
2009/6/23

GALESERAZKO TELEBISTA GALESEKO KOMUNIKABIDEEN ESPARRUAN

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The Welsh language television channel, S4C, is possibly one of the best known minority language media institutions. The dramatic history of its creation captured the imagination of language activists far beyond Wales, becoming a symbol of success in the face of adversity. Today, almost three decades later, S4C continues to play a central and influential role in the Welsh media environment, but how has it evolved within the changing landscapes of language, media and politics?

This paper will seek to analyse S4C's position as a Welsh broadcaster and audiovisual content producer and its role in a wider social, political and linguistic context. It will trace its relationship over the decades with its audience and other sections of the media and cultural industries, looking at policies and programmes and its role in cultural production and reproduction of the Welsh language. One of the fundamental questions at the heart of this debate is the location of S4C in relation to the key functions of television in society, and of particular interest is the role that television in Wales has played in the process of language normalization, language revitalization, language use and enhancing access to the Welsh language.

Since its first broadcast in 1982, the political climate in which the channel operates has undergone major changes. A central UK Conservative government which was generally ill-received in Wales was replaced in 1997 after a Labour victory at the polls which was followed in the same year by a referendum leading to the establishment of a National Assembly for Wales. These same decades saw the emergence of globalization and greater mobility, contributing to the increased awareness of the existence of diasporic communities within the territory of state and in transnational terms. The demography of the language was transformed during the same period and growth in urban areas



occurring simultaneously with retraction in communities where it had been the primary vernacular.

In a multi-platform media environment, the broadcasting industry continues to play a significant role in developing new media content and services in the Welsh context. However, in an age where , according to MIT's Henry Jenkins, 'convergence represents a cultural shift' and a 'new set of rules', other players – including citizens and other organizations - are becoming participants and producers of media. As this process continues, the paper will conclude with a view of the future, and some observations on the significance of S4C within the new media order.
