



Achter het nieuws en de geboorte van de actualiteitenrubriek
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Summary

The television programs *Achter het nieuws* (Behind the news), produced by the Vara, and *Brandpunt* (Focus), produced by the KRO, set the standard for a new Dutch television genre in the early sixties: the current affairs program. This study addresses the question what was innovative about this new journalistic genre. And which factors explain the origin of this genre and the related journalistic innovations?

To answer these questions, this study focusses on the developments within *Achter het nieuws* and the Vara, but attention is also paid to the situation within *Brandpunt* and the KRO. The main question is who or what determined how the current affairs program as a genre took the form it did. And how did the particular ideology advocated by the public broadcasting associations influence the journalists? Additionally, the influence of technical innovations in the field of camera's and sound equipment has been examined, as well as the role of the public reactions and the opinions of politicians and the press about what was considered to be permissible on Dutch television.

The result is a study which consists of three parts. The parts are interconnected, but each part has a different approach and angle.

In Part I, the historical and institutional context in which the current affairs program as a new genre came to fruition is examined. First, the advent of television at home and abroad is treated, exploring the different ways in which news and current affairs were dealt with on television, particularly in the United States and Great Britain. Subsequently the Dutch situation is examined. An analysis is made of both the Dutch media landscape and the general context in which Dutch television was launched in 1951, as well as the specific context in which television journalism was developed within the Vara. After this, the start of the program *Achter het nieuws* is briefly discussed, focusing on the change and subsequent innovation of the program in the early sixties.

Part II investigates the contours of the new genre of the current affairs program and the journalistic innovations which it brought about. In three thematic case studies the broadcasts are analyzed and the social context in which these programs were transmitted and received is examined.

The first case study focusses on political reporting and examines the differences between the television broadcasts made by the Vara of the Labour Party conference in 1959 and in 1969.

The second case study examines the manner in which morally controversial issues were covered by *Achter het nieuws*. Taboo-breaking broadcasts about homosexuality (1964) and abortion (1967) are compared with the way in which the journalists at the Vara tried to pay attention to these kind of sexual and moral taboos prior to these broadcasts in the mid-sixties.

The third case study looks at the way in which *Achter het nieuws* reported on politically controversial topics, such as war crimes committed by Dutch soldiers. The 'Hueting affair' of 1969, in which *Achter het nieuws* revealed that Dutch soldiers had been involved in war crimes in Indonesia, is compared with a controversy in 1965 concerning an *Achter het nieuws*-broadcast about war crimes committed by Dutch troops during the Second World War.

The case studies show that the innovation of *Achter het nieuws* took place on three different levels: the format of the current affairs program was modified, inspired by the British current affairs program *Panorama*; the subject matter changed, with a clear focus on 'serious' topics; and the journalistic stance changed, whereby the journalists adopted a more critical and inquisitive role.

In Part III the analysis focusses on five clusters of factors potentially affecting both the emergence of a new journalistic genre as well as innovations within that genre. These factors are: 1. public expectations and perceptions of the genre; 2. the journalistic landscape; 3. technical innovations; 4. the journalists; and 5. the institutional context. This part has a more synthetic approach, drawing on the examples and innovations which were explored in the previous two parts of this study. The role played by each factor in these developments is examined, as well as the debates which ensued concerning the professionalisation of television journalists.

It turns out that technical innovations were the least important factor in the emergence of the critical current affairs program. The influence of foreign examples, such as the British *Panorama*, was important, but especially in a more indirect sense. These foreign programs made the Dutch public aware of the fact that a different approach to television journalism was possible. This created the need for a new type of television journalist. A combination of political motives and broadcasting policy strategies help explain the readiness of public broadcasting associations like the Vara and KRO to modify their programs and create critical current affairs programs. The boards of these public broadcasting associations used the programs as a way to raise their profile and gain prestige. Critical journalism was seen as a means, not an end. In this respect, the drive for competition and the need to stay in power seem to be the main drivers for journalistic innovation.