

ILG presentation – Monday 12th December 2022. 12.30pm

Craig Willis – European Centre for Minority Issues / Europa-Universität Flensburg

Title: The role of non-speakers in the strategies of Welsh and Scottish Gaelic language television: Reflections for other minority language media broadcasters.

Abstract:

The television channels in the UK dedicated entirely to a minority language, Welsh on S4C and Scottish Gaelic on BBC Alba, were set up in significantly different circumstances. This was the case both in terms of the era they were created into, as well as the aims and structure behind them. Both however are ultimately controlled at the central level of the state in the UK, as broadcasting is not a devolved competence – something which makes these cases different to the regional broadcasters in Spain. In terms of strategy, BBC Alba was designed with a twin-pole audience strategy of providing content for the core Gaelic community and the wider Scottish audience, whereas S4C has shifted over time to target a non-speaking audience. This is aligned with literature on the purpose of minority language media which suggests that broadcasting can provide visibility to the language and maintain wider public support for the channel's continuing existence.

This presentation is part of my PhD work on the topic of non-speakers view and consumption of minority language media, across five cases – the two aforementioned, plus TV3, ETB and TVG – with the main research question of: how do non-speakers view minority language media? Using data provided by the broadcasters as well as 14 expert interviews with practitioners across both spheres, the findings centre around the core aspect of exclusivity. This is seen most prominently with live sports and the exclusive broadcasting rights for the games shown, but also exclusivity in terms of unique content such as factual programming and music / arts, with a close proximity to the audience geographically and culturally and not offered in majority language broadcasting.

Biography:

Craig Willis is a researcher at the [European Centre for Minority Issues](#) (ECMI) in Flensburg, holding this position since 2019. His prime academic area of expertise is in the field of minority language media, focusing on the role of non-speakers in the audience of broadcasting in Catalan, Basque, Galician, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic – which forms the topic of his PhD research at the Europa Universität Flensburg under the supervision of Prof. Monika Eigmüller and (externally) Prof. Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Further research foci include regional development and socioeconomic participation of linguistic and national minorities, through which he co-authored a report for the OSCE HCNM in 2021. Administrative duties include the role of Assistant Editor for the [Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe](#) (JEMIE). Craig is a member of the Scientific Committee for the upcoming XIX International Conference on Minority Languages in Carmarthen, 2023, as well as a member of the steering committee for the [International Association for Minority Language Media Research](#). Social media accounts include twitter [@cpmwillis](#) and [LinkedIn](#).