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## **Researching News Media: Creating Societal Impact from Research for the Media Industry and Policymakers**

Mikko Grönlund, Katja Lehtisaari, Carl-Gustav Lindén & Mikko Villi

### **Introduction**

Even though the consumption of media content in general has increased, the media industry is facing many difficulties. International competition, changes in consumer habits and rapid technological development have all put pressure on the media industry in many countries, Finland among them. The structure of the industry is changing, and companies from other industries are entering the field. The changes and the search for sustainable business models necessitate renewal in the industry. In addition, healthy news media and journalism are vital for the functioning of democracy. Yet, efforts by legacy media companies in Finland to adapt have been somewhat ineffective, and there have not been attempts at radical transformation (Lehtisaari et al., 2012; Lehtisaari & Grönlund, 2015).

According to data provided by Statistics Finland, the total value of the Finnish mass media market<sup>1</sup> was about €3.8 billion in 2017. Despite recent growth, this was still about 5% lower than in 2010. In the same period, mass media's share of total GDP in Finland fell from 2.1% to 1.7%. Importantly, there are considerable differences in the development of the various media sectors. The value of the electronic communications sector (television, radio, internet operations) has grown significantly, while both publishing and recording communications have declined. After a decade-long decline, publishing accounted for approximately half of the total value of the media market in Finland (€2.0 billion; 53%), and newspapers alone about a quarter (€0.9 billion; 24%). By contrast, the electronic communications sector has grown significantly since 2000. In 2017, it constituted over 41% of the total value of the mass media market, of which television accounted for about 30% and online 10%.

Advertising has long been one of the main contributors to both print and electronic communications. The economic downturn that began in late 2008 halted its growth, and in 2017 the total value of media advertising in Finland, at approximately €1.2 billion, was still nearly one-fifth less than before the recession. According to data from Kantar TNS, since 2000 the media advertising structure has also gone through a major transition. The proportion of online media, expressed as a percentage of the total value of media advertising, has risen from close to zero in 2000 to almost one-third (32%) in 2017, and has overtaken newspaper advertising. As in many countries, a large proportion of online media advertising and its growth in Finland goes to two international players, Google and Facebook.

These developments in the media economy, and especially the decline of printed press, set the background for the two research projects outlined in this chapter. The first project shows how media policy can address these developments and spur innovation, while the second explores new business models for newspaper publishers to seek new growth. The purpose is to illustrate the societal impact of research (Bornmann, 2013), specifically how media management research can inform policy-making and strategic decision-making, and how collaborative research can create value for everyday practitioners.

### **Project 1: The state of media and communications policy and how to measure it**

From discussions at round table meetings organised by the Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications in early 2017, it had become evident that there was no consistent understanding of the issues presented above. Nor was there any reliable information on the direction of development among the different stakeholders; that is, public service and private commercial media companies (Lund, 2016; for more on stakeholders, see Mitchell et al., 1997). In April 2017, the Finnish government decided to begin the preparation of a new media policy program. This program was to be part of a major governmental project focusing on growth in the digital business environment. The goal of the program was to create a favourable business environment for digital services and new business models, and to find ways to safeguard the diversity of Finnish media. It was introduced in 2018 and will run until 2023.

The starting point for the media policy program was citizens' rights to information, and the conditions and availability of journalistic content. The program seeks ways to ensure the diversity of Finnish media. It looks at media policy comprehensively across the administration. With regard to this, the media policy project aimed to create a wider knowledge base and an overall picture of the challenges faced by Finnish media, as well as a proposal on indicators that can be used for longer-term monitoring of the media environment.

Because of the conflicting interests of the stakeholder groups and media companies, it was necessary to commission a broader external and impartial research project to outline the policy program. In September 2017, the Ministry of Transport and Communications commissioned an extensive university consortium formed by the University of Helsinki and the University of Tampere, with the participation of researchers from the universities of Turku and Jyväskylä.

The project focusing on media and communications policy (referred to hereafter as the 'media policy project') aimed to produce a multidisciplinary academic study of the current state of media policy in Finland by bringing together expertise from journalism studies, communication studies, business economics, and law. Instead of a traditional sectoral approach, the study sought an innovative, holistic way of evaluating the development of the media and communications field. Thus, the project was not directly about media management research, but through its results, it provides essential information on media structures, economics and business for media managers.

In the project report, the current state of affairs in Finland is described from the viewpoint of the seven essential principles of media and communications policy (Picard & Pickard, 2017), based on the fundamental values of democracy: i) citizens' fundamental communication rights; ii) access to media and communication services; iii) diversity and plurality of ownership structures and content; iv) protection of users and society; v) providing transparency and

accountability; vi) the pursuit of developmental and economic benefits, and; vii) the pursuit of fair and effective communication policy solutions.

A Nordic comparison was appended to the study. It was carried out using a range of research materials, such as media industry and market statistics, statistics related to media support and grants, the availability of broadband services statistics, and media usage data.

According to Picard and Pickard (2017), the treatment of broadcasting, telecommunications and media as separate operating and political sectors is not well embedded in the current environment, in which virtually all content and networks are intertwined in different ways. The ability of media and communication policies to respond to rapid technological, economic, political and societal changes is also weak, because the policies are often created to tackle specific challenges at a given time, and thus their connection to media and the normative basic principles of communication policy may have become superficial. In accordance with this, the main objective of the project was for policymakers instead to look at the current situation at a more extensive and fundamental level, and seek new ways to achieve the goals.

The media policy project was organised into eight working groups, roughly corresponding to the seven principles and adding a dimension of international comparison<sup>ii</sup>. Each working group consisted of 1–4 researchers who worked independently and partly at a different pace. The three key research questions of all the working groups were: i) whether statistics or other resources on the theme had already been produced in Finland, and if so, what and how; ii) what variables best described the development of each theme and policy area, and which indicators and materials were suitable for reliable monitoring of their change, and; iii) whether there were already any useful, ready-made models for measuring the development of the theme or policy area, and if not, how their development would be meaningful in Finland.

### *Results of the study*

The final report of the research project, *The State of Media and Communications Policy and How to Measure it*<sup>iii</sup>, was published in March 2018. Based on input from all the working groups, the final report presented the following key recommendations:

1. The citizen's perspective must be closely linked to media and communications policy decision-making and drafting of laws.
2. In the development of access to media and communications services, the implementation of reforms should also be monitored from the point of view of citizens and consumers.
3. Media and communications policy should regularly monitor the development of the industry, content, and the use of media. In the pursuit of competition in different sectors, it should be borne in mind that the increase in supply does not automatically lead to an increase in diversity. Actions to support diversity should be designed and targeted across all media, not one medium at a time.
4. Risks associated with the misuse of personal data, and the content produced and disseminated by users, pose challenges for media and communications policy, as well as creating demands on the media industry. Information should also be collected on new forms of harassment and entirely new risks associated with internet use.
5. Media outlets clearly indicating to which media group they belong, and what ethical guidelines they follow can improve the transparency of the media business. Media organizations could be required to disclose their ownership structures in a comparable manner.

6. Indicators are needed to define the relevant market<sup>iv</sup>, evaluate the competitive situation, assess the development of the business and financial situation, and enable indicators of longer-term development to be reviewed retrospectively.

The report presented a measurement model (scorecard) intended for monitoring changes related to seven dimensions of Finnish media and communications policy. The twenty-six variables and fifty-two indicators included in the model are not based solely on the results and suggestions of individual working groups in the project, but are also based on the collaboration between the working groups.

### *Collaboration with stakeholders*

The media policy project was conducted in close cooperation with Finnish media and communications policy stakeholders. Researchers presented the project to public stakeholders at different stages. Both public and private stakeholders were asked to provide material for the study, which further developed the relationship between the researchers and stakeholders and raised awareness of the results. In October 2017, researchers presented the project plan to the project steering group that consisted of officials from several ministries and the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority. Round table discussions were then held with approximately thirty representatives of the research consortium, media companies, ministries, collective societies, and industry and labour organizations. Other stakeholder groups, such as Statistics Finland, were also asked to help collect research material.

Early in 2018, participatory workshops and hearings were arranged with stakeholders to identify options for action. The hearings were based primarily on the themes and issues that emerged from the final report of the project. The aim of the participatory approach was to obtain a future-oriented view from media organizations and other stakeholder groups, and provide them with a well-founded overview of future trends, particularly the necessary practical measures and policies.

The Ministry of Transport and Communications arranged the first public stakeholder-hearing event in April 2018, moderated by a consulting company. Project results were presented to approximately twenty representatives of the communications regulators from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. In other stakeholder hearings, the propositions of the project were approached through strategic options aimed at addressing the key development themes underlying the disruption of the media sector in Finland, and the advancement of options to tackle them. The strategic options intended to respond to the changes in the media sector and to look at the challenges and opportunities of each policy option. Strategic alternatives were not necessarily mutually exclusive but could also be promoted at the same time, as part of a development agenda. The hearings gathered approximately fifty participants representing a wide range of stakeholder groups.

In addition to the hearings, an open online consultation was organised to gather views on media transformation, matching the necessary practical measures and policies. Twenty-two people who widely represented various stakeholders, including media companies, media associations, NGOs and governmental institutions, completed a questionnaire.

The draft of the new media policy program was widely distributed to stakeholder groups, including such bodies as the Finnish Communications Regulatory Authority, the Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority, the Council for Mass Media, Statistics Finland,

Business Finland, as well as media organizations. Many commentators were pleased to be given the opportunity to participate in the preparation of the media policy program and demonstrated their willingness to continue their cooperation in the future.

Following the project, the Ministry of Transport and Communications has launched a new Media Policy Network. Its mission is to monitor the implementation of the media policy program approved by the government in July 2018. The Media Policy Network will improve the opportunities for stakeholders to obtain information on the preparation of media-related issues and the possibility of participating in the preparation. The network meets three or four times a year, and is open to and intended for media organisations, content producers and authors, researchers, NGOs and public authorities.

At the first meeting of the network in September 2018, with approximately fifty participants, the current situation of the media policy measures was reviewed. The second meeting, with about seventy participants, was arranged in March 2019. The Ministry of Transport and Communications has plans to execute a follow-up project that includes the further development of the scorecard and systematic monitoring of the development of media policy in Finland. The negotiations with the research consortium regarding the follow-up project started in the first half of 2019.

It is planned that the decisions and the realisation of the objectives will be monitored with the stakeholders in the Media Policy Network, and the actions will be implemented mainly within the framework of the state budget. Measures requiring additional appropriations will be decided within the framework of central government finances and annual budgets. The links to other key projects will be ensured during the implementation phase. In addition, the state of media policy in Finland is monitored cross-administratively by means of continuous or repeated research.

## **Project 2: New business models in news media**

In addition to the Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Finnish Newspapers Association (FNA) has been eager to tackle the challenges affecting Finnish media companies and to fund research that can provide insights for an industry confronted with a complicated situation. Instead of focusing on the development of media policy, the latter has been more interested in the changes in media business models. In order to help Finnish news media companies, the FNA along with the Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland commissioned a group of researchers from several Finnish universities (Turku, Helsinki and Jyväskylä) to carry out three projects on news media business models in the Scandinavian countries, the United States, and Germany. The projects were realised in 2016–18.

The purpose of these interview-based studies (also using relevant market and financial data) was to analyse how the changes in the digital environment affect the news media ecosystem. They also explored how the business operations of news organisations, especially newspapers, are changing. The outcomes offer a comparative perspective and a benchmark on new business models and revenue sources that can be used by news media companies in developing their business models and editorial practices. All members of the research consortium – the authors of this chapter – had previous experience with projects commissioned and financed by the FNA. The FNA was a stakeholder in all projects, but the funding models varied.

## *News media in Scandinavia*

The initial idea of the first project focusing on news media in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark was discussed in late 2015 in a meeting with the research consortium and FNA representatives. Based on the discussion, a two-part proposal was introduced. First, an analysis of financial statements of newspaper publishing companies in Scandinavia and related statistical data would be made. Second, a qualitative study based on twenty-nine in-depth interviews of representatives of major newspaper publishing companies, industry experts and significant scholars would be conducted. The project duration was to be relatively short; approximately six months.

The study was carried out in 2016 and was financed by the FNA. The project also involved a small follow-up project that focused specifically on local and regional news media business in the three countries.

### *Study results*

The research demonstrated that the media markets in Sweden and Norway are the most similar, as both have many paid-for local and regional newspapers (Lehtisaari et al., 2016; 2017a). Denmark has significantly fewer paid-for newspapers, and the number of free papers is high. In general, the absence of a sustainable business model suited to the new digital environment is a challenge for the entire newspaper business. One particular challenge is recruiting readers among the younger generations, and convincing them to include digital news in the monthly ‘media package’ on which they spend time and money. The interviews revealed that the Scandinavian newspaper companies have not generally been tremendously innovative in creating new approaches to reach a younger audience (Lehtisaari et al., 2018b).

However, several good examples of innovative and successful practices were found. They can be divided into two main types: i) digitally-driven business models, and; ii) brand and community building. Digitally-driven business models include such features as systematic testing of price levels, advanced user analytics, engagement orientation with value-based offerings, digital newspaper subscriptions bundled with mobile phone subscriptions, regionally based personalisation of the digital subscription, and a feedback loop through which new practices and operational models are first tested in some titles and then expanded to other titles. Brand and community building includes practices such as exclusive events for loyal customers, a monetising service formed around the brand (e.g. Politiken Plus in Denmark), and targeted news in order to reach a desired audience (e.g. Justin Bieber’s visit to Norway being covered in detail in order to lure young readers).

### *Collaboration with stakeholders*

The preliminary results were presented in May 2016 at the annual FNA Spring meeting and seminar. The seminar gathered more than 100 participants from Finnish newspapers and other interest groups around the country. The presentation was well received and gathered positive feedback and constructive comments.

Because of this and because of requests from newspapers unable to participate in the event, the FNA arranged another seminar in Helsinki in September 2016, with two presentations. The first put a Nordic perspective on the results of the Digital News Report released in June 2016 by the Oxford University Reuters Institute. The second touched on the new business models for news media in Scandinavia, with an emphasis on explaining the experiments made by news media organisations to transform or grow their business. Pekka Mervola, the editor-in-chief of

the *Keskisuomalainen* newspaper, then commented on the two presentations. The event was streamed live, to gain as large an audience as possible among FNA representatives. It attracted approximately fifty participants and more than eighty spectators followed the live stream. By the end of 2016, the recording of the event had been viewed more than 260 times.

The final report of the project was published in the publication series of the University of Helsinki (Lehtisaari et al., 2016). However, it was first made available exclusively for FNA members via the federation's intranet platform. After a short period of 'quarantine', the report was made available freely.

The study focusing on Scandinavia surveyed the business development of newspaper publishers and their ongoing experiments. However, since the FNA has 123 members, mostly small local newspapers, it financed a spin-off project that focused on examining the situation and prospects of local newspapers, city newspapers, and free papers. The final report of the spin-off project was also published as part of the University of Helsinki series (Lehtisaari et al., 2017a).

### *News media in the US*

The Scandinavian project was followed in 2017 by an analysis of U.S. news media (Lehtisaari et al., 2017b). The same research design was used, combining quantitative and qualitative data. The interview questions were based on the experiences from the first project and were highly similar, for comparative reasons. As in the first project, the funding institution did not have any direct influence on the research questions (such as requiring its approval), but as can be expected, discussions with FNA representatives did orient the research design.

In the project, it was decided to focus more specifically on the following topics:

- The proportion and growth of digital revenues, particularly digital subscriptions;
- New businesses outside the traditional two-sided business model of advertising and subscription income;
- Unique solutions in organisations;
- Creative partnerships;
- Organisational and cultural change;
- Creation of one's own technology;
- Adaptation of new technology.

Funding for this project was different. The Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland financed it through an open call for research proposals on the topic. In this sense, the project was not commissioned but had to compete for funding. The research consortium's experience from the Scandinavian project possibly influenced the funding decision favourably.

For the project, the research group saw a need for additional expertise and decided to collaborate with three colleagues from the United States: Robert G. Picard (Yale University and University of Oxford), Bozena Mierzejewska and Axel Roepnack (both Fordham University). The contract for the research project was signed in March 2017 and the project would run for approximately six months. The communication between researchers on two continents was carried out via email and regular Skype meetings. Mikko Villi made a two-month research visit in 2017 to Fordham University in New York City (hosted by Mierzejewska and Roepnack) to support collaboration and data collection. The researchers also met at several events, for example during the 2017 ICA conference in San Diego, as well as during the shorter

data collection visits to the U.S. made by Katja Lehtisaari, Mikko Grönlund and Carl-Gustaf Lindén.

### *Study results*

The study used quantitative data to develop a picture of the overall business environment of U.S. newspapers. In addition, qualitative interview data were collected in 2017 from media managers, researchers, industry representatives and media analysts (N = 35). The results revealed the wide differences between the approaches of U.S. newspaper publishers. The study concluded that foreign newspaper publishers wishing to learn from the U.S. media industry must determine individually which approaches are most appropriate for them, as there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution for publishers operating in the U.S. According to one interviewee, "There is no silver bullet, only silver shrapnel". It is understandable that there is a huge difference between newspapers such as the New York Times and the Washington Post and the metropolitan newspapers and local newspapers in smaller cities (Villi et al., 2019).

The results show that business model innovation is focused on building and nurturing value-creating relationships with readers, advertisers, partners, and intermediaries. Contemporary news business models and activities require knowledge and competencies that are often absent from traditional news industry workforces. Most publishers are still struggling to adapt to the digital age, and little 'reinvention' was found. For legacy media rooted deeply in a formerly stable ecosystem of actors, routines, habits and norms, the upheaval is often felt as a threat. The leap from print to digital publication, as well as the integration of content, audience and producers, is a challenge for newspaper organisations. The New York Times and the Washington Post, which have led developments in the digital environment, perceive those investments as central to their strategies and future growth.

According to the findings, many smaller news organisations seem to think that they must follow the national news organizations without developing their own business models and strategy, or without regard to whether they will be equally useful. Thus, innovation (or often, isomorphism and imitation) seems to be the goal itself rather than the means to a goal (for further analysis, see Villi et al., 2019). The review of the U.S. news media business revealed that it is struggling to reinvent business models and find its own path in the digital environment. The U.S. experience shows the unwillingness or inability of many established newspaper firms to consider value creation and business relationships in the broader way that digital competitors and emerging news providers are embracing. There is no universal solution, but the examples provided in the project report may serve as inspiration in finding new ways of value creation in newspaper publishing.

### *Collaboration with stakeholders*

The key results were presented to private and public media stakeholders at a seminar held in Helsinki in September 2017, which attracted over fifty participants. In addition, approximately 100 spectators followed the live stream of the event. The event was organised by the Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland and the Finnish Media Federation (Finnmedia). The latter is an advocacy organisation for the Finnish media industry and printing companies. Including its member associations (the Finnish Periodical Publishers' Association, the Federation of the Printing Industry in Finland, the Finnish Newspapers Association and the Finnish Book Publishers Association), it has in total nearly 700 member companies, which employ about 20,000 people. After the event, the final report of the project was made available freely via the University of Helsinki website (Lehtisaari et al., 2017b).

The results were also presented in 2017 in an article in the Suomen Lehdistö (“The Finnish Press”) periodical. The article focused on the key findings and ideas of the research project, and findings from the simultaneously executed project, *New Business Models in the News Industry in the United States*, a study conducted by the consulting and research company Kairos Future. Suomen Lehdistö targets decision-makers at Finnish newspapers and is published eight times a year. The average number of readers per printed issue is approximately 2,600.

Another tangible effect of the U.S. study occurred when the Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland launched a special theme call for project proposals on *Paid Content and Global Development in the Media* in 2018. The purpose of the call was to accumulate research projects that would present international cases that are scalable in the Finnish media market. The text of the call for proposals included a link to the U.S. report and a comment that it would be worthwhile for applicants to read the report, to draw useful ideas for their own proposals.

### *News media in Germany*

The third project in the series, focusing on Germany, was conducted in 2018 and financed by the FNA. Its purpose was to analyse how the digital environment affects the ecosystem of news media. The final report offered a perspective on new business models and forms of revenue in Germany, and revealed a wide variation in the approaches by newspaper publishers to the changes in the media field. The report came to similar conclusions to earlier reports on Scandinavia and the U.S., in that those who want to learn from the German media industry must determine individually which approaches are the most appropriate to them.

### *Study results*

For the study, the research group applied a similar approach to those of the two other studies. They used financial performance data and market data to form a picture of the overall business environment experienced by German newspapers. This was combined with qualitative data collected by interviewing media managers, researchers, industry representatives and media analysts (N = 20). Castulus Kolo (Macromedia University) and Barbara Brandstetter (Neu-Ulm University of Applied Sciences) helped in providing contacts and arranging interviews.

The results demonstrated that German news media operate in a highly conservative industry characterized by family ownership. From the outside it seems to be exposed to the same forces of consolidation that are prevalent in other European countries, while on the inside, few expressed any sense of urgency. In addition, the study concluded that German news media companies are slower to adopt new pay models than are companies elsewhere in Europe. Despite the media industry at large in Germany being mostly reluctant to risk its still profitable print-based business models, a few examples of creativity and innovation were found. During the study, the researchers were informed of several projects that aim to implement payment solutions, i.e. paywalls. Especially in northern Germany, managers showed interest in how Nordic media companies have developed their subscription business. One person noted that his company had started a new R&D project called *Oslo*, named “after our idol, Schibsted<sup>v</sup>.”

### *Collaboration with stakeholders*

In a similar fashion, the findings were first shared with the FNA. Preliminary results were presented to Finnish private and public media stakeholders in Helsinki in May 2018 in a keynote presentation at the FNA Spring seminar. The final report, published in December 2018,

was first made available to FNA members only before being published for the broader audience as part of the University of Helsinki series (Lehtisaari et al., 2018a).

In addition to such venues, the final reports of the projects did not gain much public visibility. There were a few stories in the media, most of the coverage being concentrated in media outlets aimed at media industry professionals. It seems that the findings of the projects are used more for internal discussion in the industry and the government than as seeds for creating public debate.

However, the researchers themselves have been actively disseminating the findings in journal articles (Lehtisaari et al., 2018b; Villi et al., 2019; other papers in process) and through more than ten academic presentations at international conferences, including the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA), European Media Management Association (emma), International Communication Association (ICA), International Symposium on Media Innovations (ISMI), NordMedia, and the World Media Economics and Management Conference (WMEMC). The findings have also been advantageous in education and have been firmly included on the agendas of courses at the universities of Jyväskylä and Helsinki.

There has been no systematic analysis of the studies on Scandinavia, the U.S. and Germany concerning their impact in Finland, and thus it is difficult to evaluate exactly how much difference they have made. This is certainly something that should be addressed in future projects, as a systematic framework would serve in collecting data about the impact. However, it is possible (and desirable) that Finnish news media companies have used insights from the studies and adopted certain suggestions as part of their development processes. The FNA has signalled the importance of benchmarking studies of this type for the Finnish news media. In addition, the FNA used the reports as reading material for a study trip for its members to Norwegian news media in September 2018 and a similar trip to Sweden in September 2019. One of the researchers in the project, Carl-Gustav Lindén, was asked to identify industry experts and interesting media trends in the national context as well as to provide background information about the media companies visited in Norway and Sweden. He also provided participants with a set of salient questions and participated as an expert in the discussions with media companies.

## **Discussion**

In the remaining section of the chapter, we critically reflect on the research collaboration and actual impact on policymaking and strategic decision-making.

### *Practical vs. theoretical contributions*

The starting points of both projects were practical rather than theoretical. The aim of the projects was not to develop media management research in Finland as much as to bring into the discussion practical issues, best practices, and ideas that can be used when media companies develop their strategies. In sum, the projects were oriented by the purposes of the funding parties. However, media management research played a background role in the planning phase and when carrying out the projects.

Although the projects were not theory-driven but motivated by industry demands, it is important that the researchers were not content with only the commissioned project reports, but strived to produce more academically oriented publications. In this way, the outreach of the

projects could be extended to the academic community and could assist in developing the field of media management research both theoretically and practically.

The two projects presented in this chapter differ in several ways. The target group of the media policy project consisted primarily of political decision-makers, despite the fact that the project aimed at continuous interaction with other stakeholders as well, including media companies. In contrast, the interests of media companies targeted precisely the projects focusing on new business models for news media, and therefore their objectives were more business-oriented and practical.

#### *Influence of funding modality on research*

Due to differences in both the funding and backgrounds of the projects, there were also significant differences in their documentation. The media policy project was financed with state support. In Finland, the use of appropriations financed through tax revenues must be open and, therefore, the whole process from beginning to end was transparent and well documented. In contrast, the studies focusing on new business models for news media were funded by an industry organisation or an industry-connected foundation. Therefore, negotiations, contract issues and other interactions were in principle not public but were confined to personal interactions.

#### *Including stakeholder interests*

The media policy project had a formal steering group. The regular steering group meetings provided the research team with feedback throughout the project. Cooperation with the project funder and other round table stakeholders worked quite well via representatives of the Ministry of Transport and Communications. Collaboration with other ministries and state authorities in the steering group varied and, in some cases, the research group found that there was room for improvement. To some extent, this was because some of the people appointed to the steering group had insufficient expertise-related resources to support the research project. There was also a great deal of variation in stakeholder activity. Some stakeholders provided data and commented on the data collected by the researchers, but some did not. In general, the research team had slightly higher expectations of the collaboration than what transpired.

Public consultation was arranged after the report was published. Furthermore, the Ministry of Transport and Communications has organised meetings of the Media Policy Network in order to facilitate continuous dialog with stakeholder groups. However, the future of the network depends on the parliamentary elections in Finland in 2019 and the inauguration of the new Minister of Transport and Communications.

In contrast, the projects focusing on news media business models did not have formal steering groups or regular meetings between the research team and the representatives of the Finnish Newspapers Association and the Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland. However, the funding parties were kept informed of the progress of the studies in informal discussions and email correspondence. The main feedback was given after the funding representatives had read the first drafts of the final reports. They also approved the final versions of the reports.

In the media policy project, the extent of the project, the tight schedule, coordination requirements, and somewhat restricted resources made the execution of the project demanding. During its early stages, before any actual work or results of the work packages could be reported, there was quite a lot of reporting on the project plans to the steering group. The project consisted of multiple work packages and therefore the budget per work package was rather small and the number of work hours that could be allocated to each work package was limited.

The research consortium collaborated well; perhaps even better than the project coordinator had expected. While the consortium was large and scattered across several institutions in Finland, many of the members of the groups involved in the work packages already knew each other. In addition, the liaison person between the Ministry and the consortium parties played an important role. During the first stage of the project lifecycle, it took some time to clarify the task of individual work packages in order to avoid overlap. Nevertheless, when these issues were resolved, all members of the consortium committed to meeting common schedules and goals.

The consortium had monthly meetings at which presentations were made about the progress of each sub-project, and any necessary fine-tuning was agreed upon. It is important to understand that in such large projects, experts do not require micromanaging. Rather, they should be given the space and time to do their work, in addition to having sufficient resources to cover support functions and auxiliary tasks. Several members received no additional resources for the project (e.g. in the use of their work time), which became noticeable in their reduced capacity for collaboration and active contribution to the project, and an overall understanding of its goals.

Even though the research agenda and goals of the media policy project were agreed in the original contract, due to the open process, some efforts were made by stakeholders to expand the project during its lifecycle. The main reason for this was the substantial number of stakeholder groups with differing agendas or interests. The stakeholders included media companies, industry associations, and NGOs, and thus their views might contradict each other. Statements at round table meetings could often be understood to be lobbying by stakeholders. For example, participants who had not attended the previous meetings could make statements promoting their own interests, showing they were unaware of the project's objectives and task constraints. Some of the suggestions or information needs presented by stakeholders during the project were so extensive, or outside the agreed boundary conditions, that it was not possible to implement them.

#### *Time constraints of applied projects*

The business model projects had fewer stakeholders and the researchers could carry out the study without being disturbed by lobbying. They were in this sense much simpler and more straightforward as projects. The projects focusing on Scandinavia, the U.S. and Germany opened the possibility for the researchers to learn much about conditions outside Finland and generate new connections with foreign media industry people and academics. On the other hand, it can be mentioned that the schedule required the data collection, analysis and reporting to be carried out in six months, which might be the normal pace in the media industry, but is less common in the academic context.

The report on media and communications policy is available online (Ala-Fossi et al., 2018), and the results have been used in scholarly publications (Ala-Fossi et al., 2019). So far, the model and framework created by Picard and Pickard (2017) have not been tested in practice. However, the Finnish research consortium has started negotiations with representatives of the Ministry of Transport and Communications to test, research, and evaluate selected indicators in practice. Thus, it is probable that the insights from the project can be integrated with media policy in Finland.

The findings on Scandinavia, the U.S. and Germany were presented to Finnish media managers in reports containing many practical implications, potentially offering input for their decision-making. All project reports are available free online; the presentations and reports were widely distributed and created considerable interest among news media representatives in Finland.

Beyond that, the researchers have no knowledge about what the stakeholders have learned from the results, how they have taken advantage of the information provided, or if they have implemented any changes or new practices based on the insights from the three studies. The follow-up, through study trips for FNA members to Norway and Sweden, did not indicate that the reports created curiosity to know more. It should also be noted that media managers frequently attend events at which best practices are shared, including those arranged by industry associations such as the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), International News Media Association (INMA) and Global Editors Network (GEN). Despite the international activities in which many media leaders participate, the FNA still sees a need to provide research-based information in Finnish to its stakeholders.

### *Academic career vs. practical impact*

The more theoretical and academic considerations of the studies have been used in scholarly articles (Lehtisaari et al., 2018b, Villi et al., 2019), conference presentations, and in teaching. In addition to providing tangible deliverables to media companies and policymakers, the researchers have thus been able to advance their own research agendas and careers. Moreover, open and honest discussions with media managers have helped the researchers to get a better and more nuanced picture of the complexity of innovation dilemmas facing the media industry and learn how media organisations tackle challenges such as a scarcity of financial resources and skills shortages. One important insight is that media and journalism scholars have much to gain from engagement with practitioners, even though this is little appreciated in academia, at least not in Finnish universities. The reward and career system in Finnish universities is focused more on publications and less on mingling with practitioners.

The use of materials collected for more practical applied research, such as news media industry reports, need not be problematic if used in scholarly publications. Data has to be collected and analysed as stringently as in academic research projects. However, there is something of a dichotomy between academic publishing and industry reports, as the latter have to be pragmatic and business-oriented. Their purpose is to provide applicable information and ideas directly to business representatives, often in the form of bullet point lists. An applied research project rarely offers a basis from which to build major theoretical contributions without trade-offs. Thus, such media industry reports are often a compromise between academic knowledge and applied science.

The practical impact of these studies is not easy to measure. Often, no funding is available for such post-project endeavours, and after the project has ended, the researchers tend to concentrate their efforts on producing academic publications. However, in our experience, the type of collaboration analysed in this chapter has clear advantages for academic research. One obvious advantage is the access to well-placed sources. Media managers often appreciate a frank discussion with researchers about their challenges, innovation ideas, trade-offs and plans. To get the best results from an open discussion, researchers need not avoid the media industry but should be prepared to share their insights and to accept the limitations of their knowledge. Research should undergo a ‘reality check’ and provide insights that industry and policy experts recognise as being well grounded. The discussion would then have a better chance of creating a societal impact; that is, creating real value for the media industry and policy-makers. The second major advantage is that these conversations and analyses also provide researchers with a view of the future of the industry and ideas for further research.

In this chapter, we have not delved much into the field of teaching, but an obvious advantage of applied research is that it provides a more informed picture of what is going on outside the

high walls of academia. These insights are valuable to students who must finish their studies while at the same time trying to determine what skills and capabilities are valued in the job market 'out there'. Even though not presently rewarded in scholarly rankings, updating the knowledge of those who teach at universities should be a core demand from university management. This is especially true in a field that is rapidly being transformed under the pressure of new communication technologies.

Finally, media management research deals with the complexity of decision-making in uncertain circumstances and a rapidly changing business environment. Since there are many moving parts (from changing business models to the demand for new skills and the transformation of the technological landscape), a multidisciplinary approach is much needed. Our advice is that research teams should incorporate multidisciplinary expertise and skills to be able to analyse these complicated contexts competently.

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<sup>i</sup> Mass media statistics provided by Statistics Finland describe economy, enterprise structures, contents, consumption, audiences, internationalisation and labour force in diverse sectors of the mass media. Statistics Finland’s estimate of total mass media market consist of sales at the end user level of publishing (newspapers, free papers, magazines and periodicals and books), electronic media (television, radio, and internet advertising) and recorded media (audio recordings, videos and cinemas). The figures include domestic production and imports and they include several estimates. More information is available on the website of Statistics Finland. [https://www.stat.fi/meta/til/jvie\\_en.html](https://www.stat.fi/meta/til/jvie_en.html) and [https://pxhopea2.stat.fi/sahkoiset\\_julkaisut/joukkoviestintatilasto/html/engl0000.htm](https://pxhopea2.stat.fi/sahkoiset_julkaisut/joukkoviestintatilasto/html/engl0000.htm)

<sup>ii</sup> The leaders of the research consortium and the project were Katja Valaskivi from the University of Tampere (UTA) and Professor Hannu Nieminen from the University of Helsinki (UH). Project coordinator was adjunct Professor Marko Ala-Fossi (UTA). Primary investigators and their work packages: Anette Alén-Savikko & Jockum Hildén (WP1, Communication rights), Marko Ala-Fossi (WP2, Access to media and communication services), Heikki Hellman, Ville Manninen, Markus Mykkänen & Heikki Kuutti (WP3, Media diversity and pluralism in the media), Ilmari Hiltunen & Paula Haara (WP4, Protection of the citizens and the society), Aino Koskeniemi, Juha Herkman & Janne Matikainen (WP5, Transparency and responsibility of the media ), Mikko Grönlund & Katja Lehtisaari (WP6, Economic and structural development of the media), Johanna Jääsaari, Kari Karppinen & Aino Koskeniemi (WP7, Policy process) and Jockum Hildén (WP8, Comparative aspects of Nordic media and communications policy)

<sup>iii</sup> The report is available on the Finnish Government’s web page [https://api.hankeikkuna.fi/asiakirjat/6b4c477d-8ec9-415a-80ec-600be17076a9/2a9c94b8-b42c-4e9a-8920-bc226396c8e3/RAPORTTI\\_20180328121708.pdf](https://api.hankeikkuna.fi/asiakirjat/6b4c477d-8ec9-415a-80ec-600be17076a9/2a9c94b8-b42c-4e9a-8920-bc226396c8e3/RAPORTTI_20180328121708.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> According to the European Commission (see Commission notice on the definition of relevant market for the purposes of Community competition law (97/C 372/03) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3A126073>, the definition of the relevant market combines the product market and the geographic market, defined as follows: a relevant product market comprises all those products and/or services, which are regarded as interchangeable or substitutable by the consumer because of the products’ characteristics, their prices and their intended use. Relevant geographic market comprises the area in which the firms concerned are involved in the supply of products or services and in which the conditions of competition are sufficiently homogeneous.

<sup>v</sup> Norwegian Schibsted Media Group is an international media group with 8000 employees in 22 countries.