

**“Our main advantage to this is that we can bring more quality and depth to it – but you need time for that. “**

Interview with Bert Lanting by Sophie Weresch

Bert Lanting has been working in journalism for more than 30 years now. He started as a freelancer in the 1980s and then worked for the Dutch press agency ANP. Since 23 years he is now working for de Volkskrant which is a Dutch daily morning paper founded in 1919. According to the daily workload of his job he says that compared to when he started as a journalist the time pressure in delivering the news got much higher.

Reporting from Moscow, Washington and Brussels Bert Lanting has been reporting abroad for 16 years. Currently he is working for the foreign desk and also as a commentator at de Volkskrant.

As an experienced journalist Bert Lanting gives a deeper insight in how a journalists daily workload has changed during the last years concerning the lack of investigate journalism through time pressure for example.

**Are you writing for the classic newspaper or for the online department at deVolkskrant?**

“Both actually, I work for the print newspaper but almost every day I write for the website as well. There is a transformation going on at the paper – we want to bring the website and the newspaper closer together. That will mean that we will give more priority to the website.”

**Did you notice a change in journalistic work during the last ten years?**

“Yes, we have to work quicker for the news website than we had to work for the print newspaper. Basically it is the same way of working but for example the newspaper will send me to the U.S for the elections as an extra journalist on the spot. We have a correspondent there, but to get more and quicker information for the news website they will send me there additionally.”

**Does the quality of the news website suffer from the lack of time you have to provide the article due to digitalization?**

“If you have less time, of course the quality will suffer, that is logical. But as I mentioned, we first write the articles for our website and than expand it and go more into depth for the newspaper. Nowadays you can find news everywhere and our main advantage to this is that we can bring more quality and depth to it – but you need time for that.”

**Obviously there has been a shift from traditionally printed newspaper to online news services. How does de Volkskrant deal with this change?**

“Half of the content on our website is covered with quick and refreshing news. You will find short news articles comparable to the nu.nl website. The other part covers articles we have in the actual newspaper. For the news articles there is a pay wall, which means you need to subscribe.

Now we want to change the system a little bit because we see it is not worthwhile for us to keep up with websites like nu.nl and we also want to give additional values to our readers which means to go more into depth with our articles.”

### **To narrow it down – how has your personal workload changed due to the shift from classic media towards online media?**

“Well, now it is more often that you are being asked to produce a story in less time than 10 years ago. But then we do it in two forms – first you will write an article for the website and then you will use this article to make it even bigger and research more deeply for the printed version of the newspaper.”

### **How does de Volkskrant experience this change?**

“We get about 70 million Euro which is our turnover. Until now the print newspaper makes about 50 million Euros from the turnover. We can see that most people don't use their subscription to go online during the week but rather use their subscription to read the printed version on the weekends. From the 50 million we earn from the subscribers only 4 million are due to the online website. That shows that for us it would be suicide to close the printed newspaper department. On the one hand we know that we have to improve our website but on the other hand we realize that we earn our money with the printed newspaper.”

### **Why is the online news service not as profitable as the printed version yet?**

“Your generation doesn't pay for their newspapers – this is how you live – you are used to get your music for free on YouTube and so on. And this is the way you think news also should be there for free. But the problem is it costs money, because we have to work for it. If we would only stick to print we know that there will be no future because the future obviously will be online. But the problem is that we don't exactly know yet how to earn money with it.”

### **Where do you see the future of journalism?**

“I see it online – that will happen for sure. But I won't be so quick as a lot of people think because there are still many people from my generation and they prefer print. These people have money and I think they will stick to the physical newspaper for a long time – at least 20 years.”