

# Localizing the global: 'domestication' processes in international news production

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The process of making foreign news from its origin until it is aired is completely the same in every country. (NHK, Japan, Ikuo Wada, Chief Desk, interview 17 July 1997)

## Introduction

The present project is an investigation of the production and output of international broadcast news in Japan. It is a study of micro processes and strategies behind the proliferation of visuals and concepts that affects our phenomenological world or our 'global consciousness' (Robertson, 1992) from the perspective of news producers. The development of technology and news distribution infrastructures has enabled news access anywhere in the world. The constant inflows of information and the visibility of other cultures create a cultural and social reflexivity that makes each choice in the newsrooms a conscious cultural effort. Owing to the dynamic flows of media images, texts, sounds and graphics across countries, globalization entails both an increased awareness of other cultures, often in competition with one's local culture, and much more immediate experience of the world as a whole. News producers at the national broadcast stations, who work in the space between the global and the national, have included a reflexive hunch in their strategy for the selection and production of international stories. The Janus-faced ability of both knowing international affairs and knowing the receiving audience was found to be essential in the framing of international news information and an important element in the process of presenting events to a national audience.

While the study exemplifies both processes of homogenization and diversification in global news communication, it emphasizes the localization aspects of international news production through an analysis of actors and factors at the *global*, the *national*, the *organization* and the *professional* level of influence. It answers the following questions: what are the similarities and differences in production strategies in different national contexts (Denmark and Japan)? How do extra media factors in the national media environment influence production processes? How do organizational differences between public service and commercial broadcasting influence decision-making processes? Finally, how are professional news criteria and international news agency stories negotiated between news producers on location and editors in the international newsrooms? Japan provides an interesting case, because its public service and commercial broadcast system bears intriguing resemblances to the dual broadcast systems of the European countries. Further, the Japanese broadcast stations allocate large financial and human resources to their flagship programmes and therefore have the ability to 'domesticate' news (relying less on 'homogenizing' international agency footage).

### **Japanese newsroom studies and comparative content analysis**

The study is based on interviews with 40 media experts and news producers at the major Japanese broadcast stations, and newsroom observation at the public station, NHK, and the commercial station, TV Asahi, in 1997. The interviewees include executive managers, editors, foreign correspondents, news desk personnel, scriptwriters, producers and anchorpersons. They are asked about their considerations of news production at its different stages of negotiation, from planning to finished product, and about the strategies and decision-making processes involved in producing specific news. The event in focus in this article is the 1995 United Nations (UN) Conference on Women in Beijing. The news material is based on two weeks of tape-recorded news programmes from September 1995, collected for the 'Co-operative Study of Foreign News and International News Flow in the 1990s' (referred to as the International News Flow Study).<sup>1</sup> The in-depth interviews were conducted in Japanese by the author and transcribed into English.

### **Homogenization or diversification in news globalization?**

It is argued here that processes of globalization through international news mediation cause neither total homogenization nor total heterogenization of world-views. News communication should be seen as including dialectical

and dynamic processes in which ‘news as an institution is both affected by globalization and is itself an agent of it’ (Hjarvard, 2001: 10). While media play a considerable role in the global mediation of concepts and visual impressions, international news increases the awareness and interconnect- edness of social and political information and actors across borders. As described by Robertson: globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole (1992:8). In this sense, consciousness precedes the experienced and lived lives of most people. As described by Giddens (1991: 187): ‘Although everyone lives a local life, phenomenological worlds for the most part are truly global.’ Robertson further argues that a characteristic of the 20th century is our participation in a twofold process of the ‘*interpenetration of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism*’ (Robertson, 1992: 100, original italics). The present study contributes empirical support for this statement.

On the one hand, technological development and the distribution of news through international news agencies enable the global diffusion of information about events, while enhancing the interpenetration of *universal* (in this specific case United Nations) concepts and policies. Further, news is in many respects produced according to universally institutionalized forms of communication – following transnational genre conventions. On the other hand, as emphasized here, processes of *particularization* (highlighting familiar elements) are enhanced in the mediation of international information. Events are framed according to particular frameworks of interpretation shared by national audiences (or audience segments).

Theories of global news distribution and its consequential homogeniza- tion of world cognition are thus turned on their head in the present study. UN concepts and political policies, while mediated globally, are ‘domestica- ted’ and made particular through news production. In other words, it is claimed here (as shown in Table 1) that news ‘domestication’ is a *universal* phenomenon and that global news is *particular* to each country. Inter- national news is presented within frames of interpretation of local audi- ences in each nation, which makes global news particular to each country. An empirical statement by a public service international news editor sums

**TABLE 1**  
**Homogenization and diversification through international news**

<b>Perspective</b>	<b>Universal</b>	<b>Particular</b>
International news distribution infrastructure	‘Global’ concepts and policies	‘Domestic’ framing
National news production strategies	‘Domestication’ of international news events	‘Global’ news

up the argument: 'Global news in Japan is not like global news anywhere' (NHK, Chief Desk, Interview, 17 July 1997).

In sum, the mediation of international discourse is a dynamic process of meaning construction, which is influenced by multiple factors at the international as well as local level. The following exemplifies how news contains both standard, that is, universal, characteristics as well as culturally specific contextual traits. It deserves mentioning that, while standardization features of news communication are acknowledged in the presentation of results, there is an emphasis on presenting factors that enhance the processes of 'domestication'.

### **News 'domestication'**

The notion of 'domestication' was brought into news production studies by Gurevitch et al. (1991) in their European study of international news. While the present study exemplifies features in international news production that enhance processes of both globalization and localization, Gurevitch et al. use the term as a counter-conceptualization to globalization. They define it as follows:

Media maintain both global and culturally specific orientations – such as by casting far-away events in frameworks that render these events comprehensible, appealing and relevant to domestic audiences; and second, by constructing the meanings of these events in ways that are compatible with the culture and the dominant ideology of societies they serve. (Gurevitch et al., 1991: 206)

Gurevitch et al., who base their study on production, audience reception and content analysis, further state that, 'in order to be judged newsworthy, an event must be anchored in a narrative framework that is already familiar to and recognizable by newsmen as well as by audiences' (Gurevitch et al., 1991: 207). Within the field of global communication, the special framing of events becomes important because it facilitates the target audience's comprehension. While the present study does not study the dimension of audience reception, but instead focuses on audience considerations from the perspective of news production, it does provide a nuanced picture of how international news is 'domesticated' through the study of particular news events from processes of planning until the finished products. While Gurevitch et al. provide a European perspective on 'domestication' processes in international newsrooms, the present study contributes a non-Western perspective.

The notion of 'domestication' in this project is not intended to connote an understanding of the national or nationalism as a political countermeasure to globalization. A 'protectionist' strategy is described by Youichi Ito as:

Excessive inflows of information and cultural products from foreign countries can endanger cultural identity. Every nation, like every individual, has contradictory desires. They want to learn from and imitate others, but at the same time they want to be different from others. Just as every individual wants to create and maintain his or her individuality, every nation wants to create and maintain its cultural identity. Then a sense of cultural identity usually includes the sense of continuity and pride or self-esteem. Therefore, although no nation would oppose inflows of foreign cultures and information per se, it would like to keep it under a certain level or under its control. (Ito, 1990: 441)

Against this backdrop, 'domestication' strategies as a means of protection of national identity may be at work in the international newsrooms. However, overt measures to protect national identity by controlling inflows of foreign information were not apparent in the Japanese newsrooms. At editorial meetings, there was a continuous demand on international news producers to justify the relevance of their news in terms of audience appeal. This, however, according to the statements of the news-producing management, was more due to business concerns than to efforts to protect national identity. Thus, in short, 'domestication' in the present project refers to processes of making information comprehensible to audiences in a given culture.

It is worth mentioning that the news agenda in Japan differs in some respects from that of other countries, as described in content analyses of news flow (Clausen, 2001; Cooper-Chen, 1992; Cooper-Chen and Kanayama, 1998; Miller, 1994). The difference in news mix is mainly due to the global position of Japan and its differing interest in international news due to its political and historical background (following the 'domestication' thesis this may be true for every country). As noted above, the ability to 'domesticate' relies to a great extent on the national media organizations' financial resources. The Japanese stations allocate vast amounts of money to the production of their flagship news programmes – a strategy that enables the presence of Japanese-held cameras and highly qualified staff around the world.

The following sections return to the topic of strategies of communication and outline the main observation at the four levels of analysis, namely the *global*, the *national*, the *organizational* and the *professional* contexts of news production.

### **The global level: 'domestication' strategies in Denmark and Japan**

The comparative analysis at the *global* level of analysis shows that although formats and framing processes were similar in the Danish and Japanese presentations in some respects, the *communication strategies*, the *discourses* (themes) in focus and the choice of *actors* included elements of

'domestication' that made news content differ in terms of national socio-political context.

### *Communication strategies*

Specifically, the analysis of communication strategies provided examples of how national public service and commercial broadcasters in the two countries package news presentations (form, studio-decoration, narrative style) and create the brand image (the station profile, message) according to similar global formats: the jingle, the opening logo, the marking of the international news section with a symbol of a globe and the introduction of specific news with a representational icon or logo was found to be similar across cultures. The insertion of signs to support the macrostructure (Van Dijk, 1991) of visuals in the programme, thereby providing coherence in news progression, was similar. Just as the reader of a newspaper glances at headlines and identifies different sections in the newspaper, viewers use visual instalments for guidance. A significant difference between the Danish and Japanese news programmes was the comprehensive use of written headlines in the Japanese programmes. Each piece of news, together with smaller sequences within it, was marked by an explanatory headline. The extensive use of headlines is similarly found in China and the literate cultures of Asia that, like Japan, make use of Chinese characters.

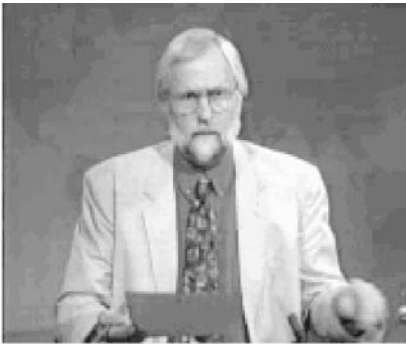
The aesthetic expressions and the choreography of actors in the presentations similarly followed the conventions of 'factuality' in the news genre. These conventions include the format,<sup>2</sup> studio decoration, the ritual performances of socio-political actors and professional news presenters, the cutting pace, the framing of visuals and the staging of immediacy in live reporting.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the formats of the four programmes are designed and inspired by features of news transmissions styles of the English public service station BBC and the US commercial broadcasters ABC, CBS, NBC. The formats of the Danish stations *TV-avisen* and *News 7* and the Japanese public service station NHK resemble the BBC News Service broadcast style, which is characterized by a conventional opening sequence with a static view of the newsreader in the studio. The studio at the Danish public service/commercial station *Nyhederne* is open, with cameras in the background as is common in US commercial broadcasts. *Nyhederne*, although it does not show commercials during the news programme, as does its Japanese counterpart *News Station*, has incorporated other ideas from the US commercial stations. Flyers and stringers of advertisement between news items work as appetizers and invite audiences to stay with the evening programme flow on the channel after the news.

The presentation at the Japanese commercial station TV Asahi is modelled after the co-anchorage style of the US commercial broadcasters. The TV Asahi studio is open and the presenters, including a female anchor, a male anchor and a male commentator, provide commentary through interaction. The interactive style was introduced by TV Asahi in the 1980s and followed by other commercial stations in Japan. Following the break with the Danish public service monopoly (Hjarvard, 1999), commercial elements were introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Denmark.

Both commercial and public service programme newsreaders and newscasters radiate objectivity and authority. They appear to be Danish and Japanese, representing the mainstream population in both countries rather than ethnic or minority groups. Their appearance, personality and clothing include no sharp colours or individual character, which might distract

**FIGURE 1**  
**News formats in Denmark and Japan**



DR1. TV-avisen. 19.00–19.30

NHK. News 7. 19.00–19.30



TV2 Nyhederne 21.00–21.30

TV Asahi. News Station. 21.54–23.18



**FIGURE 2**  
**'Live' on location reporting**



attention from the news information. The didactic paternalistic way in which information is presented, the use of modalities, the factual reading of the news are characteristic of the news genre in the national broadcasting of the two countries. The impression and atmosphere signal factuality and trustworthiness. It should be mentioned that the style of the newscaster at TV Asahi's *News Station*, Kume Hiroshi, differs from these norms. Kume Hiroshi is popular due to his emotional exclamations, laughter and idiosyncratic comments. Although the famous newscaster was on holiday during the two weeks of analysis, statements by newsroom staff bear witness to the importance of his personality in programme production (Clausen, 2001).

As illustrated in Figure 2, all stations create a sense of immediacy and proximity. The sense of time and space is 'here' and 'now', although the stories are edited in Beijing and therefore not in real time. (The time difference to Beijing is minus 2 hours in Japan and plus 8 hours in Denmark). The setting in the first report on the UN Conference on Women, a continuing news story, is established through professionals on location. The immediacy effect is intended to elicit a feeling of closeness to the event on the part of the viewer, while at the same time enhancing the sense of factuality. In other words, the fact that professionals are on location adds to a perceived sense of reality of the event. As confirmed by news professional and researchers alike, the documentation effect of visual communication is high. 'Events that provide interesting visuals are more newsworthy than events with unclear, ambiguous or no visuals' (interview, Director of Foreign News, Fuji TV, 2 July 1997). Mediation of events by 'our' news reporters provides interpretation from a Japanese and Danish perspective by a news personality familiar to the audience.

Using the station's own visuals adds to the perception of the event as immediate and real. Visual impressions captured by the media organization's own camera also enable 'domestication' processes (i.e. framings of stories according to national, cultural, organizational and professional interests). The Danish reports are produced mainly with their own visual

footage.<sup>3</sup> DR1's correspondent is outside on one occasion and the live filming of the festivities inside is accomplished with the station's own cameras. TV2 microphones are in the picture on two occasions. Whereas the Danish visuals are clearly from their own cameras, it is more difficult to evaluate the origin of the Japanese visuals, especially in the extensive reports on government speeches by the Japanese stations, described below. These visuals may be from pool arrangements,<sup>4</sup> international news agencies or their own pictures.

The Danish and Japanese visual dynamics and cutting pace were found to follow the genre conventions in news. The visuals in the Danish presentation, although the average cutting pace (frames per minute) does not differ from the Japanese, appear dynamic. Where the story in the Danish presentation is told by visual sequences connected to an overarching theme, the narrative at NHK and the first part of TV Asahi's more than 5-minute report are illustrated by a slow-moving visual protocol account of government representatives. Visuals in the Japanese case merely support the narration and not vice versa. As stated by a foreign correspondent 'NHK has its own visual aesthetics' (Interview, European Correspondent, September 1997). This verbal account oriented production style, which is mainly employed at NHK, resembles what the news producers in the NHK newsroom referred to as 'newspaper production style'.<sup>5</sup> This is exemplified in the news under analysis. The foreign correspondent makes a voice-over report on location where the visual overview merely serves to illustrate his narration. The cameras in this overview move slowly from one dignitary to the other, combining close-up pictures of actors with audience panorama views. In the presentation of the commercial station, the cutting pace and the dynamics of the pictures pick up somewhat in the second half of the report. However, as most of the story is based on interviews, the camera rests upon the interviewees for long sequences. By contrast, the Danish interview presentations include clips of passing Indian women in colourful saris, which adds excitement and colour to the visual impression. The 'newspaper production style' of NHK complies with observations of US political scholar Krauss (1995), who comments that this style differs from the visual focus of US commercial news production, where professional storywriters direct events and visuals follow their accounts.

In sum, the composition of aesthetic elements, including logos, framing of visuals, graphics and props, is found to follow similar (universal) procedures in Danish and Japanese media contexts. The procedures and conventional practices are grounded in professional values (as discussed further below) that ensure real and objective presentations of news through what Norwegian media scholar Knut Helland refers to as incorporated 'objectivity claims' in textual production (Helland, 1999). Another genre convention is the staging of professional and socio-political actors. An

institutionalized use of sources forms a 'web of facticity' (Tuchman, 1978) and legitimizes information. The staging of actors is exemplified in the following.

### *Actors in international news*

The public service stations mainly represented voices of the international, political and social elite, while the commercial station represented multiple voices, including those of ordinary people and grassroots organizations. Specifically, the Danish stations showed longer sequences with South African Winnie Mandela and showed interviews with ministers and government representatives. The commercial Danish station additionally showed interviews with an NGO participant. The Japanese stations presented Chinese Prime Minister Jiang Zemin, the Japanese Socialist Party member Doi Takako, the conference leader Gertrude Mongella and Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The commercial Japanese station additionally showed interviews with representatives including the Japanese Lawyers' Council, an ordinary Japanese participant, a female Japanese NGO participant (lawyer) and ordinary participants in the NGO forum from Jamaica, Canada and the USA. In sum, the active voices were few at the public service stations and many at the commercial stations.

The analysis thus reveals that the public stations featured representatives of the international and domestic political elite, while the private stations, especially the Japanese, gave voice to a more diverse group, including ordinary citizens as well as members of the social elite. It is also revealed that the choice and orchestration of actors reflected the political and ideological views of the broadcasting organizations. Whereas the public stations in the two countries represented the system and a pro-government ideology, the constellation of actors in the commercial station presented the people and an anti-government ideology. Such political tendencies were most pronounced in the Japanese broadcast news, as elaborated further below.

In conclusion, the social actors represented in the analysed news broadcasts largely reflected the regional and national affiliations of Denmark and Japan. The Danish presentations featured Danish politicians. Mandela was presented as significant while the Chinese were constructed as a distant Other. Mandela was not mentioned in the Japanese news. From a number of UN representatives, the Japanese chose to focus on Japanese and Chinese government officials. The United States was clearly a significant other in the Japanese presentations. Where NHK was pro-US, TV Asahi was critical. The critical tone in the Danish presentations towards the Chinese organizers was not found in the Japanese news. Although news producers at both Japanese stations agreed that the

organization of the event was problematic, this was not an issue in their reports. Rather than being critical, they concluded that problems such as these are to be expected in a country like China. It should be mentioned that political and diplomatic relations were of great concern in the newsrooms (Clausen, 2001).

### *UN discourse as presented in Denmark and Japan*

The analysis of discourses in news revealed that the general themes of the UN Conference, namely Equality, Development and Peace, were framed differently across cultures. Moreover, in the Japanese news there were great differences in framing as a function of the pro- and anti-government views of the stations. In all reports, the notion of equality (between women and men) was strongly connected with the concept of human rights. The Danish stations chose negative frames of reference for their stories. They made on-location descriptions of the conditions at the Beijing Conference, positioning the Chinese organizers as being in direct contrast to the UN themes: 'The Chinese organizers exemplified everything but equality, development and peace.' Rather than making political commentary or relating the UN concepts to domestic politics, which was the approach taken by the Japanese stations, the Danish reports made reference to conditions on location while drawing on political discourse concerning human rights and gender issues in developing countries. Seemingly, as a frontier in gender equality issues, the Danish stations did not debate issues in relation to home conditions while Japanese presentations witnessed curiosity to measure the progression of issues such as equality and peace in relation to Japan.

The Japanese stations treated the theme of equal rights from a domestic political perspective. NHK, the public service station, described step-by-step how the Japanese government intended to implement the 'Platform of Action' for gender equality in Japan. TV Asahi, the commercial station, elaborated on the theme of peace, taking the opportunity to criticize the Japanese government's treatment of victims of the Second World War, including the 'comfort women'. The problem of 'comfort women' (young girls from surrounding Asian countries forced to provide sexual services to the Japanese army) is still a public issue in Japan, as many of the women have come forward demanding compensation for these war crimes. In contrast to the critical Danish reports, the Japanese stations did not offer any criticism of the conditions at the conference in China.<sup>6</sup> TV Asahi put Chinese nuclear testing on the agenda but, according to the news producers, this was in order to criticize nuclear testing rather than a deliberate strategy to criticize China. Thus UN discourses were represented differently due to differing strategies in the two national contexts.

In conclusion, when watching Danish and Japanese international news, casual viewers would immediately recognize familiar elements of the news genre and might experience a resemblance in news formats. This first glance thus confirms the notion of a universal format familiar to viewers worldwide. On closer analysis, however, distinctions appear. The systematic analysis of communication strategies, discourses and actors in news content in Denmark and Japan exemplifies elements of both global (universal) and local (particular) factors that influence international news production. Similar formats, framing processes and presentation styles across nations bear witness to universal communication features in news mediation. The awareness of national positioning and involvement in world affairs as important factors in the choice of themes and actors indicates deliberate 'domestication' strategies by national broadcasters.

The subsequent sections further illustrate how these strategies are influenced by national, organizational and professional factors. Note that these observations are made in a Japanese context.

### **The national level: the political character of Japanese news**

Everyone in the Japanese media will insist that they are not engaged in politics, and in reality that is what it is all about. (TV Asahi, Chief Director, interview, 25 November 1997)

As noted above, the Japanese presentations were distinct in their clear pro- and anti-government presentation styles. An investigation of the Japanese media environment and factors external to the media clarifies why. Four observations serve to illustrate factors in the Japanese media environment that influence international news production as well as to exemplify 'domestication' processes. First, because the Japanese media are highly politicized, different views on parliamentary processes are presented in their news programmes. Second, the difference between the public service and commercial news presentation styles and news mix provides viewers with a variety of different news programmes and consequently different international news presentations. Third, exclusive agreements with international news agencies and national Western broadcasters result in differentiated use of Western sources. And, finally, strategies of regional focus in news presentations support the 'domestication' thesis. The observations are discussed in turn.

The dual Japanese public-commercial system (including the public service provider, NHK and four national broadcasters, TV Asahi, TBS, Fuji TV and NTV) was found to provide Japanese viewers with a variety of news programmes. NHK, a provider of traditional factual news, represents one end of the spectrum, while NTV, a provider of social information in entertainment form, represents the other. Second, despite legal aspirations

**TABLE 2**  
**The national TV stations with their newspaper affiliates**

<b>Political spectrum</b>	<b>Liberal (JSP)</b>		<b>Neutral</b>		<b>Conservative (LDP)</b>	
Newspaper	Asahi	Mainichi	Nihon Keizai		Yomiuri	Sankei
TV Station	TV Asahi	TBS	TV Tokyo	NHK	Nihon TV	Fuji TV

to keep broadcast news politically neutral, domestic politics do influence the production of text and images. Although executive managers of the international news departments at the major broadcast stations claimed that professional criteria of objectivity and the legal stipulations of broadcast law caused them to refrain from political involvement, newsroom negotiations and news output at NHK and TV Asahi showed clear pro-government and anti-establishment stands. The affiliation between Japanese broadcast stations and the Japanese newspapers (see Table 2) that represent particular political views may provide explanations for the political ‘spin’ in broadcast news. The political character of the Japanese media and the differing agendas of public and private stations were thus found to affect the strategies for global news processing.

Another significant observation was the close connection between the Western networks and the Japanese national broadcasters. Through cooperation and exclusive agreement, the Japanese news producers are closely connected with and rely on their affiliated sources for what they perceive as reliable information. The availability of material from, and professional connections with these suppliers enhance the Japanese broadcasters use of material from their affiliates. Thus, from a globalization perspective, the close cooperation with Western agencies and national networks is potentially a strong factor of Western influence on international news production in Japan. Many of the Western international agencies and US national network news providers offer the same news menus (Paterson, 1998) and the programme mixes of the three US national networks are very similar (Miller, 1994). However, ‘domestication’ strategies in news production depend not only on agency access, but also on the economic capability of the news organization. As noted above, NHK and TV-Asahi have vast resources in the form of Japanese correspondents stationed around the world, which enable ‘domestication’ processes.

Finally, a regional focus and transference of resources from the Western to the Eastern part of the world were expressed as strategic plans at higher management levels. These measures support the notion that news distribution is becoming increasingly diversified and stratified in a global perspective.

Thus, the political character (pro- and anti-establishment), the dual broadcast system (public service and several private news suppliers), the differentiated affiliation to international news suppliers and, finally, regionalization strategies were factors supporting the 'domestication' hypothesis. The vested interest in US affairs and the strong reliance on international agencies were factors supporting the thesis of global (Western) influence.

### **The organizational level: public service and commercial TV**

While the studies of news content above provided examples of different communication strategies in the two countries, the interview survey and observation at NHK and TV Asahi provides empirical evidence that organizational factors – including decision-making processes, newsroom practices and general institutionalized strategies behind news production – affect global news presentation. Practices at the public service and the commercial station differed greatly in several respects. The following summarizes the main observations at the organizational level.

The public interest strategies versus commercial business strategies at NHK's *News Seven* and TV Asahi's *News Station* were found to be the prime factors of influence on production procedures at the organizational level. The fact that public fees finance NHK turns the focus of NHK news mediation to political processes and public interest concerns. *News Station* was originally conceived as a money-generating programme based on commercial income, which has naturally influenced the overall strategies of the programme. Whereas NHK news producers are regular NHK employees, the *News Station* staff includes personalities from the TV Asahi Broadcasting Company as well as independent production companies. The NHK news producers are specialists within their field and the production process is negotiated between professional news experts. On the other hand, at *News Station*, generalists are employed in many key positions and traditional journalism and technically difficult international news items are often processed so as to interest a more general audience, as exemplified below.

The observed organizational difference between the two flagship programmes is partly due to the fact that the news producers at NHK are responsible for several news programmes, while *News Station* has its own production unit. Authority in the production hierarchy differs according to the organizational structure at the two stations. At NHK, there is a hierarchical production line in which decision-making power is a function of position in the hierarchy. At *News Station*, a strong focus on individual personalities (in particular the anchors) and the importance associated with the programme greatly influence the decision-making structure with respect to the preparation and arrangement of news.

In sum, the analysis at the organizational level highlighted differences and similarities in communication strategies and in-house norms at NHK and TV Asahi. The most outstanding organizational difference guiding production practices and composition of news was the pro-government political ethos of the public service station and the anti-establishment ethos of the commercial station. (The political demarcation of the Japanese stations was more noticeable than that of their Danish counterparts.) While the analysis at this level provided knowledge about general procedures in the news organizations, the study at the professional level explores and reiterates the notion that general production formulae characterize the world-views of the news producers at the two broadcast stations.

### **The professional level: ‘news’ and ‘views’ strategies**

The study at the professional level provides insights into the implementation and emergence (Mintzberg, 1987) of strategies (including factors from the above levels) in individual action as concerns the production of specific news. First, the analysis at this level shows how news producers ‘domesticate’ events *in situ* through efforts to make information understandable to national audiences. Second, the specific production formulae (objective/subjective, news/views, pro-/anti-establishment) making news content differ are exemplified. Third, it is pointed out how news producers’ expert versus generalist schemes of knowledge guide their choice of themes on location. And, finally, the analysis at this level exemplifies the interaction between news producers and the use of international news sources on location.

The non-partisan view and adherence to traditional news reading at the public station was in contrast to the partisan focus on individual opinion at the private station. The fact that members of the international newsroom at NHK are educated as journalists within the company, as opposed to the news producers at the commercial station, who have a variety of backgrounds, has important consequences for the framing of issues. The news negotiation process at NHK was influenced by traditional journalistic news values and expert knowledge, and the final news was greatly influenced by professionalism. News values at NHK were characterized by the view of its own staff as *traditional*, *conventional* and *reliable*. (This image of NHK news was widely held by news producers at the private stations.) News values at *News Station*, as noted by its own staff as well as observers, may be characterized as *proximate*, *interesting* and *instantly gratifying*. Whereas shared professional practices and news-making procedures at NHK were guided by strategic measures to make objective non-partisan news from a systems perspective, the shared professional practices at *News Station* were guided by strategies to make subjective and anti-establishment news from the point of view of the people.

The preparation for and production of news on the UN Conference on Women exemplifies how the in-house norms were implemented and negotiated in the production process. NHK news producers would frame news in terms of the station's capacity as a government spokes-channel, and consequently sought to offer little criticism of government action and less of international political partners of importance to Japan. In cases of criticism (e.g. the US criticism of China by President Clinton on the second day of the UN Conference on Women), NHK attempted to be less critical than the international news agencies and at most offered indirect criticism using agency material. It was also found that the NHK journalists' in-depth knowledge of Chinese-Japanese political and economic relations, metaphorically speaking, caused their spectacles to focus on political processes and international politics rather than on conference themes related to women's issues.

The Asahi news producers, on the other hand, were not guided by elaborate schemes of knowledge about the economic and political implications of the conference or by knowledge of Sino-Japanese relations. Their approach was to cover the events of the conference through observation and interviews about popular issues. Entertaining, informative and critical reportage about unfolding events illustrates their efforts to frame what the reporters referred to as the atmosphere on location with national audiences in mind. The in-house norms reflected in the TV Asahi news producers' strategies were (a) an eagerness to cover gender issues in Japan in relation to foreign advances, and (b) an effort to cover the issue of comfort women, a recurrent public concern.

In sum, the overall strategy of NHK news producers was (albeit with a pro-government bias) to make objective news in the traditional journalistic sense through a rational appeal and with political commentary. TV Asahi's efforts to make a more popular appeal may be described as a subjectivist emotional approach to news coverage. Subjectivity, according to Cottle (1999: 11), 'may be constructed through a variety of textual means, including prominent use of visuals, popular language and interviews designed to elicit emotive and experiential accounts'. These were features prevalent in the TV Asahi presentations. However, in spite of the emotional and subjective appeal of *News Station*, which is also referred to as a 'well-researched infotainment programme' (Cooper-Chen, 1997), it was found that the production of international news included many elements of traditional hard news coverage. In support of this observation, it should be mentioned that the Japanese public service station and the commercial station analysed were more factual and information-intensive in their approach to international news coverage than were their Danish counterparts (Clausen, 2001).

Finally, the systematic analysis of communication strategies, discourses and actors in news content in Denmark and Japan exemplifies elements of

both global and local factors of influence on international news production. Similar formats, framing processes and presentation styles across nations bear witness to universal communication features of news mediation, a finding that supports the homogenization thesis. The strategies and factors of influence listed at each level served to illustrate news 'domestication'. Two main factors supporting the notion of 'domestication' across levels were: first, an intentional effort to make information understandable to national audiences, which was incorporated into professional mental scripts and models for news production; second, contextual differences at the national, organizational and professional levels caused news content to differ.

### **Conclusion: the integrative character of national broadcasting**

Although recent research shows a decline in the politically and nationally integrative role of national news broadcasting, the present analysis argues that national broadcasters, in spite of growing international competition, maintain a competitive edge through their 'domestication' competencies.

At the global level, the large international mediators of political and cultural information, CNN International and MTV, employ market strategies of diversification and segmentation (Volkmer, 1999). At the regional and national level, new concepts of diversity are found, especially within the field of political communication, in response to a growing social and political pluralism that corresponds to the diversity of the information environment (Neuman, 1991: 38). In the US, the shares in the market of the established networks, ABC, CBS, NBC and PBS, are decreasing in a highly fragmented market. The original goal of domestic programming for government-regulated or public service broadcasters was social integration: a political unification through the use of a domestic news framework (Dahlgren, 1995). The concept of unification, according to Dahlgren, is in decline. This is also observed in the fall of public service broadcasting market shares in Western and Southern European countries. The services are losing their cultural function in many countries, and are facing increasing competition from other national and international broadcasters. This trend includes the news sector.

In light of these changes, the present study found that Japanese national news producers, in spite of concerns regarding growing international and national competition (enhanced by 400 satellite channels), envision a continued need for national broadcasting. In spite of future strategies of segmentation to cater to individual needs in the development of new channels, executive managers envision no crises for their national flagship programmes. Rather, according to their predictions, the increasing international competition and growing availability of new channels make

Japanese national broadcasts in the Japanese language as pertinent as ever. The financial and human resources of the national broadcasters were found to enhance the ability to frame information for national audiences. The interpretations of Japanese political processes and the translation of news into Japanese were perceived by executive management at all national stations as being a competitive edge and *raison d'être* of the national flagship programmes. Detailed study of NHK and TV Asahi revealed their capability – in their role as mediators between the global and the local – to ‘domesticate’ information.

The observations in this study are summarized in a discussion on universal (globalizing) and particular (domesticating) elements in production strategies. In the final analysis, the production of international news may be ‘characterised by a tension between the particularistic and the common; the shared world and the divided one; the effort to defend cultural borders and, at the same time, the effort to blur them’ (Cohen, 1996: 154). In other words, the challenges of the international newsrooms were twofold. On the one hand, efforts were made to make international news a mirror on the world; on the other hand, efforts were made to ‘domesticate’ international information for national audiences. Thus we see a dialectical process in which universal communication features are used in local meaning creation.

## Notes

I would like to thank Professor Youichi Ito at Keio University, Japan, for making the initial introductions to NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute and for arranging access to the international newsrooms at NHK and TV Asahi.

1. The project ‘Cooperate study of Foreign News and International News Flow in the 1990s’ is coordinated by Professor Robert Stevenson of the University of North Carolina and Professor Annabelle Sreberny at Leicester University. A description of the project and a list of participants are available on the project web site: <http://sunsite.unc.edu/newsflow/>

2. Much television and other media content has been effectively internationalized in terms of genre or format, even when it is locally produced. Typical of such ‘international formats’ are quizzes, games shows, soap operas, telenovellas and other dramatic fiction genres, the news itself, sporting events chat shows (McQuail, 1992).

3. The origins of visuals are only noted on rare occasions. Consequently, it is difficult to determine the original source of events without being able to compare with news agency output. In the DR1 report, an interview was conducted with Winnie Mandela showing DR1 and TV2 microphones, thus indicating that this is the station’s own footage.

4. The Japanese pool arrangement includes the five main TV stations in Japan: TV Asahi, Fuji TV, NTV, Tokyo TV and NHK take turns filming big events and press conferences abroad; responsibility shifts at one-month intervals. The visuals

are distributed to all pool members (Interview, NHK Satellite section manager, September 1997).

5. TV Asahi, Chief Director, Interview 25 November 1997.

6. In the government speech, Nosaka Koken merely expresses appreciation to the government and the People's Republic of China for the efforts to ensure the success of this Conference. 'It is indeed significant and an opportunity that the Fourth World Conference on Women should be held in China, a country that has achieved remarkable economic progress, and a country where women hold up half the sky' (UN Press Release, 1995).

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