Public Service Media and Digital Innovation
The Small Nation Experience

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Abstract

This chapter identifies asymmetries of power in the network society and analyses the place of public service media therein. In doing so, we draw upon two bodies of literature – theoretical considerations of small nations, and minority-language media studies – which rarely inform international debates about the digital horizons of public service media. Through critical discussion of some of the digital myths that circulate in industry and academic discourse, we argue for greater attention to how the inequalities of global power that characterise the network society are negotiated. Using empirical research on and with TG4, the Irish language broadcaster and S4C, the Welsh language broadcaster, we demonstrate how digital platforms can, and already do, help achieve objectives that are core to public service broadcasting's public purpose. However, significant structural issues remain which require careful intervention from policy-makers to ensure linguistic vibrancy and media plurality.

Keywords: digital media discourse, minority language, social media, media policy, broadcasting, Wales

Introduction

This chapter enriches our understanding of how a network society might operate in the context of public service media (PSM) in small nations, especially regarding the very specific content of minority-language broadcasters. We identify key differentials of power and opportunity that govern how new digital affordances operate. We argue against a pervasive tendency towards futurology and technophilia in dominant strands of discourse on the network society now circulating in media industries and among media policy makers. This over-concentration on technology fetishizes the object of scientific innovation and obscures the social world in which technologies are brought to life by users and viewers. Often this is a result of approaching digital innovation as a narrow economic and technical objective. Government policies that promote a digital economy are especially susceptible. 'Digital discourse' is frequently associated with democratic ideals of universality, inclusion and plurality, which are core values

for PSM, but our research in selected small nations reveals the more complex and multidimensional ways in which power is exercised.

We begin by outlining the conceptual value of small nations and minority-language media studies which ground our analysis. We proceed with an overview of broader theoretical models from which we draw – including Castells' influential thesis on the network society. We then identify popular myths that abound in discourse on digital innovation and argue the need for critical interrogation. After clarifying the methods used for our research, we present original empirical findings that identify emerging digital innovations currently being implemented by PSM organisations in Ireland and Wales. This contribution to the RIPE@2017 Reader reveals how minority-language media are simultaneously negotiating asymmetries of power in the network society context and seizing opportunities offered by the global, highly personalised relationships that are characteristic of the network society.

Critical approaches to small nations and minority-language media

Along with colleagues in the Centre for Media and Culture in Small Nations, we use the concept of small nations to understand questions of power, scale and sustainability in the creative output of the audio-visual sector. This perspective balances concern with general tendencies in PSM and the globalisation of audio-visual production on the one hand, and on the other the particularity of cultural and political contexts of small nations. It is impossible to undertake work on small nations without putting power – cultural, national, and global – at the forefront of consideration. Moreover, to speak a minority-language is, to some degree, always to have power on one's mind and on one's tongue. The frame of small nations is a highly productive way of tracing how power operates in the emerging network society environment.

Nations may be small due to the relative size of several variables including geography, population, Gross National Product and internal market, or their relative political impact. Small nations may not be self-explanatory, but they are numerous. Mark Bray and Steve Packer note that over "half the sovereign states have populations below five million, and 54 have populations below 1.5 million"; hence, they argue, "the world is a world of small states" (cited in Hjort & Petrie 2007: 4). Globalisation has caused small nations to adopt diverse strategies to negotiate their places within today's highly interconnected media and communication systems. Scale shapes strategies.

The analytic value of 'small nations' stems from its relational focus, not only in terms of size but, importantly, also in the relative power of small versus large nations. The role of PSM in small nations may be especially pronounced and is often crucial to the sustainability of a vibrant, pluralistic television system. A limited domestic market in audiences, advertising and licence fee income, coupled with competition from imported content and barriers to export, create a specific set of challenges that PSM faces in small

nations (Iosifidis 2007; Lowe & Nissen 2011; Moring 2013; McElroy 2016; McElroy & Noonan 2016). These PSM organisations must negotiate competing demands in a context where the issue of scale and the specifics of their remits are intertwined.

This is most evident in the specific case of minority-language public service broadcasters. The World Indigenous Television Broadcasters Network (WITBN), a "global alliance which aims to unify television broadcasters worldwide to retain and grow our Indigenous languages and cultures", lists 14 members which include Maori Television in New Zealand, NRK Sápmi in Norway and YLE Sápmi in Finland, Ōiwi Television in Hawaii, S4C in Wales, and TG4 in Ireland. Often very small-scale even in the context of the broadcast organisations in small nations, minority-language PSBs are expected to sustain linguistic vitality and cultural diversity while also needing to retain political support for public funding, to maintain viewing figures, support indigenous production, and compete in international markets. Further complicating matters, minority-language broadcasters frequently exist in markets dominated by a powerful majority language company, as in Ireland, the UK and Spain.

The media are an important cultural forum through which identity is expressed. As Elin Gruffydd Jones argues, "television enables a language community to speak to itself […]. [I]t can build and strengthen that community's sense of collective identity" (2007: 190). At both national and supranational levels, several policy measures have been established to support minority-language media provision, including publicly-funded media (Cormack & Hourigan 2007). Impact on the acquisition or actual use of the minority language remains contested, however (Dunbar 2012). As noted, in both policy and practice minority-language broadcasters face unique challenges. For example, reflecting on the remit of BBC Alba, the Scottish Gaelic language channel, Dunbar (2012: 392) outlined the considerable demands they must meet: "Where a minority language community is fortunate enough even to have one station, that station must serve the needs of the entire community, something which is expected of few majority language broadcasters, even state supported broadcasters such as the BBC which has a range of services."

In researching minority-language PSM organisations, it became necessary for us to hold together literature on both the wider contexts of the small-nations where TG4 and S4C operate (Ireland and Wales), and the specific remit and cultural role they play for Irish-language and Welsh-language speakers in those nations respectively. While scale is integral to the literature on small nations, language per se is less centrally a focus. In contrast, minority-language media studies are valuable in their dual concern with identifying the potential of mediated communications to maintain and normalise minority-language usage, while also recognising that media systems are a route by which dominant languages and worldviews travel and assert their power (see Cormack & Hourigan 2007). Writing about ethnic and indigenous people in Latin America, Uribe-Jongbloed (2013) argues that demand for their own media spaces arises from a need to express their own perspectives to one another and to society at large. In doing so, they seek to challenge the misrepresentation of their "whole culture

and world view [which] remain absent from the nation-state hegemonic discourse" (p.32). It is therefore vital in "the design and establishment of media outlets to modify negative collective images and one-sided representations which is fundamental if we are convinced that power in the network society is communication power" (p.33).

Often closely linked with activist interventions, this scholarship approaches media as *one* important element of the social ecology that shapes language use. That is pertinent to the focus of this book because networks are integral to language use, language shift, and linguistic identity. As Cunliffe et al. (2013: 339-340) observe, "offline social networks are recognized as an important site for the development of language practice and of language norms, particularly in opposition to the standard majority norms". Therefore, minority-language media studies that take an engaged but critical approach to global communication technologies sharpen our critical analysis of digital innovation as experienced within small nations – the focus of this contribution.

Digital myths in the network society

In his landmark work on the networked society, Manuel Castells argues this phenomenon is "manifested in the transformation of sociability" that results from "networked individualism" which is "not a consequence of the Internet or new communication technologies, but a change that is fully supported by the logic embedded in the communication networks" (2005: 11-12). PSM around the world are faced with the challenge of finding new ways to serve their publics in the context of this transformation of sociability. There seems to be a major contradiction between rising individualism on the one hand and the aspiration of broadcasters to remain a public service for all on the other. While PSM cannot ignore new forms of networked individualism, neither should it adopt a wholly commercial approach to users conceived as consumers lest they surrender their very mark of distinction, namely a universal orientation and pluralistic provision. This is a major tension for PSM development in the network society context, and one that may be especially acute in small nations with less scope for indigenous commercial media to deliver sustainable market-driven alternatives.

Our aim here is to identify some influential digital myths. Each myth is a pervasive belief commonly asserted as a truth that is repeated in debates about the future of public service media in the digital age. We want to demythologise these claims to better understand the sources of tension for PSM and demonstrate the necessity of paying greater attention to questions of scale and power as one conceptualises the emerging shape of public service media in the network society context.

Myth 1: Digital distribution signals the end of linear television

The end of linear television is often prophesied in digital media markets (Hastings 2016). While the primacy of linear schedules is doubtful in the future, talk of TV's

demise is premature. Linear TV remains the dominant mode of television consumption in Europe. Audience data from Ireland, for example, shows that despite a variety of devices and viewing options, 90 per cent of television viewing is done live on TV sets. Moreover, the amount has increased by 11 minutes in the past decade (TAM Ireland 2016). While the long-term trajectory for live television might signal decline, the pace is slow in many countries. However, the data highlight marked differences across age groups. The daily time viewing for adults in Ireland averaged 4 hours and 34 minutes, but for 15-24 year olds, the figure was 3 hours 33 minutes (ibid.). This means linear television has distinct value for different audience segments, which should be reflected in PSM strategies.

Digital provision does not signal the immediate end of linear transmission. It is most likely that linear and over-the-top (OTT) services will comprise a typical dual offering for many years in most countries. This puts an additional burden on broadcasters as they must spread commissioning budgets and output across multiple platforms, committing resources at a time when advertising revenues are under pressure and audiences are fragmenting across a proliferation of services and providers. Although digitalisation has not killed linear television, it has disrupted traditional forms of distribution by opening a multitude of new windows and platforms. Larger PSB organisations such as the BBC can cater directly for niche audiences through an assortment of channels. But smaller organisations like S4C and TG4 lack the resources to develop additional channels, especially in this era of funding cuts. For these broadcasters simply having the resources to provide a full daily schedule on one channel with some original content throughout the year is a considerable challenge.

Myth 2: Public service broadcasting is now redundant

European PSM organisations are under increasing pressure to define an appropriate remit and mission within the television landscape (Moe 2011; Cunningham 2015; van Dijck & Poell 2015; EBU 2016a). Digital technologies offer opportunities for plurality of provision and diversity of voice, but also pose challenges as funding must finance multiple services to meet a variety of audience demands (Debrett 2009; Lowell & Berg 2013). However, PSB remains vital to the television sector for 1) shouldering an important share of the risks associated with digitalisation (Iosifidis 2011), 2) developing skills and talents (e.g. through apprenticeships, training initiatives and more stable work contracts traditionally), and 3) addressing problems of market failure in content provision for niche areas including local news, children's programming (Steemers 2017) and the arts (Noonan & Genders 2018). Their contribution to the provision of content is evident in the fact that European PSB organisations invest 84 per cent of their programming expenditure in original content, significantly more than their commercial rivals (EBU 2016b).

As developers of digital platforms (e.g. BBC iPlayer) and content, PSB as PSM are often prime enablers of development in digital infrastructure and the pleasures

of creative storytelling (Sørensen 2014). In many countries PSM organisations have retained market dominance despite fierce competition and dramatic change. As Evans and McDonald argue, they "act as a signal of consistency and predictability in a moment of upheaval" (2014: 167). Ofcom's 2017 'Annual Review of Public Service Broadcasting' found that in the UK, "public service broadcasting remains highly valued and satisfaction with many aspects is increasing", and that while "television viewing is changing […] the PSBs remain at the heart of the overall audience experience" (Ofcom 2017: 2). Moreover, recent research by the EBU (2016a) emphasises PSM's social value, demonstrating how strong public service media organisations "contribute to building healthy societies, being linked to democratic governance, social cohesion and citizens' trust in the media". Finally, we should remember, as Lowe and Berg (2013: 78) argue, that current debates on funding PSM are never only about "economic value, but also socio-political values".

Myth 3: Digital means power and control shift to the audience

Digital technologies are often celebrated for their democratic potential. This is usually expressed through a framework of 'consumer choice' and accessibility. Strikingly, the principle of inclusivity, which is a core public service value, is far less prominent in such discourse. This indicates a major philosophical contrast between PSM as a nationally-regulated service with socio-cultural aims geared to enhancing civil society, and the more laissez-faire philosophy of profit-driven, consolidated global internet corporations that frequently escape national regulatory frameworks and seem "intent on redeveloping cyberspace as retail real estate" (Iosifidis 2016).

Lotz (2014) reminds us that power has always been concentrated at the distribution stage of the television value chain. A result of deregulation is growth in vertical and horizontal integration. A fundamental shift in the prevailing power structure of the audio-visual media sector is unlikely to be accepted without resistance by incumbent distributors: "All too frequently, emergent technologies provide multiplicity and diversity in their infancy, only to be subsumed by dominant and controlling commercial interests as they became more established" (Lotz 2014: 165).

Myth 4: Digital offers universal access to all players

New connections between television providers, telecommunication companies, and technology manufacturers are a defining feature of the digital era (Lotz 2014). This allows a relatively small number of companies to leverage economies of scale and scope across international markets, and presents barriers to entry for small players. As Maria Michalis argues (2016: 143), the emphasis on innovation in media policy (understood largely in technological terms) can create "a vicious circle whereby the targeting of oligopolistic industries creates strong incentives for first-mover advantage and measures that will sustain, if not strengthen, the oligopolistic characteristics on which government interventions and international competitiveness are based".

Moreover, the powerful interests of multinational companies that are key players in media markets today, like Google, Netflix and Apple, are difficult for national policy makers of even large nations to oppose, even when they wish to do so. This problem was pointed to by Castells long before it became as endemic as it is today:

> The network society constitutes socialized communication beyond the mass media system that characterized the industrial society. But it does not represent the world of freedom sung by the libertarian ideology of Internet prophets. It is made up both of an oligopolistic business multimedia system controlling an increasingly inclusive hypertext, and of an explosion of horizontal networks of autonomous local/global communication – and, naturally, of the interaction between the two systems in a complex pattern of connections and disconnections in different contexts. (Castells 2005: 13)

Broadcasters, producers and distributors outside the dominant English-language world face additional difficulties when entering the international marketplace (see Jensen & Waade 2013), and in developing strategic responses to the digital ecology in ways that still address the needs of specific audiences. English is the language of digital technology and the internet, and the most powerful companies are based in the USA. This reality challenges any assumption that the network society facilitates equality of access for all players in the market. The commercial digital environment puts little emphasis on universality and poses a challenge to national regulators. Against many claims of the 'digital revolution' is the reality that "digital expansion strategies are not necessarily conducive to greater diversity of content or pluralism" (Doyle 2016: 37). Moreover, specific interventions in digital provision by broadcasters need to be evaluated contextually. We turn to this task next, beginning with an overview of the methods used to research such interventions from within a distinct, collaborative milieu.

Methodology

The findings presented here emerge from empirical insights gained through an Arts and Humanities Research Council funded network examining PSM production in small nations.[1] The project connected international scholars and industry professionals in three workshops, each for one or two days, conducted in 2015–2016. In total, this involved 63 participants from 12 small nations, some of whom also engaged online through publishing blogs and reviews of workshops – thereby extending discussion and debates. Workshop proceedings were transcribed and the results inform our analysis (see https://smallnationstv.org/).

The workshops considered two overarching research questions. Firstly, what strategies are minority-language PSM organisations using to compete in the global television market? Secondly, how are these organisations adapting to new communication technologies and is it to their advantage? This qualitative approach was a conscious

intervention in the field of production studies that is premised on respecting the critical acumen and reflexive capabilities of television industry workers who rarely enjoy the time or space to articulate critique of the industries in which they live their lives (see Banks 2017).

This approach is an exercise in co-creating research and findings rather than treating workers in PSB/PSM organisations purely as the external objects of academic investigation. It demands considerable trust on the part of participants to dialogue when the very language and conceptual framing of phenomena may themselves be integral to how academics and television production professionals demarcate their distinct professional repertoires (see Hill et al. 2017). Looking back, our most successful workshops enabled both industry and academic participant observation of one's another's milieu in a comparative international context. This enriched our understandings by providing greater nuance and insight about the complexity of PSM as a professional practice that is embodied in the lives of its workers.

We agree with Eva Bakoy et al. (2016: 6) who noted the insistence of Georgina Born in her landmark ethnography of the BBC that a more anthropological approach need not eradicate critical distance but may yield a productive double consciousness – both empathy and distance. In contrast to the industry/academic engagement elaborated by Annette Hill et al. (2017), our network benefitted from a commonality of interest and perception which those working and producing (whether research or PSM content) in small nations (and perhaps even more so, in minority-languages) share.

It is important to acknowledge these shared understandings of what it means to work within small nations where issues of power are lived and negotiated daily, where the scale, geographic location, and cultural characteristics of one's nation are factors that commonly need to be explained before one can speak to interlocutors from larger dominant global nations. This everyday reality – and the tacit grasp of power it entails – engenders a certain disposition to navigate translation across cultural, national, and linguistic borders. Indeed, this translational imperative may itself be a normative condition of small nationhood. Whatever the distinct tactics employed by individual participants in navigating their small nationhood, they were all intuitively able to grasp the complexity and necessity of translation, something which helps enormously in the disposition and willingness to work across industry and academia.

Digital challenges and opportunities in small nations

Castells and Cardoso (2005) argue that we already inhabit a network society. Our research revealed the immediacy of challenges this presents for PSB organisations in the project of becoming PSM. This is understood as a living, ongoing process without an agreed image of what PSM will look like when accomplished. In our research, the term 'digital' was a recurring focus of professional discourse among television profes-

sionals, as evident in job titles, department affiliations, strategy documents, operating logics, and the professional practices we observed.[2] There was professional commitment to digitalisation as 'a good thing' for small nations, which was rationalised by a need to remain competitive and to be perceived as 'innovative' due to its competitive value in media industries.

Historically, small nation broadcasters have tended to have more limited access to international markets and overseas sales than larger media markets, which harness them for additional revenue (Iosifidis 2007; McElroy & Noonan 2016; McElroy et al. 2018). The reward for capturing value from digital provision is the potential for long-term sustainability. Although costly in terms of investment in platforms, content, audience measurement and engagement, digitalisation could deliver future efficiencies. This is the context in which we identify and assess strategies employed by PSB organisations in small nations as they transition into PSM.

Digital practices: Social media engagement and curatorship

The development of a curatorial role and increased social media engagement are two key aspects of emerging digital strategies. In 2012, S4C appointed Huw Marshall to be Digital Manager (until 2016). He pointed to this strategic decision as evidence of how the broadcaster was developing a more tactical use of social media to add value to content and enhance relationships with audiences. This included a shift from what had been a relatively sporadic pattern of posting on S4C's Facebook site to a deliberate strategy of two posts per day, which encouraged a more selective assessment by the marketing team of its own content sharing. In this way, the digital team implicitly performed a gatekeeping role, exercising value judgments about what might work effectively in this space. Formalising practice also allowed a more precise quantification of activities and trends over time. These metrics can have a direct and powerful impact on strategy (van Dijck & Poell 2015) and should not be considered as value neutral, as underlined by Kosterich and Napoli:

> The net effect [of this usage] could be a narrowing of focus on producing only those types of programs that appeal to the types of audiences that actively engage in social TV activity around television programs. The net effect (if any) on television program diversity of the institutionalization of this supplementary market information regime has yet to be determined. (Kosterich & Napoli 2016: 267)

The additional challenge for S4C is how to turn high social media reach into genuine audience engagement. Although a range of possibilities arise for making content more visible through social media platforms, the industry's understanding of how to assess and produce a return on investment is still emerging. Indeed, the consequences of such investments are yet to be fully realised.

According to Marshall, a central role for anyone with 'digital' in their title is to persuade others in the organisation that digital is implicitly in theirs too. Having a

'Digital Manager' is tangible evidence of emerging social media and digital logics within broadcasters (van Dijck & Poell 2015). Digital managers advocate 'digital' as both strategy and process, such that digital provides a route through the uncertainties that are endemic within media industries. Digital enables practical interventions. For Marshall, a key part of his role at S4C has been testing digital tools to promote and create content, build relationships with audiences, and mobilise external allies. The latter is especially important for PSB where the visibility and articulation of social value is crucial for sustainability.

S4C exemplifies how strategic collaboration by smaller PSB organisations with larger counterparts has benefits but also limitations. In 2014, S4C decided to make its own content available through iPlayer, the BBCs on-demand service. This collaboration was possible because of a partnership developed between the organisations following major cuts to S4C's funding in 2010 that contentiously transferred responsibility for the bulk of S4C's funding from the UK government grant made through the Department of Media, Culture and Sport, to the BBC licence fee.

While S4C remains operationally independent, placing its content on the BBC's highly developed and well-known iPlayer was part of a strategy to increase the channel's availability, as S4C chief executive Ian Jones explained: "The great advantage of BBC iPlayer is that it is available on over 650 devices and platforms for free in the UK – which provide new ways to showcase S4C's excellent content" (cited in BBC 2013). It appears this collaboration has paid off. S4C's 2016 annual report noted an increase in online viewing sessions from 5.7 million in 2014–2015 to 8.4 million in 2015–2016, the first full year where S4C content was available on iPlayer. This was especially marked by an increase in viewing sessions by viewers outside Wales and across other parts of the UK accessing S4C content.[3]

However, our analysis found that putting content on another, larger and more powerful broadcaster's platform also brings problems in data ownership. S4C does not own the audience data for viewing sessions using iPlayer, and is therefore less able to exploit analytics for its own benefit. In the digital economy, the ability to access and manage the analytics of audience engagement on different platforms is an increasingly important lever; to yield such control is a major risk.

Public value and digital innovation: The regulatory response

While digitalisation is part of the everyday reality of broadcasters and integral to all aspects of broadcasting today, many participants felt policy-making and audience measurement had failed to keep pace with changes. They perceived policy-makers across Europe as being inadequately prepared for the digital world, reflecting instead assumptions of the analogue era of mass media. We argue this inadequacy can be partly explained by the deregulation of media industries in recent decades because an ideology of consumer choice and market competition encouraged interventions that were often reactionary, piece-meal and offered a limited diet of possibilities (e.g.

quotas or tax incentives). Furthermore, broadcasting crosses policy domains that include business, culture, education, and community building. Within new nations or in the context of devolved powers, broadcasting can be secondary to more immediate areas of policy-making such as health and education. Consequently, media policy interventions may be difficult to deliver.

The digital era also redefines what broadcasters are and do. For instance, the number of stakeholders involved in policy decision-making has expanded to include global media outlets, telecommunications groups, technology manufacturers, and IT companies. In the digital landscape, the presence of content is less problematic than gaining ready access to it. While technological affordances such as catch-up services exist, audiences will only find content and engage with it if it can be accessed easily on smartphones, tablets and Smart TVs. Emerging players operate as powerful gatekeepers, so questions of power remain highly pertinent – especially in rights negotiations for both content and platform access. Platforms are not neutral routes to content but are themselves businesses with particular priorities and affordances. Regulators, we suggest, have an important part to play in making a diversity of content readily *accessible* (not just available) to audiences.

Regulation may be especially pressing in the case of minority-language communities where the market is not large enough to sustain diverse commercial provision or ensure sufficient traction with large international corporations such as Netflix and YouTube. The financial cost of accessing such platforms and services is a major challenge for publicly funded, smaller broadcasters. For one participant in our network, negotiating rights with suppliers to clear content to be offered across various platforms was "horrendous […]. [W]e thought we were a broadcaster, we want to make content, not negotiate contracts". Such negotiations can exclude smaller broadcasters from platforms as the high cost of development and content rights prohibits their engagement in every space.

Content rights and apps in public service media

Increasing global competition for content rights is a major trend that can pose disproportionately large challenges for minority-language PSB organisations. As noted by TG4, for example: "Competition for the rights to television programmes and major sporting events is increasing and TG4's purchasing power is falling […]. In addition, TG4 holds the unique role of serving Irish language audiences, with this specific statutory role in the Irish broadcast market not required of any other broadcaster in Ireland" (TG4 2016: 9). In many nations that have a variety of language communities, both commercial and majority language PSB organisations have withdrawn from minority-language provision due to deregulation and market forces (such as overseas sales) that favour dominant languages. However, minority-language PSB organisations recognise the value of digitalisation and are responding in diverse ways, including multi-platforming, social media, and user generated content.

Underscoring one of the 'big advantages' that digital technology has brought, Lís Ní Dhálaigh (Acquisitions & Output Director for TG4) explained: "Our content is now available worldwide, so it doesn't matter where you are in the world, you can access the TG4 Irish-language content […]. It's allowing us to communicate directly to our audience and to build a relationship directly to our audience, whereas before this we would have been depending on third party advertising platforms." The opportunities afforded by the media infrastructure that facilitates a network society allow TG4 to expand its audience from the confines of a national border to the substantial global Irish diaspora. Data from TG4's catch-up service suggests a broad range of genres that appeal to this audience. Cultural genres including music and the arts, along with sport (especially Gaelic Football and Hurling), resonate particularly strongly.

Social media and UGC content are important elements in the strategies of minority-language broadcasters. They provide new spaces for speakers of minority-languages to communicate with each other in ways that make minority-language life visible and audible online (Gruffydd Jones & Uribe-Jongbloed 2013). They complement traditional television's consumption-only mode, and allow broadcasters to engage in two-way dialogue with vibrant but relatively small communities. As Huw Marshall pointed out, it is especially important for minority-language broadcasters to find and retain younger audiences. TG4, for example, provides 11 Irish language apps for preschool children, "making Irish more accessible and fun for young people worldwide" (TG4 2016: 12). Indeed, some linguists argue that the current era of highly individualised media communications "is characterized by the emergence of communities based on interests in a language or activity in it, rather than necessarily by location" (Kelly-Holmes & Atkinson 2017: 238). From the moment children learn to read and navigate independently online, they are exposed to a swathe of English-language material that is easy to find on channels such as YouTube Kids. As part of its bid to retain 7-15-year olds, S4C explained how they have been innovating by engaging with youngsters as producers of content:

> So, we've invested, along with the Welsh Government, in projects like Game Tube, which is showing kids how they do walkthroughs for Minecraft […] if you are making that walkthrough in English you are one of a billion videos on YouTube, if you are doing it in Welsh, you have actually got more of a chance of getting your content noticed and watched. So, you make doing something in Welsh a USP.[4] (Interview with Huw Marshall, S4C Digital Manager 2016).

While in some digital spheres a minority-language may restrict access to services, for example by not having interfaces and apps in that language, here the Welsh language offers distinction in the Anglophone internet world. The small number of Welsh speakers – constituting an intimate networked society of speakers – can be a boon to the proto-celebrity eager to connect and make a mark online.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the analytic value of both small nations and minority-language media as approaches for identifying formations of global power that underscore the importance of PSM in a networked society. In the light of important digital myths that circulate in debates about the future of public service media, we have argued for greater attention to how inequalities of global power that characterise the network society are negotiated, often with great agility and collaboration, by smaller public service broadcasters. We have shown how digital platforms can, and already do, help achieve objectives that are core to public media's public purposes. For example, digital technologies can enhance language learning and raise the visibility and reach of languages beyond traditional strongholds. However, major structural issues remain.

New empowered actors are accumulating valuable resources (especially data, advertising revenue and attention) and exercising gatekeeping power to the detriment of less powerful players that lack the necessary resources to compete successfully. The pervasive logic of neoliberalism has not only reduced the regulation of global media organisations, but helped drive down public funding. Retaining funding at a level that allows genuine innovation and the leveraging of digital resources is a major challenge in making the transition to PSM. Public media need government support in formulating credible remits that enable broadcasters to develop their services in the digital environment, whilst retaining a clear sense of their public purposes and values.

Reducing PSM to a tool merely to plug holes caused by market failure in commercial media not only diminishes the diverse cultural, social, and economic values of their offerings, but also excludes the distinct role that minority-language PSB organisations play in ensuring linguistic vibrancy and diversity. Sustained, direct engagement with scholars, industry professionals, and policy-makers through our international research network led us to identify this as a crucial moment in determining the abilities and sustainability of PSB organisations to deliver fully on their potential value to the publics of small nations in a globalised media system. We believe effective policy intervention is urgently required. Policy-makers and regulators need to think creatively about how actively to support pluralism in an online environment where the dominance of a few global corporations can squeeze out smaller players and languages. Ensuring the network society is equitable and inclusive requires active scholarly interventions in media policy and public debates to bring nuance and precision to the technologically deterministic character of digital discourse, and to provide positive examples of the enduring salience of public service in media. This is vital for clarifying the core values of PSM independence, universality, and plurality in twenty-first century networked societies.

Notes

1. A series of collaborative studies were conducted by the Centre for Media and Culture in Small Nations at the University of South Wales with academic and industry partners. The research reported in this chapter was funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council international research network scheme (AH/M011348/1). Television production in small nations was led by McElroy and Noonan with Anne Marit Waade at Aarhus University (Denmark), and with support from the European Broadcasting Union, S4C, TG4 and Royal Television Society Wales.
2. S4C is the UK's sole Welsh-language public service broadcaster. In the S4C annual report 2016 the term 'digital' appears 35 times, compared to 17 times in the 2010 report.
3. The term 'viewing sessions' is commonly used by UK broadcasters to refer to catch-up viewing online.
4. Short for 'unique selling proposition'.

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