

The power of turkish radio and television and satellite- television in the netherl...



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Television is a powerful medium. However, Turkish viewers ignore Dutch television and point their dishes to receive TV-stations from their home country. The commercial Turkish stations are more popular than the state broadcast TRT INT, receivable through cable. Do these stations actually interfere with integration or are the Dutch stations not making enough efforts to attract Turkish viewer ship? TRT INT is the international TV-station of the Turkish state-owned broadcasting system TRT. It broadcasts ' the best of - ' programs (read: archived material) of the six national TRTstations from countries where there are large Turkish populations.

Taken into consideration that the main aim of any international TV-station is a hidden form of state propaganda (just like RAI UNO from Italy, TVE Internacional from Spain and ERT from Greece), TRT INT goes a step further. This station not only wants to present the Turkish viewers abroad with a Turkey of an immaculate prehistory, including racially pure norms and values which are presently no longer existing in (larger parts of) Turkey. The station also creates a matriarchy in which it exercises a subtle form of social control over the Turkish viewers abroad, who have supposedly fallen into an identity crisis.

TRT INT offers help to expatriates in order to retain Turkish culture, language, religion and traditions through documentaries, films, talk shows and music programmes. Furthermore, it informs the foreign Turkish viewers on topics such as law, legislation and social services in Turkey and Western Europe. First generation Turks especially agree with the point of view represented by TRT INT, because these foreign labourers still live with the idea of returning to the country of their birth. Cemil (59), working at a <https://assignbuster.com/the-power-of-turkish-radio-television-and-satellite-television-in-the-netherlands/>

computer company, considers the programs as essential. Perhaps because it is still in the back of my mind to return one day.

Dutch television does not appeal to me, but neither does TNT, I must say. That is a conservative and conceptual station. I do not like their approach. But I do confess that their informative programs about law and rules at home and abroad are indeed very interesting. For example, Hukuk Rehberi on Sunday afternoon is a true guide to law. Very important for people who are about to decide on issues which will affect their future. Maybe when I return one day such advice will serve me well. Cemil regrets he doesn't watch Dutch television and his children have criticized him for this. They do not have any interest in Turkish television.

“ But”, says Cemil, “ at my age it isn't very easy to follow programs in the Dutch language. ” He doesn't master the language sufficiently, and besides, the Dutch speak too fast or use words he doesn't understand. Even the subtitles run too fast for him to follow. “ For nearly 35 years I have been a resident in the Netherlands. At present, nothing will amaze me anymore. The problem with the Dutch is that they love to categorize; every item must fit in a pigeon hole.

But Turks do not easily comprehend this. Turkey is a very large country. One's region, town or village has an enormous influence on one's personality. In the Netherlands alone you'll find Turks from many regions. Of course, there is a lot of common ground because we originate from the same nation, but above all, we are human and unique, individuals. Then, one's

self-development is a very determining factor. Actually, we are a sorry bunch, seeing that we apparently oppose Dutch television.

We are a people without identity roaming about in no man's land. There is great appreciation for programs which tackle issues such as emigration, laws of inheritance, double nationalities, retirement laws, uniting or disuniting families, real estate and divorce. Besides that, TRT INT continues to foster patriotic sentiments with the foreign Turk. On a nearly daily basis viewers are reminded of the heroic deeds of Ataturk and the positive effect of being drafted for military services. It also tries to protect the Turkish image abroad by feeding the expatriate Turk 'reliable' information (for example about the Armenian question) in order to make them impenetrable to slander.

The Turkish honor is of mayor importance with this station and television is the ultimate medium to force feed patriotism. TRT INT is in favor of unity and it considers its people abroad as the visiting card of Turkey. That is why it is so important that its Turkish viewers integrate, work and raise their children in their country of residence. Because of this dubious approach, rocking between two cultures, integration is not an easy matter. Since the nineties, the arrival of satellite-TV has created a heavy competition for the favor of the Turkish viewers, but this seems to be no reason at all to stop broadcasting.

Obviously, TRT INT is generously sponsored by the Turkish state. Although TRT INT is absolutely not catering for the wishes and needs of the Turkish youth in Europe – the youth prefers the satellite stations – the Netherturkisch do not wish to lose access to TRT INT. Loyalty is a fine thing. There is no

harm in trying, that is the mentality. It doesn't matter that the station scores low viewing rates abroad. If a few hundred daily viewers learn something, for example, from programs concerning law, and therefore are better equipped to find their way through bureaucratic Turkey and the Netherlands, then TRT INT is providing an educational service to the Turkish viewer.

Nearly forty percent of the Turks has problems with speaking Dutch and nearly sixty percent with reading it. If the Dutch government cannot improve the situation, then the Turkish will fill that gap. Why spend millions of euros on translated brochures and flyers when a television program can inform the Turkish speaking senior-immigrant? And what about Dutch television?

We may live in a multicultural society, but apparently the supply on Dutch television regarding Turkish programs remains poor, since the Turkish youth proportionally watches more frequently the Turkish commercial satellite stations. But why? Ad Backus, lecturer at the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tilburg, who specializes in language and media use of Turks, makes the following observations: " This has an emotional value: in the Netherlands, being Turkish forms a large part of one's identity, just as they value being Dutch as a large part of their identity when they are in Turkey.

The mixed identity of migrants surfaces in various things, for example in the choice of language. " Research conducted by the Catholic University of Nijmegen showed that in 2000 the nonnative youth viewed information critically and wanted to compare the Dutch sources with the home sources. In 2006, less comparison was made, because the majority of the Turkish youth is no longer interested in Dutch television. Burak (24), a tertiary

education student, born and raised in Utrecht, has no need for comparative materials. He speaks Dutch all day long at school and at his work place.

He lives according to Dutch customs, but when he arrives at home he wants to be able to zap around the tube without hearing the words ‘ immigrant’ or ‘ Islam’ over and over again. “ There is nothing to watch on Dutch television. I watch Netwerk and Nova occasionally to keep up-to-date. But I am also a young person who enjoys a soap with attractive Turkish ladies or typical Turkish humor; or a film which can lead me to appreciate my Turkish roots. ” Burak feels ‘ different’ and often misunderstood by Dutch society.

The ultra-white television here underlines his feelings of being a foreigner. Thank God, the NPS now broadcasts a show called Asmali Konak. But then again, that’s on Saturday afternoon! As if I, a hardworking guy, have nothing better to do on a Saturday afternoon. I play soccer. Yes, with a Dutch team. Besides, that Turkish show is so dated. Twice a year I visit Istanbul, so I need to be informed about fashion, music and life style. I am and remain a Turk. I do not wish to be regarded there as some strange European immigrant without taste.

Oh, we never get it right, do we? ”, exclaims Burak. The research results by Millikow-ski made in 2000 about re-ethnicism hits the nail right on the ead. “ Television from Turkey confronts the viewers with ‘ modern’ Turkey. And that is definitely a very different Turkey than the Turkey of their parents.

Therefore, the youth has acquired a more realistic view of Turkey. In the Netherlands, the idea of repressed Muslim women persists. But what appears from these television programs is that there is little difference between the

behavior of young Dutch girls in a Dutch soap and that of Turkish young girls in a Turkish soap. The concept of Turkish culture and identity, spoon fed to the Turkish youth during their upbringing, absolutely doesn't match reality anymore.

The differences between Turkish and Dutch aren't that clear. Turks in Turkey resemble much more the Dutch than Turks living in the Netherlands.

Besides, the romantic notions of the mythical and perfect fatherland are being replaced by more realistic and more ordinary views. " The first generation spoke hardly any Dutch and their participation in Dutch society is still very low, but they are confronted for nearly 23 hours a day with Turkish modernization. One could say that they are informed about new morals and opinions in a very positive manner.

As a result, the younger generations, through too little and too few (actually none) means of identification provided by Dutch television, are glued to the Turkish entertainment stations and this will also be of consequence for integration. " Means of identification. Here we go again", cries Yasemin, IT-specialist (32) annoyed. " And what actually is identification? That is so personally and so impossible in the media. Then you should create a soap for South-Africans, a music channel for the deaf and a quiz show for pedophiles, so that everyone can identify with ' something' on television.

I think that people, in this case the Turks, must assume a more flexible position. There are so many channels on the Dutch cable. Try to find your own preferences. Put in some effort. If you do not like a certain program, watch something else instead. But don't come and complain to me that you

cannot identify yourself with any of it. What nonsense. Just call it laziness or disinterest. " Whatever the case may be, the Turkish community in the Netherlands clearly still has strong ties with Turkey.

Moreover, especially the young demonstrate transnational media behavior through which they (sentimentally) live in more than one country at the same time (Phalet, 2000). Yasemin's reaction:" Why should Turks not be able to identify themselves with programs about do-it-yourself or living? Do Turks not buy homes here, redecorate their living rooms or work in their gardens? Why should a Turk not be able to watch a non-Turkish soap? They live in the Netherlands and should therefore be able to identify rather with Hans Windmill than with Ali Testosteron from the Turkish soap. The producers of the latter have been for many weeks filming in the mountains of east Turkey.

Their actors speak in dialect and deal with issues such as revenge, destitution, family honor, unanswered or impossible love. Living in more than one country is not necessarily choosing one country. " This seems to be a self-delusion. Are the Turks pretending to be more Turkish than they actually are? The Turkish viewers hang on with all their might to the Turkish (media) culture, just not to feel out of place. The fear to be susceptible to Dutch culture and consequently to alienate one's self from one's own norms and values is great.

Yasemin feels sorry about this. " I am as Turkish as one can be. You shouldn't pick up Turkish language, tradition and religion from the media. It should have been part of your upbringing. The things you see on the satellite stations are too vulgar for words. Too much macho, too much nudity, too

much paparazzi level. Ultimately, it is for each and everyone to decide what to watch. TRT INT is not really terrific, but personally I think that the commercial stations are more harmful for the development of the youth. Not harmful per se, but just more harmful. ” In the beginning of the eighties the NOS broadcasted programs targeting Turks.

In these programs Turks were introduced to Dutch society and answers were provided on how to find a job and a home and how to re-unity one’s family. It was a predecessor of Hukuk Rehberi on TRT INT. In 1983 it was recognized, both in the policy documents about minorities and the media, that minorities are in need of information about policies and programs specifically focused on minorities, consisting for the larger part on art, culture and amusement from their home countries (Bestuursinfo, Utrecht). It is a pity that it was not given the attention it deserved at that time, or in any case not enough.

In 1989 this policy was abolished, when the Advisory Council on Government Policy (WRR) decided to separate policies on integration and culture. This meant the end of the national Dutch television programs targeting a specific ethnic group. Such programs became the responsibility of the local and regional media. Unfortunately, it is widely known that fragmentation (also in a social sense) in this country does not bring about too much of a positive development. In 2006 it seems that neither the Dutch television nor the Turkish satellite stations are the problem. Could it be that the provident TRT INT is the problem?