

Abstract

The Era of Cultural Television - Another History of Finnish Television in the 1970s and 1980s

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The Era of Cultural Television offers a new interpretation of the Finnish television history of the 1970s and 1980s, which has previously been interpreted as a transitional period from the politicized 1970s to the liberalization of the late 1980s. The book suggests that Finnish television of this era was characterized by an ethos in which television was seen as a cultural resource for all, playing an important role in social planning and cultural citizenship.

While Finnish television has been studied mainly as a medium for entertainment and information, *The Era of Cultural Television* offers a new framework by approaching television from the perspective of cultural policy. At the same time, the book brings to the forefront programme types that, despite their importance, have been overlooked in previous research: television drama, international films and series, service programmes as well as educational programmes for children. The book challenges the convention of emphasizing the differences between public service and commercial television and shows that the commercial television company Mainos-TV (MTV) shared largely the same ethos as the public service Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yleisradio). The book highlights forgotten aspects of MTV's history by describing how the company invested in art and history documentaries and developed new forms of addressing the challenges of modern life in its service programmes.

From the perspective of the current abundance of channels and streaming services, television of the 1970s and 1980s may seem scarce and limited. *The Era of Cultural Television* shows that scarcity is a retrospective interpretation that does not correspond to contemporary understanding of television. Television addressed an audience that was

expected to be highly curious and inquisitive. Television viewers were catered for with a diverse selection of arts programmes, documentaries and educational programmes as well as entertainment. Television brought world cinema, contemporary drama, literature discussions and music education into homes. Current social issues were discussed in educational programmes as well as in drama and situation comedy. Through international programme cooperation, imported programmes and films, television broadened the world view of Finns and increased understanding of foreign languages, cultures and geography. Television programmes also dealt with controversial issues of history and brought out perspectives on the recent past that were not addressed in the history curriculum.

The Era of Cultural Television is based on extensive archival research. The work analyses both programmes, their press reception, and documents from television administration and production. The book is intended not only for readers interested in the history of television, but also for readers more broadly interested in Finnish culture and contemporary history. The book helps to understand how television has been a part of social planning, cultural policy and democratic development, and how television's cultural programming supported the transition from agrarian Finland to postmodern urban Finland. The *Era of Cultural Television* is not a nostalgic look at the past. Rather, it invites us to think about what television means today, when the cultural programming of television has spread across different platforms, addressing small taste groups rather than a diverse national public.