Media Markets and Minority Languages in the Digital Age

Tom Moring[*]
University of Helsinki

This article discusses the changing role of the media for minority languages in the context of the development of the digital media market. Media use in minority languages is affected by the position of the language in a growing digital market. The role of the media in daily language use is assessed against a development whereby digital media play an ever greater role due to increased daily usage of media. The asymmetric position of minority languages makes them particularly vulnerable to unfavourable changes in the media landscape. Internet-based and mobile digital media are likely to introduce such changes. The key question addressed in this article is whether the media landscape in its new form can maintain its institutional capacity to embrace and serve minority languages, and under what conditions. How are the intentions that are inherent in international policy instruments for the protection and promotion of minority languages served if these instruments are not applied according to the requirements set by the new conditions? The article calls for measures to balance the negative effects of the digital changes on minority languages by strengthening policy measures in this field. The empirical focus of the article leans towards developments in Western Europe, with a view towards examples elsewhere.

Keywords: Media market; minority language; language and media; digital media

"Your language doesn't wear out.
Using it only makes it stronger.
Use it, don't lose it"[1]

The impact of media on language – and more specifically on minority language – is a much debated issue. Here, it is discussed from the perspective that certain conditions have to be met if media are to have a *positive* impact on language. While the exact effects of media on language acquisition and maintenance are not known – and perhaps too complex to be defined in exact terms – there is indeed evidence of variation in supply and use-patterns of media that support a serious concern with how

---

[*] Professor, Swedish School of Social Science, University of Helsinki. Email: tom.moring@helsinki.fi.

the new media landscape will affect minority languages if left to blind market forces. Recent research indicates that the presence of languages in the digital sphere in the future would be comparable in importance to literacy, as this is seen today. Based on an empirical analysis where language vitality is regarded along criteria that have earlier been used in other contexts, and the author has transferred to presence in the digital world, András Kornai (2013: 10) points to the 'preexisting functional loss and economic incentives that work against language diversity', and notes that '[e]vidently, what we are witnessing is not just a massive die-off of the world's languages, it is the final act of the Neolithic Revolution, with the urban agriculturalists moving on to a different, digital plane of existence, leaving the hunter-gatherers and nomad pastoralists behind'. The argument regarding the effect of media on language is thus cast in a new light: if media has not yet undisputedly had an effect on minority languages (a claim that is cast into doubt in the face of research presented below), it most certainly will in the brave new virtual world that is growing up around us.

This article approaches language *as a process* that develops under the impact of all our daily activities. That approach is more practical than theoretical, but it would not be in disagreement with a constructionist standpoint (Berger and Luckman, 1967). In simple practical terms, media can be seen as one of the many activities that affect our daily language use, informing it, renewing it and reforming it. In his review of successful efforts at language revitalization, Stan J. Anonby has noted that these share five important characteristics: 'a sense of group solidarity, immersion language teaching environments, literacy, the use of mass media, and the development of a sufficiently large group of speakers' (Anonby, 1999: 36). The role of the media to inform and disseminate language, its development and innovation is particularly obvious in small language communities, such as the Sámi in Northern Europe, where journalists consistently pondered this issue during interviews (Markelin *et al*., 2013). While the salience of this feature may vary between small and relatively linguistically isolated minorities and bigger language groups that lean on kin-states, it is present everywhere.

We should add that media cannot be seen as one activity, but as several different activities that interact with other activities in everyday life; all these activities affect our language and how we use it. No wonder then, as noted by Browne and Uribe-Jongbloed (2013: 26), that research has yet not established 'sufficient understanding of how minority languages – or languages in general for that matter –

affect and are affected by the media through which they find expression'. On the other hand, as argued by Stian Hårstad (2010: 328), '[i]t is generally demanding to measure how media interact with daily life […], but fewer and fewer tend to doubt that they exercise significant influence' [translation by author].

The focus here is on current developments that move much of the media to the web, and also give the web new functions that were earlier either not available or carried out in other ways, e.g. through direct personal encounters. While media effects on language cannot necessarily be measured, we can base our conclusions on the immense share of our lives that we spend with media, and with the language(s) we encounter there. We shall return to this discussion later in the article; at this point it is sufficient to note that media use makes up a prominent share of people's daily activities.

1. A market approach to media

A *market approach* to the minority media landscape turns our attention to the nature of media. On the one hand, the media are expected to operate for the public good. A public good would by definition be non-excludable and non-rivalrous. Individual media users cannot be effectively excluded from use. In addition, use does not reduce availability to other media users. This places an emphasis on the supply side of media, as offered by publicly-financed media providers with an obligation to indiscriminately serve the total audience.

On the other hand, the media also encompass commercial enterprises that collect their revenues from the market through advertising and revenues. These revenues are dependent on audience size in relevant audience segments. However, traditionally a large, if not dominant, share of the print press has claimed to be part of a wider public service to society, acting to promote democracy by contributing to an informed society.

The insight that (minority) languages need particular attention, as well as proactive support from society, is not new; as will be explored in greater detail below, the need to support the inclusion of minority languages both in publicly-funded broadcasting and in commercial media – broadcasting as well as newspapers – was included in the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML) in 1992. The brusque nature of the market was evident when radio and television were deregulated across Europe. During the 1980s and early 1990s, with the introduction of

new commercial media across the European broadcasting market, the market failure of commercial radio in minority languages became evident (Moring and Salmi, 1998); an observation that was repeated in France when the Breton commercial television channel 'TV Breiz' was launched and then backed out on its minority language undertakings in the first years of the new millennium (Guyot, 2007: 39). With growing competition in the media sector, public service companies increasingly competed for audiences in the *audience market*. This could be seen in critical reactions from Swedish Radio (SR) and Television (SVT) to demands from the Public Service Committee to successively increase services to language minorities (SOU 2012/59).

The particular problems that arise in the context of minority languages are typically related to the social and linguistic consequences of an *asymmetrical* situation. Minority languages are almost without exception in a less favourable position, not only with regard to globally-used *linguae francae*, but also with regard to publicly supported national languages that have a dominant position in the national context. The international instruments in place to protect, enhance or promote minority languages are, by default, measures to compensate the weaknesses inherent in this asymmetry.

As always, the coin has two sides. Production and distribution of messages that have local-to-global reach on the Internet are relatively cheap and effortless. But what does this mean for minority language media in the age of the Internet? Media developments on the Internet have created some relevant challengers to more traditional media; through social media use, through search gadgets and other web-based innovations such as location services, public and private customer services, and web marketing. Many of these are offered in several languages, including spoken minority languages. However, their use is affected by market mechanisms, which even in the world of traditional regulated media favoured *linguae francae* or national languages. Today, traditional media operators are ploughing massive resources into developing their online services in an effort to reconquer, or at least defend, some of their earlier positions among large audience segments. This is a development that risks flooding the market and leaving lesser-resourced minority languages far behind. It has already been documented by empirical research, which shows that minority language media have been slow to enter the digital scene. According to a study (Zabaleta *et al*., 2013) carried out in 2009, in 10 minority language communities in

Europe almost 30% of minority language media outlets did not have websites. Only one in four carried news services that were updated with any regularity.

However, for linguistic minorities, the new media market gives rise to both hopes and challenges. Research has shown a preference for minority languages among mother-tongue speakers when they are actively using social media, for example through writing and messaging. However, when these same persons are browsing the Internet, the tendency appears to be the opposite: the presence of minority languages in the digital realm is under threat of being dramatically more marginalized than before (Vincze, 2011). If this is indeed the case, it would call for urgent measures to meet the challenges posed by the new market situation. However, little has been done to develop instruments that encourage international institutions and states to take proactive measures in this regard. Moreover, those who work to promote their minority languages should give the issue more attention, which has not always been the case.

2. Media's effect on language – a disputed question

It was noted at the beginning of this article that the actual impact of media on minority language use is a frequently debated issue. Since the studies of Joshua Fishman (Fishman, 1991: 374, 403-404; 2001: 473-474, 482; see also Cormack, 2004: 4-5), there has been a warning against overrating media's influence on language vitality. This view has been challenged, though mainly through circumstantial evidence (Aonby, 1999; Moring and Husband, 2007; Cormack and Hourigan, 2007; Browne and Uribe-Jongbloed, 2013: 11-17, 25-26; Hårstad, 2010). Gradually, however, in support of theoretical modelling, more specific empirical evidence has been produced, which illustrates the effects of media use on language and identity (for recent examples, see Vincze, 2013; Vincze and Moring, 2013).

It may be argued that the question of media's effect on language is itself misleading. First, it is – like most effect-based research in social science – formulated much too broadly. The effects on language and language identity are composite, and it is almost impossible to isolate the media-related components from other components in social life, such as language use in the family, education, the work place, and so on. Second, the concept of "effect" itself is much too broad. What do we mean by effect? How do we measure it? What is our time span for considering an effect to be permanent? Third, what do we mean by media? I may read a book, see a film, look at

a game show on television, follow news on the radio, read cartoons in a newspaper or chat with my friends on Facebook. All these are ways of using media, but do they affect language in the same way? Obviously not.

If efforts to establish effect appear naïve, claims that media do not affect language are also naïve. We see from time-use studies that people spend a considerable portion of their days engaging with different media. Total, daily media usage in the Nordic countries varies from between six to nine hours, with the wide interval partly the result of different measuring methods; the daily use of traditional television has been estimated at approximately five hours per day in the United States and three hours in the Nordic countries (NationMaster data source 2002). According to (older) comparative statistics, other European countries fall between these numbers (Nordicom, 2012; Lafayette, 2013; Eurostat Theme 3, 2004). It is beyond doubt that this time spent with media has consequences for language use.

Research shows that different types of media perform different functions for their audiences. Different media are also used at different times of day, according to relatively uniform patterns (see, e.g. HETUS, 2007-2008). In Europe, newspapers and radio dominate morning and daytime use, whereas television dominates evening use. A relatively new domain of media use is Internet usage on smartphones, often to fill what is known as "dead time" – short moments of waiting that occur during the day, for example in traffic, in cafés, restaurants, etc., or for different forms of multitasking during other activities. A recent study in Britain (Ofcom, 2013: 51) shows that, among 12-15 year olds, the smartphone is the most important media form (when asked, "what media would you miss most", 39% answered "smartphone", compared to 19% who answered "television"). The range of activities performed on the smartphone is also wide among this age group.

The use-patterns of different types of media are undergoing rapid change, not only among the young, but across the entire audience. In Finland and Norway in 2012 television was still, but barely, the leading media across the total population before the Internet and the radio. In Sweden, the Internet had reached the same level as television, at 26% of media time (Nordicom, 2012). The Internet and mobile technology were taking over from traditional media; in Norway in 2013 there were as many people who read newspapers online as read them in print. However, newspaper readership is distributed differently on the web compared to its distribution on paper. As shown by recent Finnish statistics, while regional newspapers are still quite strong

on paper, digital reading is dominated by evening papers and the biggest national newspapers (c.f., Suomen lehdistö, 2013: 14). These examples from a relatively conservative, but well researched, media landscape in Northern Europe demonstrate some general trends regarding how media operate in a market that is affected by changing conditions.

3. Assessing media effects through time use – COD model

The impact of media on language can be, and has been, operationalized for empirical measurement – at least in a crude manner. One way of assessing the effects of different stimuli on language is to measure how they impact on the use of language in daily life. According to the so-called 'COD model', impacts are conditioned by 'Competence', 'Opportunities' and the 'Desire' to use a language and services in that language (Grin *et al*., 2003). This model identifies three crucial elements that condition the position of a language in society: people must have the *competence* to use the language, but this is only meaningful if there are actual *opportunities* to do so in daily life, and people *desire* – that is, have a preference – to use the language when offered the opportunity to do so on reasonably equal basis with the use of majority language in concrete everyday-life situations. This also explains why media are in a crucial position, as they are linked to a large proportion of our daily activities. Furthermore, there must be a net preference for use of the language. This, in itself, requires that opportunities to use the language are offered under equal – or as close as possible to equal – conditions with other (majority) languages.

The COD model thus operates from a reasonable assumption: that the most important role of language maintenance is its use in daily life. The future of a language depends on daily practice in public and private life. Thus, the effects of policies that are put in place to encourage the use of different aspects of a language in different contexts could be assessed (in an ideal case, even measured) according to how they actually increase use of that language. Are opportunities to use the language in different sectors of daily life offered? Are they offered to an extent and quality that are sufficient to serve the needs of those who could take advantage of the opportunities?

A crucial element of the COD model is the motivational aspect of language use, i.e. the *desire* to use a language. This is of particular relevance in the relatively common situation of most minority languages that are spoken by a bilingual

population that is more or less fluent in the majority language. Thus, for a language policy (e.g. to increase the availability of services in a language to enhance its daily use) to work, it must meet what Grin *et al*. (2003) call the "Strict Preference Condition". In other words, is the target population willing to use services if they are offered them to the extent and at the quality required? In the end, only this will be a valid measure of the actual impact of any set of policies in this field (Grin *et al*., 2003: 190).

The net preference among speakers of minority languages for using mother-tongue media where available on relatively equal conditions has also been shown in several studies; for example in Catalonia for Catalan, in South Tyrol for German, and in Finland for Swedish (Grin *et al*., 2003; Moring and Godenhjelm, 2011). Interestingly, languages that are not supported by kin-state cross-border supply (such as the Welsh language, or Scottish Gaelic) have been successful in attracting television audiences; and in attracting audiences among those who do not speak the language. Furthermore, local outlets (Swedish language radio in Finland, German language television in South Tyrol in Italy) have been attractive to the level that they have dominated media use among audiences that have access to a wide range of programmes in their (minority) language from a nearby kin-state.

These cases of relative success in situations where media supply has been fostered locally with the help of public support for traditional media outlets are encouraging. The success of such cases also explains why it is of importance that minorities and state parties show particular attention to the development of services in minority languages as part of the new digital media landscape. Daily activities are increasingly carried out through services offered on the Internet and mobile platforms. It is not (necessarily) the same to use a print newspaper as it is to use its equivalent on the Internet; the use of freely distributed radio on the air differs from radio use on the web; television services on broadscreen differ from those on the web, etc. But first and foremost, the new media landscape provided by the Internet, with all its gadgets, outlets, interactive opportunities, and their often unrestricted global availability, form a dramatically changed environment for media use. These changes have not yet been encompassed in the international instruments that offer guidance and benchmarks for societies in their policies toward minority languages.

Examples of how new digital usage develops can be found in a Finnish research project from 2010, which examined Swedish-speaking youth in Southern

Finland (Vincze, 2011). This research shows that, in the age bracket between 17 and 19, only 10% of those who were bilingual used Swedish-language websites, while 31% of those who were unilingual Swedish speakers did so. Both groups used websites in English just as much, with the difference affecting usage of websites in the majority language (Finnish). There also seems to be a tendency among young people to use their (minority) language more frequently when *producing* content on the web (for example, when writing blogs) than when *consuming* content (for example, browsing).

The research from Finland is echoed in more recent research from Wales. According to statistics from 2013 (Beaufort, 2013: 25), similar differences were observed among Welsh speakers in their use of the Welsh and English languages on the web. When writing emails, 33% had done so in Welsh in the preceding week, compared to 42% in English. When using/visiting a website, 28% had done so in Welsh, compared to 75% in English. At the same time, 84% of respondents indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to do more in Welsh (Beaufort, 2013: 33). Further studies are being carried out by media anthropologist Katarina Graffman[2] in Finland (for Swedish) and in Scotland (for Gaelic). The studies are based on qualitative analyses, such as in-depth interviews and participant observation. Preliminary results further support these findings.

4. Enhancing minority media in a new market situation

As touched upon briefly above, European media policy, particularly broadcast policy, has been characterized by various efforts to regulate the free market. Originally, broadcasting regulations were put in place to guarantee optimal and fair use of radio space. National policies were developed that still dominate much of the broadcasting sector through public service radio and television supply, and different national solutions regarding the licensing of private radio and television outlets, as well as community broadcasting. Cable television was required to carry public service programming through "must carry" rules. In many countries, the private press enjoyed subsidies or was regulated by limits on cross-ownership, in order to secure diversity and the co-existence of many voices. Gradually, policies that were put in place because of technical requirements established their role as policies to protect and promote cultural values that were commonly accepted by nation-states.

However, the recent dramatic changes in this landscape often led regulators, as well as public service programme providers and commercial media enterprises, to implement reactive measures in order to cope with the new market situation. As a consequence, tension grew between publicly-funded media and commercially-funded media, which was exacerbated by new media developments on the web. This created severe challenges for the business model underlying print press in particular. Through this development, the context for the protection and promotion of minority languages also changed. Originally, policy measures that interfered with the right to broadcast and assigned particular duties to licence holders were put in place to regulate problems that followed from a completely free market in electronic media. In many countries, measures were taken to enhance the position of the print press through direct or indirect subsidies.

Similar measures, adapted to the particular situation of different minority languages, were also applied in those states that had signed and ratified the ECRML. In Article 11, the ECRML offers a range of measures for improving the media situation of languages that signatory states have chosen to protect and promote under Part III (for a more detailed explanation of the ECRML and its application to media, see Moring and Dunbar, 2008; 2012). However, the ECRML was opened for signature in 1992 and could not take account of coming media developments over the next 20 years. Thus while the ECRML contains express measures for the promotion of press, radio, television and video production, it does not include similar measures for Internet-based services, although the general principles should, *ceteris paribus*, also be applicable to media on the web (Moring, 2006). As states have not been expressly bound by measures that promote newer services through the Internet, they will most likely not develop the proactive policies that were introduced in many cases for "legacy media" (Jakubowicz, 2006). Consequently, as shown by McMonagle (2012), monitoring under the ECRML has not reached the same level for digital services as for areas explicitly articulated in the ECRML. Thus, in its monitoring, the Committee of Experts 'has tended to simply report, rather than recommend or evaluate the potential of the Internet' (McMonagle, 2012: 21).

5. Social and linguistic consequences of an asymmetric situation

We should not forget the positive impact that relatively cheap and free distribution through the Internet offers to communities that constitute marginal markets. Nor

should we neglect the positive effects that social media has had in promoting the use of minority media within minority language communities. But the broad picture is less positive. As noted above, a minority–majority situation is by default asymmetric. Minority language speakers are more bilingual and live their lives in two (or more) languages. Joshua Fishman and others have observed that the net effect of media is more likely to interfere with mother-tongue transmission than to support it (Fishman, 2001: 473-474; see also Busch, 2001: 35-37). By accelerating language shift and assimilation, the aggregate effect of media tends to undermine the position of minority languages and related communities.

When a state seeks to maintain linguistic diversity with respect to minority languages that are traditionally found on its territory, it needs to balance the scales. Proactive action to strengthen the position of minority languages, e.g., in the digital world, has a restitutionary character; such measures are taken in order to counter the damage that the development of new media would do to the minority language if no such measures were taken (Moring and Dunbar, 2008). The objective to respect linguistic diversity implies measures to this end, and is included in different international instruments, as well as in Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which acquired binding legal effect following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon (2009). The media-related measures in the aforementioned international instruments were put in place mainly as a result of this type of argumentation (see the Explanatory report to the ECRML).

In an asymmetric situation, media services in minority languages can, in their totality, be seen as a "public good" that is not, as noted above, sufficiently served by the market. If the conditions that allow the media to serve daily language use are to be met – as must be the case for the COD model to work – the media landscape in the minority language must be rich enough to provide speakers with a relevant selection of diverse and qualitatively competitive content. As argued by Tarlach McGonagle, '[t]he right to freedom of expression can only be fully realized when there is widespread access to a diverse range of expressive opportunities and sources of information and opinions'. Furthermore, this diverse content must be available over platforms that are sufficiently accessible: 'As well as guaranteeing media pluralism, the other main obligation on States to facilitate the expressive rights of persons belonging to minorities is to ensure access rights' (McGonagle, 2011: 579-580).

In order to meet the Strict Preference Condition (see above), the media landscape in a minority language would have to be rich enough to facilitate media use in those various circumstances where media are used. If media supply in a language, relative to the supply in competing languages, is present on all relevant platforms with a diverse and rich content of good quality, we may call this supply "institutionally complete" (Moring, 2007). In this case, the conditions are present for users of the language to support their daily activities with a media supply offered in their own language.

In modern society, with its global availability of information and entertainment, people often use media in many different languages when the supply in their own language is institutionally quite complete. It is therefore also important to look at how "functionally complete" the actual use of a language is – both in absolute terms and relative to the supply of media services in this language. Thus, in absolute terms, an institutionally complete media system is a prerequisite for a situation where the media use is functionally complete. However, the reverse is not true: the presence of an institutionally complete media system in a particular language does not guarantee that that media dominates usage among speakers of the language. And this presents a challenge to minority languages, particularly in the relatively common situation noted above where speakers of those languages are bilingual.

We have to be sensitive to these additional challenges that asymmetries in the media add to the otherwise asymmetric situation of minorities. This becomes all the more important in light of ongoing changes to the increasingly digital media landscape. Today, digital media is taking on many of the functions of traditional mass media. It has already taken on new roles that partly substitute and add to different service functions in society. Furthermore, it offers opportunities to create new types of media, most typically media that lean on social interaction and on low-cost distribution. As will be discussed in the following section, the development of new digital offerings is likely to dramatically increase in the near future.

6. Minority language media in the age of the Internet

The role of digital media is still under development. There are not one but many forms of digital media. Recent developments on the Internet and mobile media, such as tablets and smartphones, have been discussed predominantly from the perspective of the rapid development of social media on the Internet, interactivity and user-

produced content. All these features of the Internet are to a greater or lesser extent related to increased activity in the private sphere, and interaction between the private sphere and traditional media (Deuze, 2007; Becket, 2010). However, the Internet also carries the traditional media, allowing newspapers to expand their services in a multimedia milieu and broadcasting services to expand their services in forms that resemble print and on-demand usage. In many cases traditional media are pressed by this new development. As already noted, print press in particular finds itself in trouble, as it is to a large extent dependent on advertising, subscription and newsstand copy sales.

Furthermore, new services are created in sectors that expand the role taken by traditional media, such as search engines, location services, public and private customer services, and marketing. The integration of the technological and the social in a new digital context has been discussed as transforming social processes, using the metaphor "imbrication" (e.g., Sassen, 2006). The concept is traditionally used for structures with overlapping features (in sedimentology for overlapping structures, compared to tiles of a roof). In a dynamic context, we would think of overlap between old and new systems where the new system coincides with, or even takes over, functions that were previously carried out in other ways. Again, these dynamics generate both possibilities and challenges for the less resourced in an asymmetric relationship – generally, speakers of minority languages.

It is in this dynamic sense that the concept is important here. The traditional international policy instruments that have become the benchmarks for policies to promote and protect minority languages apply to a pre-Internet world and do not *expressly* cover the current situation where functions that were previously carried out by one type of media are now carried out by new types of media (although one might argue that they should do so *ceteris paribus*). The development of new media significantly challenges spheres that international instruments such as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and the ECRML were originally set to protect. One conclusion is that, in order for the media landscape to maintain its functional capacities for minority languages, the institutional aspects of development of the new media must be developed in parallel with the changing context. The question that arises is whether – and under what conditions – the media landscape in its new form can maintain its institutional capacity to embrace and serve minority languages, and under what conditions; and how the intentions that are

inherent in international instruments aimed at protecting and promoting minority languages can be fostered if these instruments are not applied according to the requirements set by the new conditions.

7. Minorities' hopes and challenges in a new media market

While there are examples of quite successful Internet services in regional or minority languages – such as the successful news site in Catalan language, Vilaweb, an early bird in this field that was started already in the 1990s (see López *et al*., 2002); or the success of an Internet-based Swedish youth radio station in Finland, Radio X3M in the millennium shift (see Grin *et al*., 2003) – the global free market conditions form a context within which minority language services are likely to be even more challenged by market conditions than before. The analysis by András Kornai (referred to above) warns that only around 250 of the 7,000 or so languages that still exist today may take the leap into the digital world in such a convincing way that they will remain fully functional in this realm, while another 2,500 languages may survive – albeit in a less digitally functional way – for another century (Kornai, 2013: 10).

If the first wave of Internet media was mainly what has been called "shovelware", and the second wave was characterized by massive uploads by private users under a logic called Web 2.0 (Partal, 2006), we are now witnessing a third wave. The second wave in particular brought about some remarkable innovations in social media, and developed a new usage pattern of mobile telephones based on spontaneous and individual initiatives. These features were available to most people at low cost, as indicated by the abovementioned research. But the third wave that the world is now witnessing involves service providers, with a background in traditional media, moving great resources into content production for new platforms in an effort to survive. This will further change the market, and if no restitutive policies are put in place, it will do so to the benefit of the sizeable audiences that speak the big languages of the world. This development has already seen the transfer of revenues from advertising and sales away from legacy media and towards digital platforms. The digital market is increasingly global. For this reason, balances in benefits of scale hit harder than before, when markets were local and national.

Where does this development leave minorities and their languages? It is clear that new developments in the media sector fulfil many of the functions identified when the FCNM and the ECRML were formulated. It is also clear, from the texts of

these instruments and their explanatory notes, that they aim to balance media services in a way that – as far as possible – serve a restitutionary function for minority languages, irrespective of type of media (Moring and Dunbar, 2008; Moring, 2006). Yet, as noted above, monitoring of these instruments has so far dealt only sparsely with the ongoing trend towards the digital. Observations in the field of new media have been presented, but evaluations – not to mention recommendations – have been sparse (Dunbar and Moring, 2012; McMonagle 2012). It is evident that state parties, as well as minorities themselves, have not yet woken up to the reality of the new media landscape.[3]

Against this background, and taking the ethos of the FCNM and the ECRML as a point of departure, it is disturbing to notice – as we have done above – that the use of minority languages on digital platforms appears to be relatively low in communities where these languages are more extensively served and used on traditional media platforms. In light of such findings it is clear that services in minority languages on the Internet must be actively fostered in the future, if these languages are to stand a chance in the new and increasingly competitive Internet environment. Whereas a high level of institutional completeness in a minority language is not itself sufficient to secure a high level of functional completeness, it is a necessary condition. That said, an immediate conclusion is that states, as well as minority communities and private online actors need to give increased attention to the question of how services on the Internet in minority languages can be offered in a way and to an extent that can stimulate increased use. In the third wave of media developments on the Internet, where big institutions move in with their resources, this will not be successful if minorities are left to the mercy of the market. The current trend also requires societal support for minorities in this new field, in addition to ongoing support to legacy media.

Conclusion

The development of digital media allows for effortless production and use of media content online. This has resulted in a new market that has the potential to dramatically affect the position of minority languages. The development allows for new opportunities and initiatives, as production is relatively easy and distribution is relatively cheap. Some research also shows a preference for speakers of minority languages to actively use their language in *producing* content on the web. At the same

time, the new development gives rise to severe concern: for the media *consumer* browsing the web, the benefits of scale of the global media market are increasingly important. For a public good, such as media supply in minority languages, the free market condition constitutes a threat. Minorities live within the overall media ecology.

It is clear both from the media research quoted above and from sound reasoning that the digital supply in minority languages needs more support than has been available to date. The reality that prevailed in the 1990s, when the most relevant international policy instruments were created, has changed. The ECRML and the FCNM will be less functional for minority languages, and the communities that seek to maintain them, if reasonable measures are not taken to match support for increasingly dominant digital platforms with that allocated to more traditional legacy media.

Timing is crucial, as big media companies are now forcefully moving into digital products and distribution in an effort to save their businesses. Public service companies and commercial companies alike are competing for big audiences. This puts pressure on those who are working to maintain a (best possible) institutionally complete level of media services on the web. At the same time they are competing in the battle for sustained existence in the remaining media without explicit support from the international instruments that in many European countries have provided at least moral support in the traditional media context. Because institutional completeness is a necessary but insufficient condition for functional completeness, the ideal condition is to serve minority languages on similar platforms to a standard that, to the extent possible, matches the supply in the majority language.

As evidenced by research as well as by analyses of the evidence presented in the monitoring reports of the ECRML, this has not yet happened to any relevant extent. Some states report transition of media services for minorities on the Internet, and in some cases new services have also been established. But the services in minority languages on digital platforms remain underdeveloped, and are severely threatened by market mechanisms that are not countered by efficient restitutive policy instruments.

Without a clear mandate in the digital realm, to date monitoring of the ECRML has mainly registered, rather than evaluated or enforced, developments in this field. The evolution of digital services in and for minority languages thus remains at the discretion of a positive approach by the states in question. Monitoring assesses

voluntary rather than prescribed activity. It may embody good practice, but it does not assess the situation in terms of fulfilment or non-fulfilment of obligations. This leaves monitoring of digital development through this, and similar, policy instruments without their strongest measure of impact.

The question posed above was whether the media landscape in its new form can maintain its institutional capacity to embrace and serve minority languages, and under what conditions; and how the intentions inherent in international instruments aimed at protecting and promoting minority languages can be fostered if these instruments are not applied according to the requirements of the new conditions. The answer to this question is pessimistic. There is an obvious preference to use minority languages, for example in the production of social media content. This is, for obvious reasons, not matched by similar behaviour in digital consumption. The contrast between the ethos of internationally accepted instruments, and their practical application in a new situation, is of serious concern for small communities at the margins of society. As noted above, earlier research has shown that the accumulated influence of media tends to have a negative impact on the sustainability and development of minority languages and related cultures. New research points to a real threat that this negative impact will be stronger in the future when traditional media and new media services turn to digital. This risk further increases as international instruments in support for media in minority languages do not include explicit obligation for states to support digital media in the same way as they support radio, television and newspapers. To offset that impact, active positive engagement is required by the societies in question at a level which at least *parallels* that prescribed for traditional media.

Notes

1   Quote from "Giving regional and minority languages a say!", the Secretariat of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in co-operation with the Directorate of Communication. Textual Consultant: Tom Moring. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2007.
2   This comparative research is on-going and will be reported in a forthcoming article (Moring, T. and Graffman, K. forthcoming).
3   See also Moeller's article in this special issue.

References

Anonby, S.J. 'Reversing Language Shift: Can Kwak'wala Be Revived'. In *Revitalizing Indigenous Languages*, eds. J. Reyhner, G. Cantoni, R.N. St. Clair and Y. Parsons, 33-52. Flagstaff, Arizona: Northern Arizona University, 1999.

Beaufort Research. 'Exploring Welsh Speakers' Language Use in their Daily Life'. Research report commissioned by the Welsh Government, BBC Wales and S4C. Banghor: Banghor University, 2003.

Becket, C. *The Value of Networked Journalism*. London: Polis, 2010.

Berger, P.L. and T. Luckmannn. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Doubleday, 1967.

Browne, D.R. and E. Uribe-Jongbloed. 'Introduction: Ethnic/Linguistic Minority Media – What their History Reveals, How Scholars Have Studied Them and What We Might Ask Next'. In *Minority Languages and Social Media: Participation, Policy and Perspectives*, eds. E. Haf Jones and E. Uribe-Jongbloed, 1-28. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2013.

Busch, B. 'The Virtual Village Square'. In *Endangered Languages and the Media in Minority Languages in the Process of Media, Diversification and Globalization – An Example from Southern Carinthia (Austria)*, eds. C. Moseley, N. Ostler and H. Ouzzate, 35-39. Paper presented at the Fifth Conference of the Foundation for Endangered Languages (FEL). Agadir, Morocco, September 20-23, 2001.

Busch, B. *Sprachen im Disput: Medien und Öffentlichkeit in multilingualen Gesellschaften*. Klagenfurt: Drava Diskurs, 2004.

Central European Initiative Instrument for the Protection of Minority Rights 1994. http://www.ceinet.org/download/minority_rights.pdf. Retrieved: Jun 29, 2007.

Cormack, M. 'Developing Minority Language Media Studies'. *Mercator Media Forum* 7(1) (2004): 3-12.

Cormack, M. and N. Hourigan (eds.). *Minority Language Media: Concepts, Critiques and Case Studies*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2007.

Deuze, M. *MediaWork*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.

Dunbar, R. and T. Moring. 'Article 11. Media'. In *Shaping Language Rights. Commentary on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in the Light of the Committee of Experts' Evaluation*, eds. A. Nogueira López, E.J. Ruiz Vieytez and I. Urrutia Libarona, 373-424. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2012.

ETS 148 1992, European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) ETS 148. *European Treaty Series 148/1992*.

ETS 157 1995, Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) ETS 157. *European Treaty Series 157/1995*.

Eurostat Theme. 'How Europeans Spend Their Time, Everyday Life of Women and Men'. Data 1998-2002. *Eurostat Theme 3, Population and Social Conditions*. Luxembourg: European Commission. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-58-04-998/EN/KS-58-04-998-EN.PDF. Retrieved: Mar, 31 2014.

Falkena, O. 'www.omropfryslan.nl: The Development of a Frisian-language Multimedia Website'. *Mercator Media Forum* 5(1) (2001), 42-47.

Fishman, J.A. *Reversing Language Shift*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1991.

_____ 'From Theory to Practice (and Vice Versa): Review, Reconsideration and Reiteration'. In *Can Threatened Languages Be Saved? Reversing Language Shift, Revisited: A 21st Century Perspective*, 451-483. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2001.

Grin, F. and T. Moring, with D. Gorter, J. Häggman, D. Ó Riagáin and M. Strubell. *Support for Minority Languages in Europe*. Final Report on a project financed by the European Commission, Directorate Education and Culture, 2003.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/langmin/support.pdf.
Retrieved Jul, 29 2006.

Guyot, J. 'Minority Language Media and the Public Sphere'. In *Minority Language Media: Concepts, Critiques and Case Studies,* eds. M. Cormack and N. Hourigan, 34-51. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2007.

Hårstad, S. *Unge språkbrukere i gammel by. En sosiolinvistisk studie av ungdoms talemål i Trondheim* [A Sociolinguistic Study of Young Users of Language in Trondheim, Norway]. Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvetinskapelige universitet (NTNU), 2010.

HETUS (Harmonized European Time Use Survey). 2007-2008. https://www.h2.scb.se/tus/tus/AreaGraphCID.html. Retrieved: Mar, 31 2014.

Jakubowicz, K. Committee of Experts on Issues Relating to the Protection of National Minorities (DH-MIN). Comments on the draft report on 'Access of National Minorities to the Media: New Challenges'. *DH-MIN(2006)017*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2006.
http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/minorities/4._intergovernmental_co-operation_%28dh-min%29/2._documents/PDF_DH-MIN(2006)017%20KJ_Comments_Access_natmin_media_eng.pdf. Retrieved: Jul, 1 2007.

Kornai, A. 'Digital Language Death'. *PLoS ONE* 8(10) (2013). www.plosone.org. Retrieved: Feb, 28 2014.

Lafayette, J. 'Time Spent Watching Traditional TV Up. New Cross Platform Report Says Fewer People Have Multichannel Subscriptions'. *Broadcasting & Cable*. October 6, 2013.

López, B. 'Esperanzas en la Red: Vilaaweb como Ejemplo Exitosos de Medio de Communicación en una Lengua Minoritaria'. *Mercator Media Forum* 6 (2002), 58-61 [with an English summary].

Markelin, L., C. Husband and T. Moring. 'Sámi Media Professionals and the Role of Language and Identity'. *Sociolinguistica* 27 (2013): 101-115.

McGonagle, T. 'Minority Rights, Freedom of Expression and of the Media: Dynamics and Dilemmas'. *School of Human Rights Series* 44. Cambridge: Intersentia, 2011.

Moring, T. 'Access of National Minorities to the Media: New Challenges'. Report. *DH-MIN(2006)015*. Committee of Experts on Issues Relating to the Protection of National Minorities (DH-MIN). Presented in the meeting of DH-MIN, Strasbourg, 20 October 2006.
http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/minorities/4._INTERGOVERNMENTAL_CO-OPERATION_(DH-MIN)/2._Documents/DH_MIN_WorkingDocuments_eng.asp#TopOfPage>.
Retrieved: Jul, 1 2007.

_____ 'Functional Completeness in Minority Language Media'. In *Minority Language Media: Concepts, Critiques and Case Studies,* eds. M. Cormack and N. Hourigan, 17-33. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 2007.

_____ and R. Dunbar, *The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Media*. Study commissioned by the Secretariat for the Charter of Regional or Minority Languages. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2008.

_____ and S. Godenhjelm. 'Broadcasting for Minorities in Big and Small Countries'. In *Small among Giants: Television Broadcasting in Smaller Countries*, eds. G.F. Lowe and C.S. Nissen, 179-202. Göteborg: Nordicom, 2011.

Moring, T. and S. Godenhjelm. 'Det sammanhållande kittet. En studie av minoritetsmedier I Europa' [A Study of Minority Media in Europe]. *Magma Studie* 3 (2010). Helsinki: Magma-publikationer, 2010.

Moring, T. and C. Husband. 'The Contribution of Swedish Media in Finland to Linguistic Vitality'. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 187-188 (2007), 75-101.

Moring, T. and J. Salmi. 'Public Service Radio Programming for Minority Language Audience(s) in a Competitive Market. The Case of the Swedish-Speaking Minority in Finland'. *Gazette* 60 (4) (1998): 325-342.

NationMaster data source 2002. www.nationmaster.com/country-info/stats/Media/Television-viewing. Retrieved Mar, 26 2014.

Nordicom. Media Market Shares the Average Day 2012 (Share of Time Spent with the Media, Percent), 2012. www.nordicom.gu.se/sv/mediefakta/mediestatistik. Retrieved: Mar, 26 2014.

Norsk mediebarometer. Statistisk sentralbyrå 2014 [Norwegian media barometer 2014]. www.ssb.no/medie. Retrieved: Mar, 26 2014.

Ofcom. 'Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report'. Research report. London Ofcom (Independent Regulator and Competition Authority for the UK Communications Industries), October 2013.

Partal, V. 'Revolution on the Revolution: Web 2.0, Civic Journalism, P2P and IP Television, Broadband Content: The Next Wave of Internet and the Implications for Journalism'. Powerpoint presentation at the European Journalist Training Association (EJTA) conference. Tartu, Estonia, May 9-10, 2006.

Sassen, S. 'Socio-Digital Formations: Constructing an Object of Study'. *Nordicom Information* 28 (2) (2006): 9-19.

SOU 2012/59. Nya villkor för public service. Betänkande av Public service-kommittén [Opinion of the Swedish Public Service Committee]. *Statens offentliga utredningar 2012/59*. Stockholm: Elanders.

Suomen lehdistö 5/2013. Publication of the Finnish Newspapers Association.

Vincze, L. 'Finlandssvensk medieanvändning i ett jämförande perspektiv [Media Use in Finland in Comparative Perspective]'. In *Svenskan i Finland 12* [Publications of the University of Eastern Finland, Reports and Studies in Education, Humanities and Theology] 1798-5641 (2) (2006): 143-150.

Vincze, L. 'Language Minorities and New Media. Facing Trilingualism?' *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* 9 (2010): 377-388.

Vincze, L. 'The Bilingual Screen. Ethnolinguistic Identity and Television Viewing among Three Language Minorities'. *SSKH Skrifter 35*. Helsinki: Swedish School of Social Science at University of Helsinki, 2013.

Vincze, L. and T. Moring. 'Towards Ethnolinguistic Identity Gratifications'. In *Minority Languages and Social Media: Participation, Policy and Perspectives*, eds. E.H. Jones and E. Uribe-Jongbloed, 47-57. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2013.

Zabaleta, I, A. Gutierrez, C. Ferre-Pavia, I. Fernandez, S. Urrutia and N. Xamardo. 'Website Development and Digital Skill: The State of Traditional Media in European Minority Languages'. *International Journal of Communication* 7 (2013): 1641-1666.