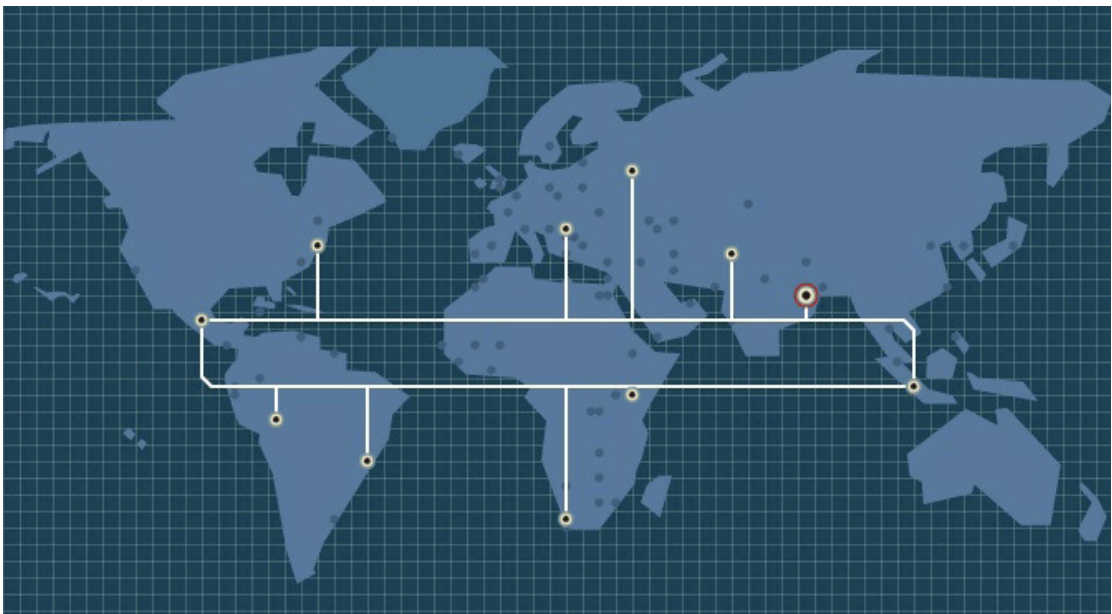


Metropolis



Metropolis in 2010: Seven Possible Topics

Who's the Boss?

An episode about working relations and leadership.

The situation in The Netherlands

Equality

In The Netherlands, there is a long tradition of egalitarianism on the work floor. Workers call their boss by his first name, and are used to speak their thoughts freely, even when nobody asked them to do so. That there are differences is something everyone knows, but that is rarely addressed.

Some people think that this culture of equality is not very effective and that it causes people to disrespect authority and that it harms the economy. That's why they want more authoritarian leadership, both in politics and in the economy. They want real leaders to lead the country.

There is a debate going on, as in other Western countries, that the Dutch should work harder to keep up with emerging economies. The days of the welfare state are over, they say, and we have to work harder and longer than we used to.

For this episode, we want to see how people think about work and working relations in different cultures. The starting point is the situation as we described it on this page. From there we want to see if we can find good stories about work and authority.

Some questions that we have for you in the first instance:

- How is leadership seen in your country?
- How would you describe working relations in your country? Are those relations very strict or is the situation similar to the Dutch situation as described before? Is it always clear in working relations who's the boss?
- How important is work for most people? What is the work ethic like? Do people work hard? How is that encouraged?

When we were talking about this topic, we came up with a few possible story lines that we would be interested in. Please let us know if you know of some story in this direction, and of course if you have other proposals that have to do with this topic.

Possible story lines:

- A story about a very authoritarian boss and his workers
- Management courses, tailored to the countries' work ethics and culture.
- A company run without bosses, by the workers?
- A story about female leaders
- A story on modern slavery
- Somebody who's getting ready to take over a business
- Boss of the year: who is considered a good boss?
- A foreign company with its own values and style of leadership in a different country

Therapy

Situation in the Netherlands

If you don't feel too well mentally, there's always the possibility of following some sort of therapy. In the Netherlands, and in other countries too, there are many options and possibilities for therapies.

Over the last decades, a huge industry has been developed, devoted to getting people back on track via therapy. For instance, hippotherapy, a way of dealing with problems by riding horses. Or martial arts therapy, kicking butt to overcome your problems. The success of the therapy industry indicates that there lots of people have a problem that they can't solve themselves.

In this Metropolis episode, we want to find out why people need all these forms of professional help, and we want to get to know more about some different and unexpected forms of therapy.

Because behind all these therapies are real problems. We want to find out what kind of problems people have in your country. Do they suffer from information overload? Or too much career options? War memories? Or loneliness? Overconsumption? We want to choose the stories that tell us something about the country and the culture. By following people and the therapy they're following, we want to find out something about the current problems and state of mind of the country.

Let us know your stories!

Scapegoats

Netherlands

The last few years, whenever there's a problem, some people tend to always blame the Moroccan descent Dutch citizens. Together with people from Suriname and Turkey, they form the largest immigrant community in Holland.

Right wing parties have been agitating against this group in Holland. Dutch right wing politician Geert Wilders refers to young Moroccans who engage in small crimes as "street terrorists", and proposed a tax for wearing a head scarf.

At the same time, other groups of people are often under attack too. Politicians, 'because they don't listen to us'. Or CEO's, for giving themselves large bonuses without reason. Or the IT guys at work, for making our computers crash. People need a scapegoat to blame them for their problems, it seems.

This situation, where one group is – in the framing of some people – always causing problems for them, led us to the idea to see what kind of groups are in that same situation around the world. Who gets blamed when there's trouble? Is there a specific group of people that always gets targeted when something happens? It's not just about minorities, but it can be the police, or the traffic agent, or anyone who always gets blamed by other people.

Let us know who your countries' favorite scapegoats are, and remember, we're not just looking for political stories, and we'd like to have very diverse angles...

Single

The Netherlands

Over 2 million people (out of a population of 16 million) do not live together with a partner or a family, but live alone instead and support themselves. In the city of Amsterdam, 40% of the population consists of so-called 'singles'.

Some 40 years ago, the ideal situation would still be to live together with a partner and start a family. But that situation has changed. More and more people choose or happen to be single, and marketeers know that they are a very important group to reckon with.

Is the 'single' on the rise in your country too? Is it common to live alone and just support yourself? Or is it not a problem at all? Could you give us some background?

The main question we have is: how to find a partner in your city?

We're welcoming stories on the industry around finding a partner, and on the meaning of living alone in your city.

Possible story lines:

- A portrait of somebody who is alone and is not looking for a partner.
- Somebody who is actively looking for a partner via all sorts of methods
- A story dating and single industry
- Alternative ways of finding a partner

D.i.v.o.r.c.e.

The Netherlands

Divorce rates have been going up ever since the 1960s, when self-realization steadily became more and more important to us, compared to values like tradition and marital stability. One in three marriages now ends in a divorce, and people are less and less ashamed of divorcing. Until recently, it was even possible to get a superfast divorce without the involvement of a judge. And this year, the first Divorce Fair was a great commercial success.

Recently, as in other western countries, divorced fathers in the Netherlands who feel discriminated against by custody judges, have been especially vocal about their concerns to remain important figures in the lives of their children even after divorce (a movement calling itself Fathers for

We want to compare the Dutch situation to other places:

- What does it mean to get divorced? Is it considered taboo?
- For what reasons people get a divorce? Is it hard to get a divorce? What is the procedure?

- Which partner has the most favorable outcome of a divorce, the man or the woman?
- Is mediation, relation therapy and counseling something that is done a lot in your country?
- Do you know people who are in the process of getting a divorce or plan to do so in the near future?

Culture of violence

The Netherlands

The Dutch as a people have long been telling themselves they don't have a violent culture: we have long believed in a self-styled image of tolerance, talk-before-action, and peacefulness. Weapons are forbidden, violence is taboo, and safety is a key political issue. As with violence, risk is minimized: children have to wear helmets on the bike, playing grounds have rubber mats so that they can't hurt themselves and boys are not allowed to fight in the schoolyard, as they're told by their mostly female teachers. Violence and risk are minimized, because it does not fit in a modern society.

At the same time, it seems that violence needs to get out somehow. Violent games sales are up, and there are reports of random street violence and more weapons are carried and used. Is Dutch culture turning violent? Or have we always been? How deep is violent behavior hidden in us and is it even possible to eradicate it completely?

We'd love to explore this topic worldwide:

- What's the place of violence in your culture?
- What's the level of acceptance? Are risk and violence minimized in the same way as we described above?
- How do people give way to their violent impulses? Can you find us stories on surrogate violence?

Although the direction of this topic is not very clear yet, we would love to hear your response, as we think that it could be very interesting to dive into this theme.

Sex education

The Netherlands

Since the sexual revolution of the 1960's, sexual education in schools has long been a part of the curriculum. The freedom to choose your sexual partner, information on birth control and acceptance of gays is taught in schools all over the Netherlands. But in the last few years it seems that it gets harder to teach these lessons in Dutch schools. Especially in the big cities, talking about homosexuality in class is met with resistance from school children. What's going on in the classroom?

In this episode, we want to get into the classroom. And we want to see how open sex and everything that has to do with it is discussed. Could you give us an idea on how open sex education in schools is? What norms are taught to children? And is this changing?

Extra: Going Dutch

The Netherlands

In the last few years, more and more people have emigrated from the Netherlands. And research shows that right now, over half a million people are considering the option of moving away from the Netherlands. Why do these people leave? In a survey, most of them mentioned the fact that the Netherlands is very crowded. Others mention Dutch culture and the many rules, as well as crime and taxes.

At the same time, all around the world people are preparing to move to the Netherlands. They follow Dutch language courses and get educated about Dutch culture. Obviously, there still must be something attractive about the Netherlands.

We don't have an episode planned for this topic yet, because first we want to find out if we can find links with The Netherlands in other countries.

- Could you check for us if there are Dutch language courses in your country?
- Since a few years, people from outside the Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada or the US, who want to come to the Netherlands have to follow a specific culture programme with a test in which they have to prove to know enough about Dutch culture. Do you know someone in your country who is taking this test or planning to take it in the future, because of plans to come to The Netherlands?
- If you're from one of the countries that are excepted from this culture test, do you know people who are planning to come to The Netherlands?

Also, we're considering if we can follow a few Dutch people who are already settled down in another country. Since there is much discussion in the Netherlands about immigrants who according to some people don't do enough to participate in Dutch society, we want to see how well Dutch people abroad are adjusted to the local situation. Do they speak the language and have friends in their new country, or are they living on their own island with other Dutch people? Please let us know if you know Dutch people in your city that would make a good story in this respect.