

Towards a sustainable media system

Explorative studies of emerging media consumption trends
and media processes for content production

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Abstract

Understanding the process of transformational change currently taking place in the media industry is an urgent challenge for people working in the industry as well as for media consumers and other stakeholders. There is a great need to deepen our general knowledge when it comes to what the future media landscape will look like. Which of the major consumption trends that exist today will continue and possibly lead to disruptive change? Which of today's existing trends could give us a hint of tomorrow's media landscape? Furthermore, we need to explore the environmental impact of the future media landscape. What parameters are important when it comes to environmental aspects of media consumption, as well as in the production and distribution of media content? These are examples of the questions explored in this thesis.

I have used a number of methods, such as qualitative interviews, workshops, scenarios, case studies, process studies and life cycle assessment, in order to explore the research questions. The characteristics of the media consumption trends are presented in four scenarios. I have assumed that the strength of influence from the government in combination with the strength of commercial powers will strongly affect the future of media. The development of media is framed by the economy, the political system, and by culture. The future of media is closely connected with its relationship to the power structures in society.

I have also defined eleven parameters, as central when discussing the environmental aspects of media consumption. These parameters are related to electronic devices, travel, transportation, energy use and waste. In the future, we may see the realisation of some of all four scenarios described in this thesis. The environmental aspects of these different future directions depend on each person's life situation and a number of choices that each consumer makes concerning environmental issues, in combination with the overall societal structure.

In relation to the global challenge of climate change/global warming, I conclude that traditional media, public service media in particular, together with social media channels play an important role in the process of increasing knowledge and awareness among consumers, politicians and other stakeholders in society. However, in current media development, media companies are rapidly becoming more commercialized and more focused on entertainment instead of on producing serious journalism concerned with social, political and cultural matters.

To conclude, I believe that it is possible to create a sustainable media system, but it will require some conscious effort of people working in the media industry, of consumers, and ultimately at the level of regulatory authorities.