemic (see Appendix A). The *20.00 Journaal* was chosen because it is the flagship episode of each day and holds the most space for foreign correspondence items.<sup>65</sup> An item entails the entire foreign correspondent-related broadcast, including the studio, report, and talking head segment. Studying the entire item rather than its segments will showcase most of the positionality of the foreign correspondent within the public news broadcast. Additionally, coverage of the first two months of the pandemic was chosen because it was a tense period during which the virus

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<sup>63</sup> Williams, *International Journalism*, 19.

<sup>64</sup> Riegert, "Pondering the Future for Foreign News on National Television," 1568.

<sup>65</sup> NOS, "Over NOS," February 6, 2024, <https://over.nos.nl/organisatie/about-nos/>.

rapidly went from a Chinese to a global issue, meaning will offer valuable insights into transnationality. Lastly, 25 units are expected to be feasible and sufficient to structure findings about the role of the foreign correspondent in public news broadcasting within the case study. The items will be accessed via the Media Suite, a digital tool that facilitates the storage, retrieval, and analysis of the items that make up the corpus.

To explore the construction of national news about a transnational topic in foreign correspondence items of *NOS Journaal* broadcasts, a textual analysis will be conducted following Dyer's approach. According to film theorist Dyer, textual analysis requires the systematic analysis of textual elements through description, interpretation and contextualisation.<sup>66</sup> The approach was chosen because audiences can read texts from an almost endless number of different positions.<sup>67</sup> Through the various steps, how the findings came to be can be displayed transparently. Additionally, these steps will help prioritise self-reflexivity as they should be built onto one another.<sup>68</sup>

The most relevant textual elements to analyse foreign correspondent items are visual content, visual form, and speech. These elements are pertinent due to their audiovisual nature, emergence from active production processes, and direct relation to audience experience. Combined they can uncover the function of foreign correspondent items in national news within the corpus. Hence, the following sub-questions emerge:

1. *How does the visual content of foreign correspondent items in NOS Journaal broadcasts contribute to the construction of national news on the global COVID-19 pandemic?*
2. *How does the visual form of foreign correspondent items in NOS Journaal broadcasts contribute to the construction of national news on the global COVID-19 pandemic?*

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<sup>66</sup> Richard Dyer, "The Persistence of Textual Analysis," in *The Richard Dyer Reader* (London: British Film Institute, 2022), 395-99.

<sup>67</sup> Glen Creeber, "The joy of text?: Television and textual analysis," *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 84-85, <https://doi.org/10.7227/cst.1.1.11>.

<sup>68</sup> Creeber, "The Joy of Text?: Television and Textual Analysis," 85-87.



3. *How does the speech in foreign correspondent items in NOS Journaal broadcasts contribute to the construction of the national news on the global COVID-19 pandemic?*

To answer these sub-questions within this research's framework of transnationality, news, and television, three indicators of the function of the foreign correspondent item emerge. First, national and transnational indicators entail the assessment of how the corpus refers to and treats global and national identities and cultures. Second, news indicators showcase the (lack of) quality of news information and its distribution to the national audience. Third, televisual indicators include how television-specific elements contribute to the construction of national news.

To identify these indicators and conduct a textual analysis, the following steps will be taken: a protocol will be filled out with observations about textual elements, these observations will, then, be described, interpreted, and contextualised until a general theory arises about the function of the foreign correspondence item in covering foreign news for a national audience. The protocol is organised according to visual content, visual form, and speech (see Appendix B for a more extensive overview and definition of all textual elements and an outline of the protocol). Considering the difference in look and tone of the various segments of a foreign correspondent item, the analysis will focus on the studio, report, and talking head separately.

#### **4. Findings**

From the analysis of the corpus of *NOS Journaal* foreign correspondence items, the following findings emerged about how these construct national news on the global COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the functions of the studio, report, and talking head segments in this construction through visual content, visual form, and speech. To contextualise these findings, the transnational areas covered in the sample were either located

in Asia, including mostly China but also Hong Kong and Thailand, or in Europe, including mostly Italy but also Spain and Germany. This is proportional to the spread of the virus at the beginning of the pandemic.

#### 4.1 Studio

Zooming in on each segment, first, the studio established a sense of familiarity and proximity. The segments rendered the national news construction of the COVID-19 pandemic predictable, providing a secure news environment for the audience, rooted in their nationality.

##### 4.1.1 Visual Content Studio



Image 1. The interior of the *NOS Journaal* studio always looks the same (20.00 *NOS Journaal*, 21/01/2020; 20.00 *NOS Journaal*, 24/01/2020; 20.00 *NOS Journaal*, 27/01/2020; 20.00 *NOS Journaal*, 22/02/2020).

The visual content of the analysed studio segments shows the transnational topic of COVID-19 is conveyed to *NOS Journaal's* national audience through familiar places and faces. First, the studio always looks the same, making it a familiar place for the audience. The 20.00 *NOS Journaal* studio is a large, rounded space of 180° in red, white, and blue, the colours of NOS (and of the Dutch flag, although this connection is not made explicitly). The

space is framed by large screens that can display images and videos, and has a high, circular table in the middle (see Image 1). Whenever an audience member watches the *20.00 Journaal*, they will always be greeted first by this space. This production choice made by *NOS Journaal* positions the studio as a recognisable and continuous news element. Consequently, the news items, even those about global events, gain familiarity.

Moreover, the analysed foreign correspondent items rotated the same five anchors, leading to these anchors becoming familiar to the audience. The presence of the five anchors was equally distributed over the two analysed months. Hence, if audiences frequently watch the news, they will start recognising them. As a result, *NOS Journaal* gets to convey news messages via representatives of the NOS that the audience knows. This production choice, too, renders the studio segment of the news broadcasts familiar.

#### 4.1.2 Visual Form Studio



Image 2. The anchor looking and speaking into the camera (*20.00 NOS Journaal*, 03/02/2020).

Then, looking at the visual form of studio segments in the corpus, the function of these segments in the construction of national news on the global event is to indicate the proximity of the news organisation to the topic and the audience. First, anchors looking and speaking into the camera indicate liveness, leading to a sense of closeness of the news organisation to the news event and the audience. In the studio, the anchors were always in

frame, reading the news whilst facing the camera. Such *mise-en-scène* is an established indicator of liveness. Because the anchor speaks synchronously with the watching audience, the element of time presents no obstacle in the conveying of news messages. Consequently, the news organisation appears close to the news event it covers.

This *mise-en-scène* of talking to the camera by the anchors also makes it seem like they are directly speaking to the audience. To illustrate, in Image 2 the anchor looks straight into the camera and delivers his news message. For the audience, however, it will look like he makes eye contact with them just like a person would during a one-to-one conversation. By acknowledging the presence of their national audience, *NOS Journaal* brings this audience in closer proximity to the news organisation.

#### 4.1.3 *Speech Studio*

Finally, focusing on speech in the analysed studio segments in constructing national news on a transnational topic, its function is to inform the national audience about foreign events, guide the flow of the item, and establish the positionality of the foreign correspondent. In the corpus, the anchors' content of speech was either informative or guiding. Informative speech entailed the introduction and signification of new information related to the item's topic. Clear examples of this are the anchor stating that the COVID-19 virus is spreading in China (*NOS Journaal*, 25/01/2020), that hard measures have been taken to prevent the virus' spread in Hong Kong (*NOS Journaal*, 05/02/2020), and that the virus has reached Germany (*NOS Journaal*, 26/02/2020). Considering the global nature of the analysed items' topics, through such informational speech, the studio segments presented transnational information to its national audience.

Additionally, the anchors' use of guiding speech catered to the flow of the analysed items and established the positionality of the foreign correspondent. Examples of guiding speech are introductions, posed questions, and summaries. Such content manages the

expectations of audiences and coherently organises the item. Another way anchors organised items was by introducing the foreign correspondent segments. In some instances, they would do so by calling the foreign correspondents by their name. Sometimes, they would use their full or last name (e.g. *NOS Journaal*, 29/01/2020; *NOS Journaal*, 02/02/2020), but rather frequently anchors would address the correspondents on a first-name basis (e.g. *NOS Journaal*, 24/01/2020; *NOS Journaal*, 28/01/2020). By using their names, particularly first names, anchors disclose they know their distant colleagues, emphasising they belong to the same news organisation. Such emphasis underscores the positionality of the foreign correspondent as part of the national end of the news coverage.

## **4.2 Report**

Then, the analysed reports presented information about distant places to national audiences in a way that signifies closeness to the area. The reports underscored the correspondents' positionality as embedded in the local culture, whilst representing the national audience by applying national frameworks of understanding to the local culture.

### *4.2.1 Visual Content Report*

From analysing the visual content in the corpus, the function of report segments in the construction of national news on a global event was to provide access to foreign areas and cater to cultural proximity. To convey the transnational event to a national audience, the setting of the reports in the corpus was either news-specific or recognisable. The news-specific settings of the reports showcased the foreign correspondent had access to places of relevance to the news topic, highlighting their proximity to the news event. News-specific settings refer to the specific places where the news event happened. These places are often inaccessible to the general public. An example of this is a news broadcast where the foreign correspondent visits the office of a Hong Kong politician to discuss his

displeasure with the COVID-19 measures the government put in place (*NOS Journaal*, 08/02/2020). Not everyone would be able to meet this politician, but the correspondent, due to his status as a journalist, could. Another example is an item where the foreign correspondent visits a teacher who has turned to teaching her Chinese students online due to the virus to talk about her experiences (*NOS Journaal*, 27/02/2020). Without the foreign correspondent, access to the experiences of an affected teacher would only be reserved for the people who know her. So, incorporating news-specific settings in national news coverage underscores how close foreign correspondents can get to the transnational news topic.

Interestingly, the news-specific settings also showcase foreign correspondents are dependent on their transnational area in their coverage. A remarkable difference in the setting between Asia and Europe in the corpus was that reports in Asia were more often inside whereas those in Europe tended to be outside. Considering the prominence of security in reports in Asian countries, particularly China, the foreign correspondent was potentially not allowed to film everywhere. To illustrate, more than once, the China foreign correspondent had to stop recording because Chinese guards urged him to do so. Once, the police even caused the live connection between the studio and the foreign correspondent to end (*NOS Journaal*, 28/01/2020). This difference shows foreign correspondents have to adapt to their local area and its culture and rules.

Furthermore, the settings in reports tended to be places that are likely recognisable to the audience, rendering coverage more familiar. These are places in the foreign area that also exist in the Netherlands. For instance, one report included coverage of a train station as Italians were leaving the big city to wait for the pandemic to pass elsewhere (*NOS Journaal*, 08/03/2020). The report's Dutch audience may not have been to this train station. They are, however, likely to have visited another station and thus be familiar with the setting. The same goes for a report covering the consequences of COVID-19 for a grocery store in China (*NOS*

*Journal*, 27/01/2020). The audience has probably never bought something from this particular store but is familiar with their local supermarket. As a result, audiences might more easily relate to the report. So, by choosing familiar settings, *NOS Journal* can provide access to information about distant places whilst making the audience feel close to the area. This production approach relates to the concept of cultural proximity, whereby audiences have a preference for programming close to their own culture.

Next, the casting in the analysed reports included local citizens, experts, Dutch people, and tourists, signifying closeness to the transnational topic or the national audience. The first group of casted people were local experts on the news topic based on experience or education. Examples include people whose businesses were affected, children who could no longer go to school, local government officials struggling to keep the virus at bay, and medical staff experiencing an overflow of patients (e.g. *NOS Journal*, 09/03/2020; *NOS Journal*, 27/02/2020; *NOS Journal*, 24/02/2020; *NOS Journal*, 24/01/2020). Because these people are native to the area of the news event, their presence in the news item provides closeness to the news topic. Consequently, *NOS Journal* offers proximity to the transnational news event.

The second group of casted people includes people foreign to the area of the news event. Most of these people were Dutch. To illustrate, in a news story on the consequences of COVID-19 for the economy, the Italian foreign correspondent decided to interview a Dutch flower vendor doing business in Italy (*NOS Journal*, 25/02/2020). Another example of this is an item where Dutch people who temporarily lived in China were asked about their experiences with COVID-19 (*NOS Journal*, 28/01/2020). These people spoke about the transnational news event based on their experiences. By presenting the news events through the eyes of these Dutch people, a national framework of understanding was offered that is likely to be familiar to the national audience. After all, the interviewees speak the same

language and share the same culture, although this depends on the audience member's understandings of and experiences with their national culture. Still, when Dutch people discuss the transnational event, the item might be easier to relate to than when a local does. This casting choice relates to the concept of cultural proximity as it plays into the audience's preference for content closest to their own culture.

#### 4.2.2 Visual Form Report



Image 3. Interviewees speaking with the foreign correspondent, looking off-screen (20.00 *NOS Journaal*, 30/01/2020; 20.00 *NOS Journaal*, 03/02/2020).

In the analysed reports, looking at visual form, their function is to use imagery to position the foreign correspondent as a mediator between the interviewees and the audience. The mise-en-scene of the reports shows interviewees facing the camera but speaking to the foreign correspondent instead of into the camera, positioning the foreign correspondent as a cultural translator. In the analysed interview segments, the faces of the interviewees are shown, but their gaze lies off-screen (see Image 3). Here, the presence of the foreign correspondent is implied by their microphone. Because the interviewee does not look into the camera, a distance emerges between the interviewee and the audience. The foreign correspondent acts as a mediator, bridging the gap between the two. In doing so, the foreign correspondent acts as a cultural translator.

#### 4.2.3 Speech Report

The speech in the analysed reports also showcases the foreign correspondent acts as a cultural translator by using explanatory speech and interviewing people in their native



languages. In the reports, voice-over speech was used to explain the visuals and interviews to the national audience, bridging the transnational and the national areas. The language used by the foreign correspondent entailed introductory language when announcing what would be next or summarising language after a particular segment to reflect on it. Such language positions the foreign correspondent as a mediator between cultures as they translate between the local culture of the place they reside and the national culture of their audience.

Moreover, interviewees always spoke in their native languages with the foreign correspondent, strengthening the position of the foreign correspondent as a mediator between cultures. Oftentimes, the foreign correspondent would switch between Dutch and the local language. In one item, for instance, the foreign correspondent interviews Chinese people about how COVID-19 has affected their daily lives in Mandarin, their native language (*NOS Journaal*, 27/01/2020). In another one, the same foreign correspondent speaks with Hong Kong people about measures taken by their government in English, which is one of its official languages due to British colonisation (*NOS Journaal*, 05/02/2020). In both cases, the correspondent reflects afterwards on the interview via voice-over in Dutch. This switching underscores the foreign correspondent's adaptation to the transnational and national context in which they operate. It showcases they are knowledgeable about the local culture they reside in but can also present it comprehensively to the national audience as cultural translators.

#### ***4.3 Talking Head***

Furthermore, the studied talking head segments contributed to the construction of national news about the foreign COVID-19 event by showcasing the foreign correspondent's proximity to the news topic and their role in familiarising the local culture for the national audience.

#### 4.3.1 Visual Content Talking Head



Image 4. Talking head segments with foreign correspondents in front of a general background (20.00 *NOS Journaal*, 24/01/2020; 20.00 *NOS Journaal*, 04/02/2020).

The function of the talking head in the analysed items in the construction of national news about a transnational event, zooming in on visual content, was to showcase the foreign correspondent's closeness to the news topic, relate the news topic to the frameworks of understanding of the national audience, and position the foreign correspondent as a credible source of foreign news. First, the setting of the talking head segments was either general or the same as the report, showcasing the foreign correspondent resided in the area they covered and underscoring their proximity to the news topic. The general backdrops were always outside or in front of a glass or screen through which the outside could be seen. Such backgrounds did not directly reveal the location (see Image 4). However, these settings do indicate that the foreign correspondent was present in the foreign area at the moment of broadcasting. It showcases the correspondent is embedded in the local area and in proximity of the news event.

Also, similar to casting a handful of anchors, each location was only covered by one assigned foreign correspondent, making them appear familiar to the audience, knowledgeable about the area, and powerful in news selection. In the analysed items, Sjoerd den Daas was China's and Hong Kong's foreign correspondent, Annemarie Kas was Thailand's, Mustafa Marghadi was Italy's, and Rop Zoutberg was Spain's. Only Germany's changed, most likely because the news events happened close to the Dutch border meaning national correspondents could easily reach the events. First, the consistency of using one

correspondent per location makes coverage predictable. It can also lead to the association of this person with the area they reside in, making them appear as capable people to cover on the topic. If this one person is always speaking on a topic, they must know a lot about it. Lastly, by choosing to position one correspondent in each area, *NOS Journaal* positions them in a powerful position to determine what information about their area gets broadcast to the Dutch audience. Consequently, foreign correspondents get to fulfil a gatekeeping role.

#### 4.3.2 Visual Form Talking Head



Image 5. Foreign correspondents showing the audience around (20.00 *NOS Journaal*, 02/02/2020; 20.00 *NOS Journaal*, 04/02/2020).

The function of the talking head segment, when considering visual form, was to show the audience around, whereby the foreign correspondent acted as a cultural translator. Through talking head fragments, the foreign correspondent can be seen showing foreign places through their eyes as a way to bridge the gap between the national audience and the transnational news event. In the sampled items, foreign correspondents would frequently walk around in the area they covered and engage with it (see Image 5). To demonstrate, in one item, the Italy foreign correspondent covers the consequences of COVID-19 for the city of Rome (*NOS Journaal*, 04/03/2020). In the talking head segment, he can be seen walking around the city and interacting with different sites and people. In doing so, he appears to take the audience by the hand, showing the local area through his eyes. Another example of this is an item where the China foreign correspondent talks about the building of an emergency hospital whilst walking around the building site surrounded by builders at work (*NOS*

*Journal*, 02/02/2020). In doing so, the correspondents fulfil a dual role. On the one hand, they showcase they are part of the local area. On the other, they demonstrate they are in these areas to represent the Dutch audience. Such bridging of cultures is, once again, an act of cultural translation.

#### 4.3.3 *Speech Talking Head*

Next, the content of speech of the foreign correspondent in the analysed talking head segments was explanatory, highlighting their role as a cultural translator between the foreign and the national area, and addressing, catering to the closeness between the news organisation and its audience. First, the language used by the foreign correspondent in talking head segments contextualised the report segments for the national audience. For instance, in one item, the foreign correspondent stood in front of the Great Wall of China to make the connection between how this wall used to keep the Chinese people safe like closing off Wuhan in 2020 would keep the Chinese people safe from the COVID-19 virus (*NOS Journal*, 25/01/2020). Considering the Great Wall of China is a famous site, most Dutch people will know it and, thus, understand the reference. Another example of contextualising speech was the foreign correspondent posing questions about the COVID-19 spread in Germany that the Dutch audience might have (*NOS Journal*, 27/02/2020). By relating their transnational topic to their national audience using speech, the foreign correspondents bridged between their culture and the local events they covered, acting as a cultural translator.

Furthermore, in the talking head segments in the corpus, the foreign correspondent used language referring to the audience and the local people, bringing about a sense of community. Examples of language addressing the national audience included “we” and “you”, whilst language referring to local people included “here” and “them” (e.g. *NOS Journal*, 24/01/2020; *NOS Journal*, 12/02/2020). When foreign correspondents address the audience, its presence becomes obvious. Through address, *NOS Journal* can make its audience feel

seen and get a sense of belonging to the audience as a group. This relates to the concept of the imagined community, whereby groups are formed based on shared characteristics without being in each other's presence. Conversely, foreign correspondents pointing out the local culture of the foreign area underscores the distance between the audience and the transnational news event. As a result, *NOS Journaal* strengthens the defined positionality of the audience in relation to the foreign news.

#### ***4.4 Foreign Correspondence Item***

Finally, looking at the overall sampled items through editing, the foreign correspondent item functions to contain the global news event for its national audience through clawback. In the analysed items, the various segments represented different distances to the audience. First, the anchor in the studio presented the items' overarching topic directly to the audience, establishing the closest proximity. Next, in the talking head segments, the foreign correspondent presented the report and interviews to the audience, positioning them slightly further away. Last, the reports, where interviewees engage with the foreign correspondent rather than addressing the camera, are positioned furthest away. Together, these segments make up a specific flow known as clawback. Hereby, the news event is contained within the structure of the item, distancing it from the audience. Containment helps mitigate feelings of potential threat associated with news events. Therefore, clawback brings about security within news broadcasts.

### **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the foreign correspondent items of *NOS Journaal* broadcasts contribute to the construction of national news on the global COVID-19 pandemic by navigating the dichotomy between the nationality of its audience and the transnationality of its news topic.

They oscillate between the national and the transnational by positioning the audience in a familiar and secure news environment, relating the disparate cultures to that of the national audience, and familiarising this audience with said disparate cultures. The studio segments rendered the national news construction of the COVID-19 pandemic predictable, familiar and secure. Then, the reports emphasised the foreign correspondent's mediating role between the transnational culture and that of their audience. At the same time, the talking head segments familiarised the national audience with distant places. Through clawback, the item as a whole could disseminate information about transnational areas in a secure way. Together, the segments allowed for the construction of news on transnational events with varying degrees of familiarity and novelty to the national audience. This means that *NOS Journaal* oscillated between the national and the transnational in its coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic involved swift changes, this oscillation allowed *NOS Journaal* to provide up-to-date information about the novel information adjusted to its location, timing, and audience. During the first two months of the pandemic, the virus quickly spread across the globe, starting in China, spreading through Asia, and arriving in Europe through Italy. Gradually, the virus went from a far-away problem to one that might soon materialise in the Netherlands where *NOS Journaal's* audience resides. Through its foreign correspondence items, *NOS Journaal* could guide this transition by sometimes relating the issue more to the local culture and its measures, customs, and rules, and sometimes to the national culture of the audience via contextualisation and familiarisation. In doing so, the Dutch audience could watch how other people across the globe dealt with the virus and, as it came closer, what the presence of the virus could mean for them.

This flexibility highlights the importance of the foreign correspondent item in news construction as it allows *NOS Journaal* to balance between offering novel information that is of importance to the public, whilst accommodating this public's comfort. News about

COVID-19 is arguably important for any audience member because it could potentially be harmful to them. For the same reason, COVID-19 news could be considered disruptive and, therefore, be avoided by audiences. By covering the news through a familiar lens within a secure news environment, the foreign correspondent items could still accommodate the news consumption of audiences adverse to disruption in ways other news sources might not. This showcases the heightened role of foreign correspondents, advocating for the relevance of news broadcasting foreign correspondence items in today's media landscape.

Additionally, the oscillation of *NOS Journaal's* coverage of the global COVID-19 pandemic between the national and the transnational demonstrates that, in this instance, television can be considered both a national and transnational medium. The news organisation accommodated for its national audience, presenting the studio located in the Netherlands as a base, using familiar frameworks and national lenses, and catering to cultural proximity. Yet, *NOS Journaal* was not confined to the national, as it provided access to and familiarised distant places. The programme performed a balancing act of “there is not here” and “there is here” as distant cultures and events were introduced, mediated, bridged and contained.

In reflection on the research project, the case study proved to be of relevance although it could be expanded upon, the method offered valuable insights which could benefit from peer review, and the scope built on illuminating theories the expansion of which would be of interest. First, *NOS Journaal* was a suitable case for this research. It offered many samples of foreign correspondence of considerable length, allowing for thorough analysis. Moreover, *NOS Journaal* was a quintessentially nationally oriented medium which was necessary to analyse the construction of news on global news events for national news. Together, these qualities rendered the case study fit to research the dichotomy of television as a national and transnational medium and apply this to the debate surrounding the relevance of the foreign

correspondent. At the same time, to make claims about national news construction of foreign news events beyond the corpus of this research, the sample size of this research should be broadened and deepened. For future research, the programme, news organisation, country, topic, and period could be expanded upon. Furthermore, the method of textual analysis allowed for thorough analysis of textual elements relevant to the construction of news, which supported findings about the function of the foreign correspondent item in national news. Considering textual analysis depends on a certain amount of subjectivity, confirmations and added perspectives of multiple individuals in future research projects can enrich this research's findings. Additionally, taking into account this research was based on a pre-defined understanding of a national audience as being Dutch, adding an audience-centric outlook could strengthen this research. Research into the composition and experience of the audience would provide a more nuanced outlook on the national audience as a concept. Finally, the geographical and cultural content of this research was predominantly derived from areas that have typically been part of research projects in media studies. Although not saturated, this pool of studies offered valuable insights and theories to build upon. However, since the practice of foreign correspondence goes beyond these areas, future research incorporating elements from underrepresented areas would add to this research's findings.

In the end, this research has contributed to the field of television studies by exploring the nuanced ways in which the nationality and transnationality of television as a medium intertwine by looking at the case of the foreign correspondence item in national news programme *NOS Journaal* in its construction of news about the global event of COVID-19. This study has demonstrated the presence of the dichotomy between nationality and transnationality as a defining trait of the television medium and the way in which this manifests. This way refers to the foreign correspondence item as a mediator between the national news organisation and the transnational news events this organisation wants to



broadcast to its audience. Taking into account current debates about the item's relevance in media, this research has underscored the various functions foreign correspondence fulfils in news broadcasting. Arguably, these functions motivate the foreign correspondent's relevance. Finally, by focussing on COVID-19 as a topic to analyse a global news event, this study has contributed to a relatively new strand of research that explores the relation between the global event and media in a crucial age for accessibility to reliable information. It has showcased the foreign correspondent can be an effective antidote to inaccessibility and avoidance, accommodating national audiences in their pursuit of information during times of crisis.

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## 7. Appendix

### 7.1 Appendix A - Corpus

Item	Date	Time frame	Title	Location	Correspondent
1	2020-01-21	06:43 - 08:52	Angst voor grote uitbraak van coronavirus in China en buurlanden	China	Sjoerd den Daas
2	2020-01-24	00:38 - 04:48	Steden in China afgesloten tegen verdere verspreiding variant coronavirus, bouw van ziekenhuis in zes dagen	China	Sjoerd den Daas
3	2020-01-25	00:45 - 06:11	Toenemende verspreiding nieuwe variant coronavirus in China	China	Sjoerd den Daas
4	2020-01-27	02:39 - 04:49	Overheid onderzoekt opties voor terughalen Nederlanders uit China wegens coronavirus	China	Sjoerd den Daas
5	2020-01-28	05:18 - 09:33	Internationale gevolgen van uitbraak coronavirus in China	China	Sjoerd den Daas
6	2020-01-29	04:20 - 8:53	Coronavirus: buitenlanders uit Wuhan en openbaar leven China ligt op steeds meer locaties stil	China	Sjoerd den Daas
7	2020-01-30	16:10 - 18:17	Wereldwijd besmettingen van coronavirus en na China meeste besmettingen in Thailand	Thailand	Annemarie Kas
8	2020-02-02	03:50 - 07:46	Kritiek in China op autoriteiten wegens alertheid na uitbraak coronavirus	China	Sjoerd den Daas
9	2020-02-03	09:26 - 11:08	China vraagt wereld om hulp bij aanpak na uitbraak coronavirus	China	Sjoerd den Daas
10	2020-02-05	07:17 - 09:50	Bijna vijfhonderd doden door coronavirus en strenge maatregelen in Hongkong (China)	Hong Kong	Sjoerd den Daas
11	2020-02-08	08:40 - 11:08	Veel inwoners Hongkong (China) ontevreden over maatregelen tegen coronavirus	Hong Kong	Sjoerd den Daas
12	2020-02-12	05:59 - 08:39	Coronavirus: cruise schip Westerdam naar Cambodja en te weinig capaciteit in China	China	Sjoerd den Daas
13	2020-02-13	05:57 - 06:39	Coronavirus: stijging van besmettingen en doden in China, economie ligt zo goed als stil	China	Sjoerd den Daas

14	2020-02-22	04:40 - 07:01	Eerste arbeiders van smartphone fabriek Apple keren terug na uitbraak coronavirus	China	Sjoerd den Daas
15	2020-02-24	07:06 - 09:38	Internationale gevolgen van uitbraak coronavirus en toename van besmettingen in Italië	Italy	Mustafa Marghadi
16	2020-02-25	02:31 - 06:03	Coronavirus bereikt meerdere landen in Europa met gevolgen voor toeristen en economie	Italy	Mustafa Marghadi
17	2020-02-26	00:41 - 03:39	Nieuwe coronavirus-besmettingen in Duitsland en waarschuwing voor epidemie	Germany	Ireen Oostveen
18	2020-02-26	07:15 - 09:05	Duizend toeristen vast in hotel op Tenerife (Spanje) na coronavirus-besmetting	Spain	Rop Zoutberg
19	2020-02-27	00:42 - 03:08	Nieuwe coronavirus-besmettingen in Duitsland en autoriteiten zoeken carnavalsvierders	Germany	Hasan Coskun
20	2020-02-27	08:02 - 10:15	Wintersportgebieden Italië rustiger wegens uitbraak coronavirus	Italy	Mustafa Marghadi
21	2020-02-27	10:51 - 13:12	Leerlingen van basisschool in China krijgen thuis les wegens uitbraak coronavirus	China	Sjoerd den Daas
22	2020-02-28	11:11 - 14:20	China heeft uitbraak coronavirus langzaam onder controle en is trots op aanpak	China	Sjoerd den Daas
23	2020-03-04	08:10 - 11:00	Italië sluit alle scholen en universiteiten als maatregel na uitbraak coronavirus	Italy	Mustafa Marghadi
24	2020-03-08	00:48 - 04:45	Noodtoestand in Italië om coronavirus: grote delen van noorden afgesloten van buitenwereld	Italy	Mustafa Marghadi
25	2020-03-09	07:09 - 09:20	Rust in straten van Milaan (Italië) na sluiting van alle winkels wegens coronavirus	Italy	Mustafa Marghadi





Item	Editing			
	<i>The way the different fragments of the item are organised into one</i>			
1	Order <i>Each separate fragment in timely order (studio, report, or talking-head)</i>	[studio]	[report]	[talking head]
	Duration <i>The number of minutes and seconds each fragment lasts</i>	[00:00]	[00:00]	[00:00]
	Transition <i>How two fragments are or are not linked together</i>	Examples: vocal cue, split-screen, visual cue...		

### 7.3 Appendix C - Analysis

This is a simplified overview of [this protocol](#) (click the link to access).

#### 7.3.1 Studio

Visual content				Visual form		Speech		
Area	Location		Theme	People		Mise-en-scène	Content of speech	Address
	Place	Setting		Casting	Sources			
Asia	The Netherlands	Studio	Outbreak virus Measures against virus Spread virus Impact daily lives Critique government Measures are failing Measures are working	Anchor 5 different Formal clothes	Not named F.c. item Authorities local Authorities global	Look into camera Speak into camera Walk around Wide angle Use maps and graphs Backdrop: virus animation, report Local broadcasts Split screen	Summarise Timeline Causes Consequences Inform Sum Figures Cite sources Question Voice-over Indicate liveness Nuance Introduce Signify Refer to location	Speak to audience Use “we” Introduce f.c. Witness conversation anchor and f.c. Familiar framework
Europe	The Netherlands	Studio	Outbreak virus Spread virus Measures against virus Impact daily lives Financial consequences	Anchor 5 different Formal clothes	Not named F.c. item Authorities local Authorities national Experts	Look into camera Speak into camera Walk to screen Wide angle Backdrop: police, people wearing masks, virus animation, tourism, laboratory, empty streets Split screen	Figures Questions Cite sources Inform Introduce Figures Summarise Explain Refer to location	Speak to audience Audience witness conversation between anchor and f.c. Familiar framework Introduce

## 7.3.2 Report

Visual content					Visual form	Speech		
Area	Location		Theme	People		Mise-en-scène	Content of speech	Address
	Place	Setting		Casting	Sources			
Asia	China Thailand Hongkong	Crowded public spaces Public spaces affected Working sites to enhance situation Working sites affected by situation Inside personal spaces Inside professional spaces Outside affected (public) spaces	<u>Voice-over:</u> Historical comparison Local response to virus Government response to virus Consequences locals virus Consequences economy Critique government <u>Interview:</u> Trust in government Safety concerns Experience locals Experience Dutch people	Local people Local workers Local affected people Local authorities Local experts Dutch people Foreign correspondent	Chinese authorities Social media local people Experience and witnessing f.c. Experience interviewees Not named	<u>Report:</u> B-roll setting B-roll casting Empty streets Authorities blocking filming Office f.c. Chinese state media Crowds wearing masks <u>Interview:</u> Face camera Speak to interviewer Background of report	<u>Voice-over:</u> Causes Consequences Translate Explain Summarise Introduce <u>Interview:</u> Experiences Opinions In Mandarin, Dutch, Thai, English Sentiments Motivations	Voice-over Explain images to audience Perspective local Translate Visit on behalf of audience In local language Presence of interviewer implied Audience witnesses conversation between f.c. and interviewee
Europe	Italy Germany Spain	Outside streets Outside business Outside hospital Outside grocery store Outside school Office expert Ski area Outside train station Inside business	<u>Voice-over:</u> Financial consequences Sentiment locals Sentiment Dutch people Timeline spread Impact cities <u>Interview:</u> Personal measures Worries economy Worries health Not worried (Dutch people)	Local people Local workers Dutch vendor Hospital visitors Medical experts Political experts Grocery shoppers Dutch tourists Tourists Business owner Local authorities	Not named Experience and witnessing f.c. Experts Authorities Experience interviewees	<u>Report:</u> B-roll setting B-roll casting Crowds wearing masks Dutch vendor at work German state media Skiing people Empty streets Inside local business <u>Interview:</u> Face camera Speak to interviewer Background of report	<u>Voice-over:</u> Summarise Introduce Explain Contextualise Compare <u>Interview:</u> In Italian, Dutch, German, French Opinions Experiences Sentiments	Explain images to audience Provide cultural context Translate Familiarise Mediate interview Audience witnesses interview In local language Provide Dutch angle

## 7.3.3 Talking Head

Visual content					Visual form	Speech		
Area	Location		Theme	People		Mise-en-scène	Content of speech	Address
	Place	Setting		Casting	Sources			
Asia	China Thailand Hongkong	At night in front of city Daytime outside streets or buildings Inside office	Outbreak virus Impact daily lives Role government Comparison familiar frameworks Consequences economy	Correspondent 1 per location Different stages of formality	Witnessing Network Own experience Interviews Social media Experts Local authorities	Look into camera Speak into camera Backdrop: city, architectural landmarks, police closing in Walking around Medium angle In office Talk to anchor Interaction with police Split screen	Figures Causes Consequences Experiences Question Explain Answer Compare Languages: Chinese Nuance Advocate Contextualise Introduce Timeline Exemplify Signify	Speak into camera (audience or anchor) Pose questions Refer to national experience Use “we” Use “you” Use “here” Use “they”
Europe	Italy Germany Spain	Daytime outside streets, buildings and sites At night at border Inside buildings At night in front of city	Worries economy Closing off cities Consequences Dutch people Timeline Experiences Dutch people Motivation measures	Correspondent 1 per location Different stages of formality	Witnessing Experts Interviews Local authorities	Look into camera Speak into camera Backdrop: city, hospital, school Partake in activity Semi-close up Vlogging	Figures Answer Introduce Inform Explain Sum Advocate for Timeline Pose question Summarise Nuance Cite sources Interpret Contextualise Explain	Speak into camera Explain to audience Show audience around

### 7.3.4 Foreign Correspondence Item

<b>Visual form</b>	
<b>Editing</b>	
Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Always start with studio</li> <li>Always report before interview</li> <li>Multiple report-interview combinations</li> <li>Talking head near the end</li> <li>Oftentimes no studio at the end</li> </ul>
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talking head tends to be one long fragment</li> <li>Multiple shorter reports and interviews</li> </ul>
Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studio introduces item by saying what's ahead via summary</li> <li>Reports always have a voice-over</li> <li>Voice-over introduces and/or summarises interview</li> <li>Talking head contextualises and summarises item, adding a new angle</li> <li>Sometimes studio thanks f.c. using first or full name</li> </ul>