



PROJECT MUSE®

Television

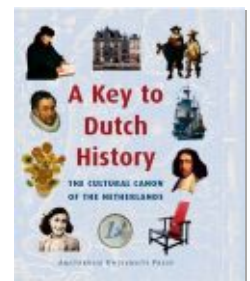
Published by

Slings, Hubert and Frits van Oostrom.

A Key to Dutch History: The Cultural Canon of the Netherlands.

Amsterdam University Press, 2007.

Project MUSE. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/76693>.



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1948 - the present

Television

The rise of mass media

In the 1950s, the Philips company was one of the driving forces behind the introduction of television in the Netherlands. In advertising campaigns, the Eindhoven-based company praised the new medium as a phenomenon that did not pose a threat to the traditional family but would rather strengthen it. The advertisements often showed a happy and harmonious family watching the screen that was bringing the world into their living room.

In order to capture a segment of the European market, Philips first had to sell a sufficient number of sets in its own country. To this end, in 1948 the company began the experiment of broadcasting programs that could be received in Eindhoven and the surrounding area. In 1951, radio broadcasting corporations in Bussum took up the television experiment. The densely-populated western Netherlands was now receiving broadcasts with the full support of Philips.

In those days of thriftiness and diligence, Prime Minister Drees attempted

to limit private spending, but by the end of the fifties this innovation could no longer be resisted. By about 1961, one million television sets were in use in the Netherlands and around twenty hours a week of programs were being broadcast. The news, dramas, entertainment and sporting events were popular viewing. Around 1970, virtually every household in the country had a black and white set and some had even moved on to colour.

The arrival of the television caused great changes in the living room. The focus was no longer on the dining table because everyone had to have a good view of the TV from the sofa or an easy chair, preferably with a side table nearby with snacks and a drink. The use of leisure time was also affected. By around 1970, the average Dutch person watched about one and a half hours of television a day and spent much less time on activities like playing cards and board games. Critics believed that this viewing behaviour would lead to passivity and

encourage slavish consumerism. Supporters of the new medium, however, pointed out the fun that families had while watching together and the informative function served by television. Television also played an important role in shaping opinions on social topics. Due to the limited viewing choice (until 1964 there was only one channel, and only two thereafter), many people used to watch the same programmes. When they arrived at work the next morning, they had something to discuss. Programs about controversial issues like sex, emancipation, youth culture, religion and the royal family invited a lot of discussion.

With the introduction of cable and satellite television, the range of programs on offer became much broader and more international. Today, most people spend more hours watching television than people in 1970 did, but watching television as a family activity is less common, due in part to the fact that a great many



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children have their own television sets. This individualisation has continued with the advent of the internet, that offers an even wider window through which to view the world .

Sub-topics

Primary education sector

Rising prosperity in the 1950s and 1960s
Philips: from small local factory to multinational

Secondary education sector

Controversial television (*Open het dorp* [fund-raising telethon], *Beeldreligie* [parody of television addiction using the language of religion], the moon landing)

Television and globalisation

Television and creativity

The role of large international companies in the Dutch economy

Philips and the stock exchange

Past and Present

How do we use television today?

Are there disadvantages to watching television?

In the Treasure Chest

The DVD *50 jaar NOS jaartal: hoogte- en dieptepunten uit het nieuws* (Veen Magazines 2006)

References

Places to Go

From December 2006, the former Broadcasting Museum will be housed in the National Audiovisual Archives and the Images and Sound Experience (www.beeldengeluid.nl)

Books for young people

Alison Cooper, *Machtige media?* (series: Standpunten) (12+ info)

Brecht van Hulst and Jean Paul Schutten, *Het NOS Jeugdjournaal* (series: Notendop junior) (10+ info)

Wordworth, *Film en televisie* (12+ info)

Background literature

Jan Bank, "Televisie verenigt en verdeelt Nederland" in H. Wijfjes (ed.), *Omroep in Nederland: 75 jaar medium en maatschappij 1919-1994*, Zwolle 1994

Websites

www.beeldengeluid.nl

www.teleblik.nl

geschiedenis.vpro.nl/dossiers

www.philips.nl