

Responding to Complexity with Humility:

A Systems-oriented Approach to
Strategic Communication

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ABSTRACT

Systemic design has emerged as both a theory and a practice that integrates design thinking and systems thinking to work with complex issues. It acts as a platform for design disciplines to develop and evolve according to the scope of complexity that needs to be addressed.

This Major Research Project (MRP) looks at how systemic design influences an organization's communication practice. It explores how the practice of strategic communication – the planned process of delivering a relevant message to a specific audience to achieve an objective – can be adapted to help organizations better reflect and respond to the real-world complexity of their issues (wicked problems) and stakeholders.

Using a case study focused on the Canadian news media ecosystem, a strategic communication plan is developed to reflect and respond to the interconnected problems and stakeholders across business, technology, regulatory, and cultural contexts.

The paper identifies the first set of learnings on how the principles of systemic design can inform the development of “*systems communications*” and how this practice is distinguished from strategic communication. It offers future research areas to explore systems communications further and discover the potential value for organizations.

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- Erin Millar, for being a patient guide in an unfamiliar territory.

Thank you to Francesca Oprandi for the graphic designs.

DEDICATION

For the lone moments spent around your inner flame.

*Where the ego cracks.
And the craft takes shape.*

*Where silence heals.
And truth illuminates.*

*Where time is slow.
And creation becomes known.*

*Where you turn to tame...
...in your inner flame.*

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I. INTRO

“How are we going to communicate about the problem, if the very nature of the problem is a failure of our communications medium?” (Softkey, 2017).

This is a profound question that’s been occupying my mind since I first heard it in August 2017.

The interplay contained within it, between problem-solving and communication, became a bit of an obsession for me. The question offered a provocative frame to look at the world through and ultimately resulted in this research project.

In this brief section I share my background and the thinking that led to this project.

WHERE I’M COMING FROM

Working in ad land

I worked for a number of years at an advertising agency as a Strategist. I learned how to work *with* creativity, not just as an output, but as a force. I witnessed how influential its alchemy, between strategy and creativity, can be for shaping society and culture.

Speaking in systems

Through this program at OCAD U I was turned onto systems thinking. It wasn’t so much that I got into it, rather *it* spoke to me, literally. It offered me a language to describe what I’ve always been thinking and acting: plurality.

Seeing in plural

As a second-generation Canadian, I’m blessed with having multiple lenses that I can put on to see the world through. It’s a natural part of who I am, how I think, and behave.

Mismatch between communications and complexity

Carrying this unique mix of professional, academic, and personal experiences may be why the question posed by Softkey resonated so strongly. It distills something I’ve noticed through my reference points: *the way we talk about complex issues doesn’t reflect the complexity of what we’re talking about.*

Multi-sidedness, context, and nuance seem to be lost in our reductive communications. This is surprising, given the level of multi-perspective understanding we’re able to handle in fictional or entertainment media. But when we discuss *real-world* issues we fail to reflect *real-world complexity*. Hmm...

This is the line of thinking that lead me to my Major Research Project (MRP) question.

II. RESEARCH QUESTION

How might Systemic Design shift the practice of strategic communication so organizations can reflect and respond to the real-world complexity of their issues and stakeholders?

In this section I unpack the research question. I establish the project within the field of Systemic Design and outline the opportunity to explore the strategic communication practice from a systems orientation.

SITUATING THE RESEARCH IN SYSTEMIC DESIGN

Why does Systemic Design exist?

There's an increasing recognition that some of the biggest challenges we face – climate change, energy reliance, wealth distribution, labour rights, surveillance tech, etc. – are wicked in nature (Irwin, 2015).

The framing of these types of challenges as *wicked problems* was originally described by Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber in their work *Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning* (1973).

The formulation of wicked problems resist the conventional forms of problem solving, as shown by their ten distinctions (listed below, adapted by Jones, 2014a, p. 97).

1. *There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem.*
2. *Wicked problems have no stopping rules (How do we know when design is enough?).*
3. *Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but better or worse.*
4. *There is no immediate or ultimate test of a solution.*
5. *Every solution to a wicked problem is a one-shot trial. Every attempt counts significantly.*
6. *You cannot identify a finite set of potential solutions.*
7. *Every wicked problem is essentially unique.*
8. *Each can be considered to be a symptom of another problem.*
9. *The discrepancies (and causes themselves) can be explained in numerous ways.*
10. *The planner has no right to be wrong.*

Classical design methods, and their problem-solution orientation, were insufficient for addressing wicked problems (referred to as *complex issues* here onwards). This mismatch was due to the level of complexity contained in a social system context that design methods couldn't account for.

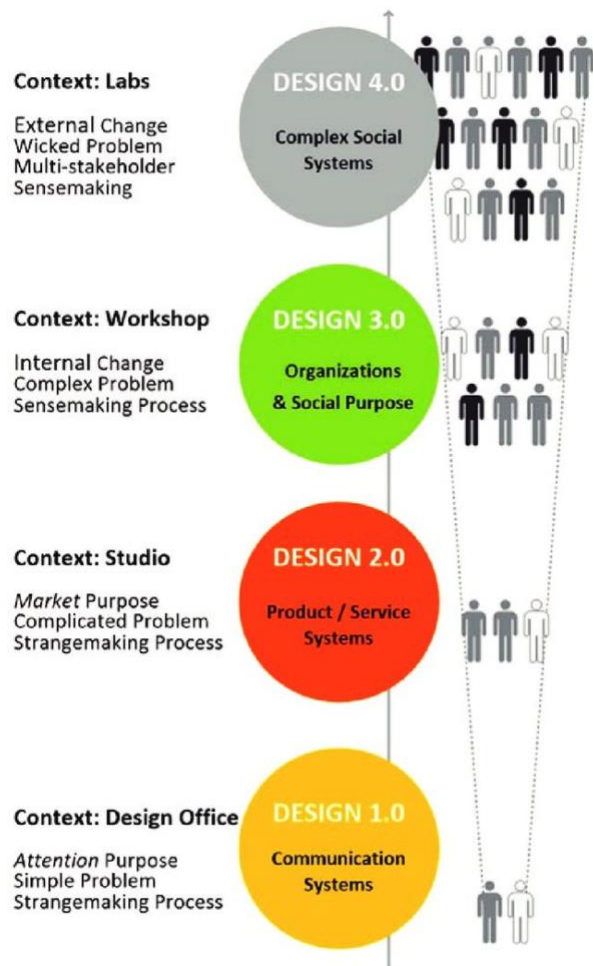


Figure 1. Design domain and associated contexts (Jones, 2018a)

Design solutions that were developed from a 1.0 and 2.0 standpoint were subservient to the dynamics of Design 3.0 and 4.0 (Jones & van Patter, 2009). Without considering the higher-order system, the design solutions were either partially effective, inconsequential, or at worst, harmful.

In effect, the design practice was out of step with the nature of the problems it was dealing with. It needed to evolve.

Enter Systemic Design.

What is Systemic Design

“Systemic Design integrates the mindsets and toolsets of systems thinking and design thinking to understand and intervene in complex situations” (Kahane & Ryan, 2017, p. 1).

The field draws upon well-established systems formalisms and design practices to *“describe, map, propose, and reconfigure complex services and systems”* (Jones, 2014a, p. 93).

It has a strong foundation in social system methodologies, as Jones outlines in *Taking Stock and Flow of Systemic Design* (2018b):

“Social systems theory and methods, perhaps the first inclusion of systemics as a design practice, evolved from the 1970s following the Club of Rome prospectus titled The Predicament of Mankind (Özbekhan, 1970). We can trace references and ideas from today’s systemic design from the social systems methodologies that followed in this era, such as Peter Checkland’s soft systems methodology (1975), Erich Jantsch’s evolutionary design (1973), Russell Ackoff’s idealized design (1985), Bela Banathy’s social system design (1997), John Warfield’s generic design science (1985), and Alexander Christakis’ dialogic design (2006).” (p. viii)

After nearly a decade of field building, Systemic Design has emerged with a robust theoretical foundation, as well as practical tools, methods, and cases, to help designers better work with complexity in higher-order systems.

The progress made by Systemic Design are published, shared, or promoted in various forms:

- **Symposium**
This annual symposium *Relating Systems Thinking & Design (RSD)* focuses on the intersection, the relational aspects of, systems and design to strengthen the connection between the two disciplines and ultimately build-up the field of Systemic Design.
- **Publications**
The theory, methods, and practices of Systemic Design are also shared through academic publications such as Springer, Sheji, and FormAkademisk (used to publish the proceedings from RSD) to further promote and invite practitioners to the field.
- **Design Schools**
Systemic Design is also integrated into the curriculum at a small number of design schools. This is a direct way of introducing the next generation of design practitioners to Systemic Design and inviting research and contributions to the field.
 - Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), New York, USA
 - Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), Chicago, USA
 - National Institute of Design (NID), Ahmedabad, India
 - Ontario College of Art and Design University (OCAD U), Toronto, Canada
 - Oslo School of Design and Architecture (AHO), Oslo, Norway
 - Polytechnic University, Turin, Italy
- **Service Offerings**
In addition to the above forms, Systemic Design is also made known through service offerings from small or medium-sized (design) consultancies. Some of these services are

formed as working groups in well-known institutions such as *DOGA*, an architecture firm funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Trade or the Government of Alberta's *Alberta CoLab* in Canada.

The field of Systemic Design advances the design practice so it can better address the complex issues of our time. With a careful and deliberately paced development, Systemic Design has emerged as a platform through which other design practices can also evolve.

THE OPPORTUNITY TO EVOLVE COMMUNICATION DESIGN

Communication design within Systemic Design

The field-building work that focused on establishing a foundation for Systemic Design left some areas of the integration between systems thinking and design underdeveloped; namely, communication design.

Communication design, as explored within a systemic design context, has traditionally been concerned with visual thinking, which itself is a common characteristic of both systems thinking and design (Sevaldson, 2011). The communication artifacts that have emerged as a by-product of the processes associated with systemic design, namely the Gigamaps (Sevaldson, 2018) and synthesis maps (Jones & Bowes, 2017).

Other visual-based communication design resources - such as Systemic Design Toolkit (Van Ael et al., 2018), Visual Representation of Complexity (Boehnert, 2018), and SystemViz (Stoyko, 2019) - have expanded the library of visual thinking within Systemic Design.

Additionally, beyond two-dimensional communications, transmedia (Bohra et al., 2019) and material design (Aguirre, 2017; Lockton, 2020) have been used as media to communicate systemic understanding.

Opportunity to communicate with broader sets of audiences

There's a growing need to develop practices that explore how a systemic design process can better translate its outcomes - a shared understanding of a complex issue space and well-reasoned pathways to preferable futures - to the broader audiences, beyond just the immediate clients involved in the process or participants in a workshop.

Since large-scale systems change requires shifts to occur at a variety of levels (Geels & Schot, 2007), there's an opportunity for communication design to help translate the sensemaking value of systemic design to multiple audiences. This translation exercise could help broader audiences also discover agreement around well-reasoned pathways to transition, but at the various levels needed.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Strategic communication as an organizational function

Strategic communication is “*the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission*” (Hallahan, 2007, p. 3).

Strategic communication is an organizational function that follows the process of other similar strategic management functions, such as strategic planning. So, as an organizational function, strategic communication is used by virtually all sectors: governments, non-profits, commercial enterprises, etc. (Hallahan, 2007).

The advertising industry’s use of strategic communication

The advertising industry evolved its use of strategic communication due to the dramatic societal and cultural changes of post-war era (Griffiths & Follows, 2016). The industry needed new ways of reaching *mass* audiences and respond to their evolving behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions. Since the formalization of advertising’s use of strategic communication (known as *account planning* as a function within agencies), the practice has had a profound impact on society and consumer culture (Stole, 2012; Jhally, 2017). The influence of the practice has provided the confidence to many organizations and marketers today to use their brands to respond to increasingly complex social issues (WARC, 2019).

The advertising industry’s use of strategic communication, as an adaptation to an increasingly complex environment, provides a relevant framework for this project.

A process for strategic communication

A loose outline of the strategic communication process is shown in Table 1. The outline is based on my own professional experience from working at an advertising agency and drawn from well-respected and established industry resources: case studies from the *Institute of Practitioners in Advertising*, best practices from WARC (industry resource hub), and publications from *Account Planning Group*.

Table 1. Stages of a strategic communication process

STAGE	DESCRIPTION
Context	Create a meaningful understanding of the environment, its dynamics, and its influence on the organization.
Objectives	Set coherent objectives between the organization’s strategic objectives and the resulting communication and marketing objectives.
Audiences	Identify and understand the desired audiences that are most valuable for the organization to engage with, given the objectives.

STAGE	DESCRIPTION
Research	Conduct research to gain a better understanding of the problems that the organization must address to achieve its objectives.
Strategy	The articulation of a pathway that moves from the current situation to the desired situation (achieving the objective), given the context and conditions.
Messaging	Based off the strategy, develop message(s) that need to be communicated and understood by the target audience in order to achieve the set objectives.
Brief	Synthesize findings from all previous steps (Context to Messaging) to orient the creative process towards achieving the objectives.
Concept	Develop concepts that express the message and refine based on feedback.
Plan	Plan where, when, and how the message will be expressed or experienced by the audience.
Production	Produce the concepts in line with the core idea and strategic intent.
Launch	Activate the plan in line with the core idea and strategic intent.
Evaluate	Measure the impact of the communications, often done by brand or campaign tracking.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

If Systemic Design is a field that builds capacity for designers to better work complexity.

And strategic communications helps organizations achieve their objectives.

Then the combined idea of using strategic communication for an organization that’s addressing a complex issue is a worthwhile space to explore.

This leads to the research question for the MRP:

How might Systemic Design shift the practice of strategic communication so organizations can reflect and respond to the real-world complexity of their issues and stakeholders?

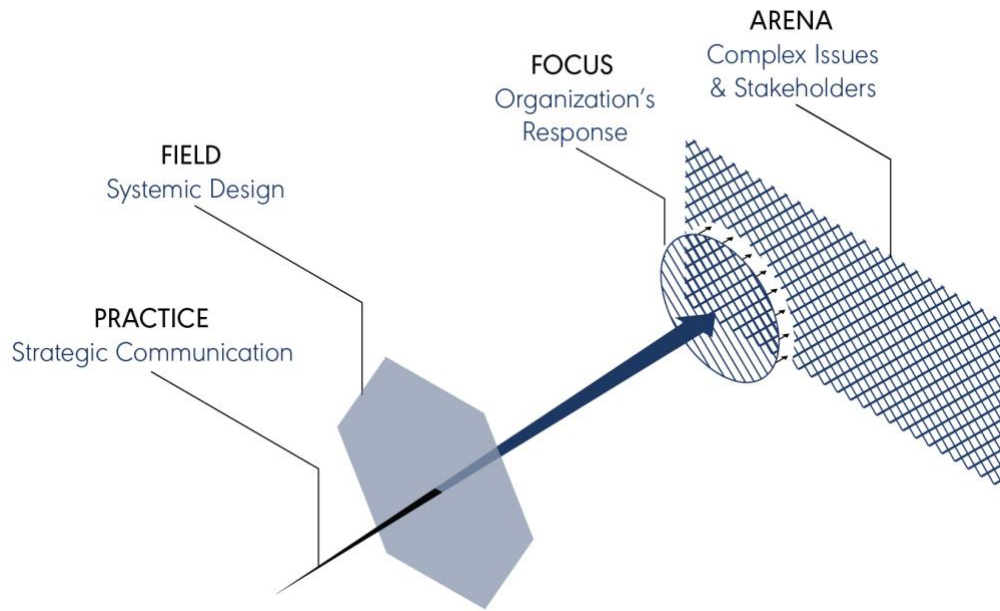


Figure 2. *Elements of the Research Questions*

III. METHODOLOGY

So far, Systemic Design has been contextualized as a field, but it also serves as the methodology. Systemic design provides a relevant set of methods that can be integrated into the practice of strategic communication.

In this section I outline the setup of the case study, the arena and host organization, and then describe the systemic design principles that underpin the approach, and the chosen design methods. I end by adapting the research question to the case study.

ARENA: CANADIAN NEWS MEDIA

The Arena is a core concept in systemic design and strategic communication. Co-creation is a central approach to systemic design. In the chapter *Contexts Co-creation*, Jones (2018a) expands on key concepts for co-creation practices, one of which is the *arena*.

He summarizes an arena as “*type of practice setting, a private convening context identified by its stakeholders and their matters of concern*” (p. 21). The arena establishes the boundary in which stakeholders, who share a concern, can address an *external* ecology of action.

Canadian News Media is an arena

Canadian News Media is a complex ecosystem that has multiple stakeholders, working across different contexts, with various, and often competing, interests.

The arena is where these stakeholders share their concerns about the current and future state news media, in Canada, and contains the dialogue and potential actions surrounding it. For the purposes of this project, this arena is separate from the *journalistic content* that news media produces.

Table 2 is a non-exhaustive list of recent publications and research projects that represent the arena of Canadian News Media. The table is a demonstration of the select issues that are a matter of concern to the arena.

Table 2. *Key publications and research projects on Canadian News Media*

KEY PUBLICATIONS AND RESEARCH PROJECTS	DESCRIPTION
<i>Cultural Policy for the Digital Age</i> Richard Stursberg 2016	Research report and policy recommendations to help Canadian media adapt to digital contexts.

KEY PUBLICATIONS AND RESEARCH PROJECTS	DESCRIPTION
<p><i>Shattered Mirror: News, Democracy, and Trust in the Digital Age</i></p> <p>Edward Greenspon, Public Policy Forum</p> <p>2017</p>	<p>Looks at the impact of digital tech on the civic function of journalism and makes policy recommendations.</p>
<p><i>Disruption: Change and Churning in Canada's Media Landscape</i></p> <p>Hon. Hedy Frey, Chair, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage</p> <p>2017</p>	<p>Government-led analysis of the shifting media landscape and its impact on Canadian culture and democracy.</p>
<p><i>The New Newsroom: Reporting from the Future of the Public Interest Journalism</i></p> <p>Catherine Wallace, Atkinson Fellow</p> <p>2018</p>	<p>Explores the communities' role in providing trusted civic information</p>
<p><i>Rise of Audience Funded Journalism</i></p> <p>The Discourse</p> <p>2018</p>	<p>Identifies early-adopter media outlets that represent new ways of providing public service journalism in communities underserved by media.</p>
<p><i>Canadian Public Interest Journalism and Democracy</i></p> <p>The McConnell Foundation & Community Foundations of Canada</p> <p>2019</p>	<p>Explores the relationship and opportunities between philanthropy, public interest journalism, and democracy.</p>
<p><i>Local News Research Project</i></p> <p>April Lindgren, Ryerson University</p> <p>(ongoing)</p>	<p>Tracks, maps, and analyzes issues related to local news across Canada</p>
<p><i>Media Ecosystem Observatory</i></p> <p>Peter Loewen, Taylor Owen and Derek Ruths</p> <p>(ongoing)</p>	<p>Analyze and understand information ecosystem health, in order to protect it from online threats and harm to democracy.</p>
<p><i>Canadian Media Concentration Research Project</i></p> <p>Dwayne Winseck, Carleton University</p> <p>(ongoing)</p>	<p>Examines the shift in media across the telecom-media-internet (TMI) industries in Canada.</p>

Existing systemic design work in the arena

This arena has been previously researched using systemic design methods in three relevant projects:

1. **Title:** Beyond Facts: Increasing Trust in Journalism Through Community Engagement & Transparency (Javidiani, 2018)
Complex issue: Weakening civic function of journalism
Systemic design methods: Dialogic Design, Structured Modelling, Causal Mapping

Mazi Javidiani's 2018 Major Research Project used systemic design to explore ways to address some of the challenges facing journalism in the Canadian context.

Mazi's influence diagram and system causal diagram are two key artifacts that provide an early understanding of the issue from a systemic design perspective. It specifically offers a systemic view of how trust and engagement are influenced within the news media systems.

2. **Title:** Media and Meaning: Whose Job is it to Make Sense of the World? (Akermanis et al, 2018)
Complex issue: Sensemaking through news media
Systemic design methods: Research Synthesis, Causal Mapping

Additionally, Akermanis et al. examined the relationship between sensemaking and the media in their project "*News Media and Meaning: Whose job is it to make sense of the world?*". The team developed a synthesis map that visualized the lineage of media, the systemic effects it has on sensemaking, and explored future scenarios that could address some of the issues.

3. **Title:** Culture of Exploitation (Christopherson & Chaplin, 2020)
Complex issue: State of free press
Systemic design methods: System Mapping, Causal Mapping, Leverage Point Analysis

Lastly, Kayla Christopherson and Heather Chaplin's work from *Journalism + Design* looks at the state of the free press as a wicked problem. A *Kumu* map was created to represent the issue and display leverage points. The project also offers resources to help journalists work towards meaningful interventions.

Although the project is US-based, it still reflects some of the patterns associated between journalism and its adjacent systems (governance, tech, business, etc.)

While these three projects don't directly influence the case study, they provide some of the upfront systemic design work that's not covered in this project due to scope and the specific

focus on the strategic communication process. The projects provide context to the arena from a systemic design perspective and validate this framing for Canadian News Media.

HOST ORGANIZATION: INDEPENDENT MEDIA ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

IMAC’s structure fits the systemic nature of the research project
 The Independent Media Association of Canada (IMAC) is a loose association of independent news media outlets, that works to create a healthier news media ecosystem. The structure of IMAC, as a collective, matches the system-level focus of the research project.

Table 3. Organization details about the Independent Media Association of Canada

MISSION	<i>Support the growth of a more sustainable and diverse media ecosystem in Canada.</i>
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Mobilize funding to create sustainable business models for public service journalism.</i> 2. <i>Accelerate innovation through collaborative research and development.</i> 3. <i>Ensure women and people of colour are equitably represented among founders and leaders of new digital media.</i>
ASSOCIATED INDEPENDENT NEWS MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Deep • Taproot Edmonton • Media Indigena • The Narwhal • Indian Cowboy • The Discourse • The Sprawl • The Public Record
INCUBATING ORGANIZATION	Journalism for Human Rights Canada
SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) • Inspirit Foundation • Canadian Film Centre • Journalism Entrepreneurship Training Co. • Waterloo Global Science Initiative • Sheo • J-Source • McConnell Foundation • Vancouver Foundation

IMAC has ‘Skin in the Game’ when it comes to the issues facing Canadian News Media
 The *Skin in the Game*, as a Taleb (2018) concept, entails inherent risk on the part of the participant when taking actions towards major decisions or outcomes that have uncertainty.

In addition to its structure, IMAC’s mission and strategic priorities also show that it has a commitment to the outcome and consequences of issues facing Canadian News Media.

This idea of risk-involvement is meaningful to a systemic design case study since execution uncertainty is part of the design context for complex social systems (Design 3.0 and 4.0, as mentioned in the previous section).

IMAC is a participant, not just a bystander, making it a suitable host organization for the case study.

SYSTEMIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND METHODS

The principles of systemic design

In *Systemic Design Principles for Complex Systems*, Peter Jones (2014a) proposes ten complementary principles shared between design and systems.

The systemic design principles are identified based on a meta-analysis of concepts from design theory and systems sciences. The principles have a long-history of use in both fields and are mature enough to be used in a range of applications. These principles provide a foundation for practitioners to evolve practices that are associated with design, such as strategic communication.

Table 4. Principles of systemic design

PRINCIPLES	DESCRIPTION (Jones, 2014a)	ASSOCIATED CONCEPTS AND REFERENCES
Idealization	Continuous identification of an ideal state and adjusting actions towards the desired outcome. <i>“Idealization is the principle of identifying an ideal state or set of conditions that compels action toward a desirable outcome, or signifies the value of a future system or practice” (p. 108).</i>	Idealized design (Ackoff, 1993) Strategic Foresight (Slaughter, 1999) Design Futuring (Fry, 2009)

PRINCIPLES	DESCRIPTION (Jones, 2014a)	ASSOCIATED CONCEPTS AND REFERENCES
Appreciating Complexity	<p>The observation and framing of a problem as complex.</p> <p><i>“The principle of appreciating complexity acknowledges the dynamic complexity of multi-causal wicked problems and the cognitive factors involved in understanding the relationships that indicate problem complexity”</i> (p. 109).</p>	<p>Wicked Problems (Rittel & Weber, 1973)</p> <p>Wickedness (Buchanan, 1992)</p> <p>Requisite complexity (Özbekhan, 1969., Warfield, 2001)</p>
Purpose Finding	<p>Agreement can be made about the purpose of a system.</p> <p><i>“The shared systemic design principle of purpose finding is not that a purpose is identified , but that purposes can be determined by agreement and therefore designed or redesigned”</i> (p. 110).</p>	<p>Purposeful systems (Ackoff & Emery, 1972)</p> <p>Purposive Systems & Purpose-seeking systems (Banathy, 1996)</p> <p>Purposes Hierarchy (Nadler & Hibino, 1998)</p>
Boundary Framing	<p>The invitation to challenge proposed frames and reframe the boundary, or problem, before committing to action.</p> <p><i>“The aim of problem framing is to define the most effective fit between a concept and its target environment. Fit requires an iterative process of selecting boundaries and reflectively considering the associated meanings entailed by the boundary frame”</i> (p. 111).</p>	<p>Placements (Buchanan, 1992)</p> <p>Briefing and Reframing (Paton & Dorst, 2011)</p>
Requisite Variety	<p>The inclusion of multiple perspectives so that the solution variety matches, or exceeds, the problem variety.</p> <p><i>“Ashby’s (1958) law of requisite variety asserts that the variety in a control system must be greater than or equal to the variety in the system being regulated”</i> (p. 113).</p>	<p>Law of Requisite Variety (Ashby, 1958; Espejo, 2000)</p> <p>Dialogic Design (Christiakis & Bausch, 2006)</p>

PRINCIPLES	DESCRIPTION (Jones, 2014a)	ASSOCIATED CONCEPTS AND REFERENCES
Feedback Coordination	<p>Adjustments and iterations based on new knowledge, learnings, or feedback.</p> <p><i>“Feedback processes are conceived as continuous or iterative loops, gathering information from a state, applying control signals to obtain a desired performance, and measuring the difference and coordinating this control to achieve a preferred state” (p. 114).</i></p>	Cybernetics, Coordination of Feedback (Wiener, 1948)
System Ordering	<p>The structure – hierarchy and relationships – and ordering of concepts.</p> <p><i>“Ordering defines the relationships of objects, system components, or abstract concepts to each other in a systematic way” (p. 116).</i></p>	Composition (Nelson & Stolterman, 2012)

How and where the systemic design principles are used in the research project

For this research project, the principles offer a guideline, instead of hard rules, to examine how systemic design influences the practice of strategic communication. Essentially, they provide a framework to observe and describe what a systems-oriented approach to communications may look like.

The seven principles are ones which are most relevant and aligned to the parts of the strategic communication process that were completed within the scope of the research project (as shown in Figure 3 mapped to the patterns of creation and optimization).

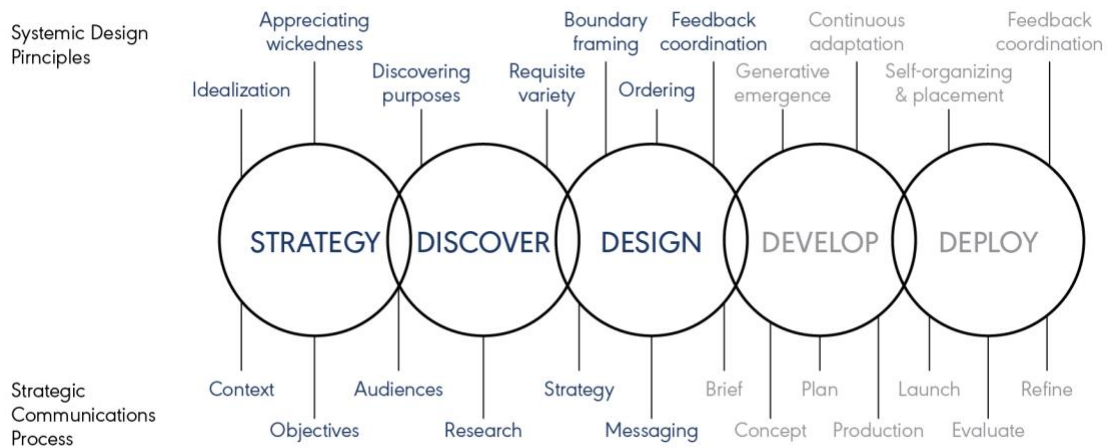


Figure 3. Mapping of chosen systemic design principles and stages of strategic communications (adapted from Jones, 2014a)

Systemic design methods

In addition to defining the principles of systemic design, Jones also outlines associated design methods to the principles in *Design Research Methods in Systemic Design* (2014b).

Table 5. Systemic design methods aligned to principles (Jones, 2014b)

SYSTEMIC DESIGN PRINCIPLE	ASSOCIATED DESIGN METHODS
Idealization	Framing, Iteration, Backcasting
Appreciating Complexity	Sensemaking, System sketching
Purpose finding	Inquiry (5 Whys), Prototyping
Boundary framing	Critical probes, Strange-making
Requisite variety	Co-creation, Function analysis
Feedback coordination	Modeling, Interactive Testing
System ordering	Structuring, Pattern making
Generative emergence	Future creation
Continuous adaptation	Multiple reasoning modes
Self-organizing	Co-creation, Facilitated design modes

This framework provides a guide for mapping design methods that are appropriate to the scope of the case study and relevant to the aims of the research project (evolving the practice of strategic communication).

Environmental analysis (as Framing via Literature Review)

- **What the method is:**
This method involves a structured way of analyzing the environment to create a meaningful frame that helps understand of the arena.
- **How the method was used:**
This method was most appropriate for understanding the wider context of Canadian News Media and its current dynamics.

A literature review was structured around 1) recent landmark reports that referred to the challenges facing the wider ecosystem. This literature provided a baseline understanding of the different stakeholders, contexts, and sub-systems within the ecosystem (as shown in the case study setup section). And 2) the intra-industry articles, columns, and opinion pieces that were a reaction to the Federal Government's proposed media fund. This scan provided an overview of the variety – represented as viewpoints, opinions, concerns, and priorities - contained within the media ecosystem.

Semi-structured interview (as Inquiry)

- **What the method is:**
This is a qualitative method that uses a set of pre-determined, open-ended questions, to discuss a subject with interviewees and gain an understanding of the interviewee's perspective.
- **How the method was used:**
This method was used for the research stage of the process. It was used to conduct 25 stakeholder interviews, to appreciate the complexity of interconnected issues facing Canadian News Media and discover strategic opportunities for the communication plan.

The method provided the flexibility needed for interviewees to move around the conversation of a complex issues space such as Canadian News Media.

System sketching & Modeling

- **What the methods are:**
These methods use a mix of soft-system and system dynamics to visualize a representation of a described system or phenomenon. They are used to showcase how the parts of a system are interrelated.
- **How the methods were used:**

These methods were used to make sense of the findings from the interviews. The system sketches provided a visual, symbolic, way to represent the different views that stakeholders held about the issue space and the way forward. And some modelling was applied to describe how different stakeholders viewed proposed interventions and the desired effects. While this is ideally done *with* research participants, I did these independently due to project limitations.

Structuring & Interactive Testing

- What the methods are:**
 These methods are used to develop and propose an ordering of a concept in a way that solicits feedback. The structuring can involve a proposed hierarchy or defined relationships. The structuring can be shared as *stimulus* to invite feedback from research participants in an interactive manner.
- How the methods were used:**
 These methods were combined during the Message Testing phase to structure a proposed messaging system and shared as a text-based stimulus to get feedback from IMAC associates.

Table 6 illustrates where the systemic design methods were used along the stages of the strategic communication process.

Table 6. *Systemic design methods used in the MRP*

STAGES OF STRATEGIC COMM PROCESS	SYSTEMIC DESIGN METHODS USED
Context	Environmental Analysis (Literature Review)
Objectives	Environmental Analysis (Literature Review)
Audiences	Environmental Analysis (Literature Review)
Research	Semi-Structured Interview System Sketching & Modelling
Strategy	Modelling
Messaging	Structuring & Interactive Testing

ADAPTED RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the systemic design methodology – the arena, host organization, principles, and methods - the initial research question can be adapted to the case study, as follows:

How might a systemic design approach to strategic communication help IMAC reflect and respond to the complexity of the issues facing Canadian News Media and its stakeholders?

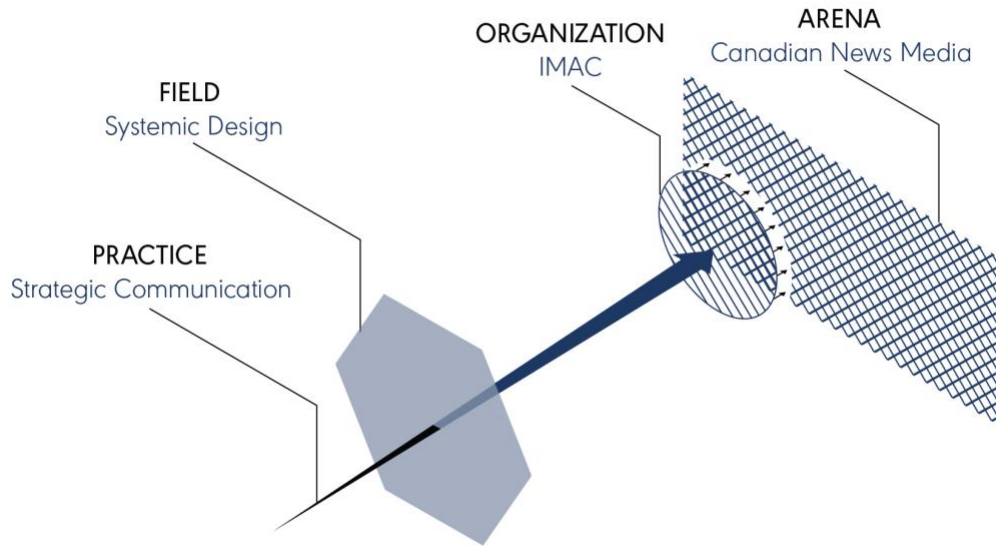


Figure 4. Elements of the Research Question adapted to the case study

An early suggestion of the *complex issues* facing Canadian News Media can be extracted from literature review. These issues can be characterized as interconnected problems such as: declining ad revenue for media outlets, closure of (local) newsrooms, changing media habits, spread of misinformation, erosion of democratic and civic functions, regulatory limitations, and others (further examined within the case study).

IV. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

This section analyses the case study findings through the lens of systemic design. It describes how a systems-oriented approach influenced each step of the strategic communication process and how it differs from the traditional approach.

The section is structured according to the stages of the strategic communication process completed in the case study, as follows:

1. Context
2. Objectives
3. Audience
4. Research
5. Strategy
6. Messaging

Each stage contains the respective section from the case study to reinforce the analysis. In some stages a truncated excerpt is presented, with the remaining info found in Appendix A and B.

1. CONTEXT

A systems-oriented approach emphasized the full stakeholder *variety* – of viewpoints, opinions, interests, and concerns – of Canadian News Media as the central theme of the context. With an orientation towards the ecosystem, the context that was established for IMAC cast a wider net than a typical strategic communication process. Rather than scanning the immediate environment of IMAC – associated organizations, or exclusively looking at its competitor set – the systemic design approach examined the environment more widely.

“Context” section from the case study:

CONTEXT:

There's an overwhelming variety of viewpoints, opinions, concerns, and priorities about how to address issues in Canadian News Media, which IMAC must consider

There are many interconnected problems facing Canadian news media, such as declining ad revenue, closure of local publications, and the spread of misinformation, amongst many others.

Since each problem has its own set of stakeholders - and each stakeholder with their own viewpoints, opinions, concerns, and priorities - the variety found in Canadian News Media, as a whole, is tremendous.

Steps taken to address the web of problems are often met with the overwhelming response from the variety of the system.

Over the last few years, it was with the Federal Government, with their announcement of \$600M in support for the industry, that bore the force of the system's variety; cheers of support, fervent opposition, and all shades of grey in between.

It's this environment of high variety that IMAC must be carefully in tune with, when advancing its own strategic priorities.

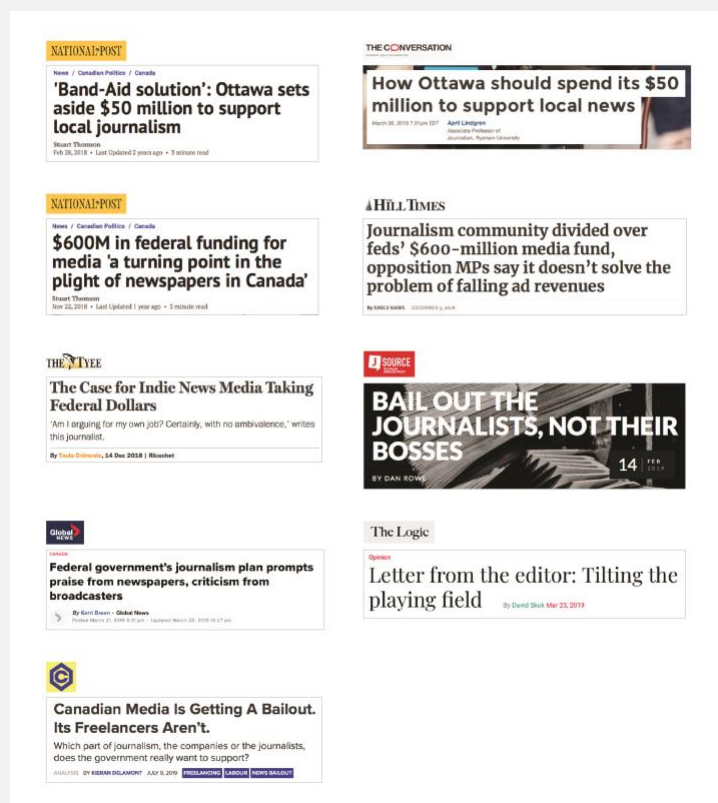


Figure 5. Select news articles of the variety of viewpoints in Canadian News Media arena

From the case study example, the Government's announcement of a media aid package was met with a variety of concerns from the ecosystem: local news advocates, freelancers, independent publications, academics, associations, broadcasters. This context shows that there are concerns, shared and distinct, within the arena.

So, the context-setting was strengthened by using an event, the Government's announcement, and scanning outwards, throughout the arena. As a result, the variety of the media ecosystem was identified as the core feature of the context and something IMAC must seriously consider when working towards its mission.

2. OBJECTIVES

The communications objective considers the dynamics found in the media ecosystem, not just IMAC's immediate environment

At this stage, again, the systems-oriented approach helped set objectives that were in tune with a wider understanding of the media ecosystem.

This orientation helped craft the specific frame for the objectives as *"increasing stakeholders' willingness to collaborate"*. This objective recognizes that there is potential for collaboration, but it may not be fully realized amongst stakeholders in the wider ecosystem. So, the role of communications is to generate a desire to collaborate.

OBJECTIVES:

Encourage media innovation across the industry, in a way that handles its variety

The strategic objective for this case focuses on IMAC's goal of addressing the lack of innovation in news media.

*This objective is connected to the recommendations made in *The Rise of Audience Funded Journalism (2018)*, a report issued by The Discourse along with other independent media organizations and supporters.*

The recommendation urges news media stakeholders to support collaborative research and development projects that lead to media innovation, such as new business models.

To increase the number of collaborative research projects, there'd need to be more potential collaborators willing to sign on. So the communication objective - articulated as a change in attitude, perception, or behaviour - is to create this pool of potential collaborators.

- **Mission:**
Support the growth of a more sustainable and diverse media ecosystem in Canada.
 - **Strategic Objective:**
Increase the number of collaborative research and development projects towards media innovation.
 - **Communication Objective:**
Increase stakeholder's willingness to collaborate on media projects.

A more traditional approach to strategic communication may have seen a narrower objective that focused on organizations that were already collaborating, or willing to collaborate (i.e. create a list of collaborators, pair them up, invite them to an event, share/showcase collaborative tools or examples, etc.).

3. AUDIENCES

The audiences that were identified tried to represent the breadth of stakeholders involved in Canadian News Media, not just a narrow ideal audience

Typically, a strategic communication approach would identify certain audiences that the organization sees value in influencing, through communications, towards a specific goal. But in a systems-oriented approach, the audience identification tried to reflect the variety of stakeholders found in the ecosystem.

AUDIENCES:

Stakeholders who influence or decide how resources are put towards addressing the issues facing Canadian News Media

The identified audiences are news media influencers and key decision-makers -- those who either decide on, or influence, whether or not resources can be put towards journalism projects.

These audiences fit the strategic and communication objectives, since they can influence the decision to participate in collaborative media innovation projects.

These audiences are organized into stakeholder groups, to better understand their distinct relationship with the media ecosystem and the issues space.

Table 7. Stakeholder groups

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	DESCRIPTION
Traditional Media	Established news media organizations, public and private, typically active for more than a decade.
Startup, Independent, or Community Media	Publications that serve a particular community (may be based on subject, interest, language, or region), and have typically been around less than a decade.
Tech Platforms	Technology firms whose platforms distribute news content.
Public Servants and Policy Influencers	Organizations or individuals that work on, or directly influence, policies that affect Canadian News Media.
Industry Associations	Associations that represent news organizations, journalists, and media stakeholders.
Academics and Researchers	Institutions or individuals who study and publish research related to Canadian news media.
Private Funders	Foundations and firms who fund news media organizations or projects.

This identification was aided by the sweeping effect of the environmental analysis, which included a wide variety of perspectives within the arena.

The identification of “*influencers*” and “*decision-makers*” was still strategic in its intent, but this target was applied across the ecosystem, and not just a preferred audience group or demographic.

4. RESEARCH

Systems orientation inspired a research approach that placed the relationships – between stakeholders, and between stakeholders and the issue space – at the centre of inquiry. At this stage of the process, the systems-orientation approach shifted the research to be more focused on the *relationship* that stakeholders had to the issue space, and with each other.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:

Understanding how to encourage collaboration in Canadian News Media

To better understand how IMAC can encourage collaboration, the stakeholders’ relationship to the issue space needs to be examined first.

The use of a semi-structured interview method provided the flexibility needed for discussing the various issues facing Canadian News Media.

The research aims to get a more nuanced understanding of the stakeholders’ views. This deeper understanding could unlock a way to deliver the message - to invite collaboration - that’d make it more well received since it’d be in tune with the stakeholder variety

General flow of semi-structured interview questions:

- *What do you see as the challenges facing Canadian news media today?*
- *What broader impacts do these challenges have on society?*
- *From your perspective, what actions need to be taken to address these challenges?*
- *What opportunities are there for collaboration in the news media ecosystem?*
- *What does a healthier news media ecosystem look like to you?*
- *What do you believe is each stakeholder’s role in creating this healthier media ecosystem?*

The shift towards focusing on the relationship was demonstrated in how the discussion guide was developed for the semi-structured interview. The guide focused on understanding stakeholders’ perception of the challenges facing Canadian News Media (the issue space), and *their* views on the way forward, as opposed to discussing the challenges through their own internal strategies, tactics, or operations.

The influence of a systems orientation enabled the discussion guide to keep the ecosystem top of mind, throughout the interview. Using this discussion guide across all stakeholder groups (see Tables 8 to 14) allowed the research to focus on gaining a multi-perspective understanding of the issues facing Canadian News Media (which will be discussed in *Research Finding* section).

RESEARCH METHOD:

25x semi-structured interviews across all stakeholder groups

The research findings are based off the twenty-five, one-on-one interviews done between Nov 2019 and January 2020.

Table 8. Traditional Media

ORGANIZATION	NAME	POSITION
The Canadian Press	Gerry Arnold	Executive Editor
APTN	Jean La Rose	Chief Executive Officer
Toronto Star	Kathy English	Public Editor
[Canadian communications and media organization]	--	[Senior staff]
[Canadian communications and media organization]	--	[Senior staff]
[Canadian news broadcaster]	--	[Senior staff]
Canadian Broadcast Corporation / Radio-Canada	Shaun Polter	Executive Director, Strategy, Public Affairs and Government Relations

Table 9. *Startup, Independent, or Community Media*

ORGANIZATION	NAME	POSITION
Winnipeg Free Press	Bob Cox	Publisher
The Logic	David Skok	Chief Executive Officer & Editor-in-Chief
Canadaland	Jesse Brown	Publisher

Table 10. *Tech Platforms*

ORGANIZATION	NAME	POSITION
Google	Mladen Raickovic	Head of Canada, Global Partnerships
Facebook	Kevin Chan	Head of Public Policy, Canada

Table 11. *Public Servants and Policy Influencers*

ORGANIZATION	NAME	POSITION
Department of Canadian Heritage	--	[Senior official]
Department of Canadian Heritage	Pierre Dulude	Manager, Policy

Table 12. Industry Associations

ORGANIZATION	NAME	POSITION
News Media Canada	John Hinds	President and Chief Executive Officer
Journalists for Human Rights, Canada	Rachel Pulfer	Executive Director
Canadian Film Centre	Anna Serrano	Chief Digital Officer

Table 13. Academics and Researchers

ORGANIZATION	NAME	POSITION
Carleton University School of Journalism	Chris Waddell	Professor Emeritus
Ryerson University School of Journalism	April Lindgren	Professor and Velma Rogers Research Chair, Principal Investigator for Local Journalism Project
Institute for Investigative Journalism, Concordia University	Patti Sonntag	Director

Table 14. Private Funders

ORGANIZATION	NAME	POSITION
Inspirit Foundation	Chris Lee	Director of Programming
The McConnell Foundation	Ana Sofia Hibon	Associate, President's Office

ORGANIZATION	NAME	POSITION
MaRS Discovery District	Allyson Hewitt	Vice-President, Impact
Marigold Capital	Jonathan Hera	Founder, Managing Partner
Atkinson Foundation	Pat Thompson	Director, Social Impact

Research within traditional strategic communications often focus on the behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions that a particular *user* might have with a product or service. This approach looks *inwards*, by placing the audience at the centre of investigation, whereas a systems-oriented approach looks *outwards* by placing the *relationships* – the lines between nodes – at the centre.

The visual methods of systemic design helped framed the findings in ways that reinforced the relationship-centred research focus, within the broader ecosystem

Systemic design’s emphasis on visual thinking and mapping helped frame the interview findings in a way that was consistent with the overall research approach: on the relationships

Research Finding 1 revealed a contested transition stage, by grouping the learnings based on the *structure* of a Three Horizons Model (Sharpe, 2013). This framed how the stakeholders view: the current state, the ideal state, and the pathways to transition.

The visual layout shows that an idealized state of Canadian News Media can be agreed upon. This is a key condition in systemic design that enables the design and reconfiguration of a complex social system

RESEARCH FINDING 1:

The pathways to transition are contested by stakeholders, not the current state or desired future

The stakeholders generally agree on the current and desired state of the industry. But where variety is most pronounced is in how they transition to the future. That’s where the pathways are contested, and where IMAC’s message needs to be focused.

Table 15. Research Finding 1

THE CURRENT STATE OF CANADIAN NEWS MEDIA	THE PATHWAYS TO TRANSITION	THE DESIRED STATE OF CANADIAN NEWS MEDIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broken business model • Loss of advertising revenue • Smaller newsrooms, increasing pressured • Closures and staff layoffs • Changing news media habits • Ongoing digital / tech change • Proliferation of information, true and false • Communities underserved with professional journalism • Lack of diversity in professional news 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gov't funds industry vs. Gov't funds ecosystem vs. Gov't regulates market • Regulate tech platforms vs. Make use of tech platforms • Preserve business model vs. Create new models vs. Complementary models • CBC as competitor vs. CBC as ally vs. CBC as platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable business model • More sources for professional news • Verifiable, fact-checked, information • Offering balanced perspective • Critical information needs are met • Sharing more diverse perspectives • News is delivered in format people want

The systems orientation helped refrain from collapsing stakeholders' different views on how best to transition. Whereas a strategic communication approach might aim to reduce variety, here the goal is to maintain variety, so it can be a future opportunity for design.

Research Finding 2 zooms into the transitioned pathways and uses system maps to visually represent the different transition pathways that stakeholders see as viable. This helps frame the stakeholder's relationship to the issue space (their boundary, perceived causes and effects, and places to intervene).

The visuals show how the same issue, such as the Government's support, can be modelled in different ways, depending on where the stakeholders draw their boundary, or how they see multi-causality.

RESEARCH FINDING 2:

Stakeholder see different pathways for transition based on their vantage point

Stakeholders tend to draw a different boundary around the issue, depending on their own experience, information, and understanding.

As a result, stakeholders see different pathways for transition based on the causes and effects they can witness.

(The following figures visualize some of these contested pathways. Note that the maps shown are simplifications. They only illustrate that different viewpoints exist, but are not exact nor complete representations of the issue. The different viewpoints are illustrated as “scenarios”, variations from a “baseline” understanding.)

On Government support: not only is Government intervention contested, but so is where and how it intervenes

- **Baseline:** The Government relies on News Media to keep citizens informed and therefore engaged in a healthy democracy. Through their coverage, the News Media also keeps a check on Government in the public’s interest.

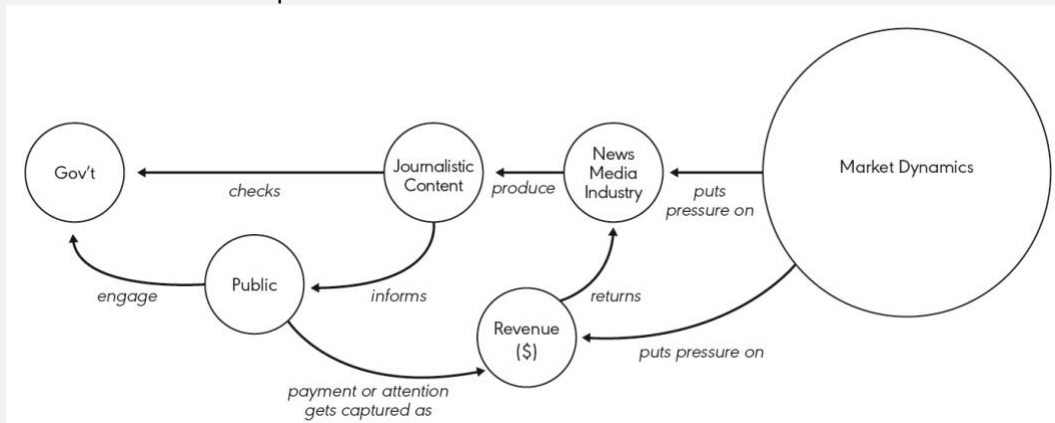


Figure 6. Relationship between Canadian News Media and Government

- **Scenario 1:** The Government can fund News Media to support the production of journalism that helps citizens stay informed.

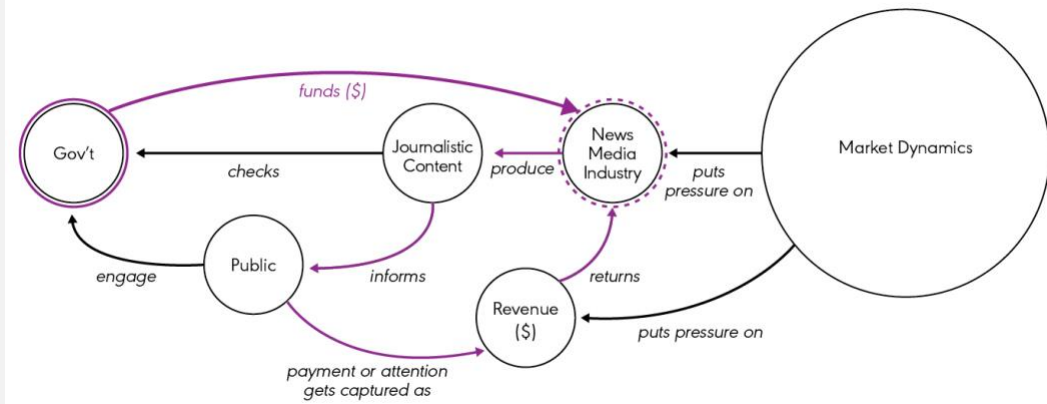


Figure 7. Government funds news media production

- **Scenario 2:** The Government can regulate the broader market dynamics to create more favourable conditions for News Media.

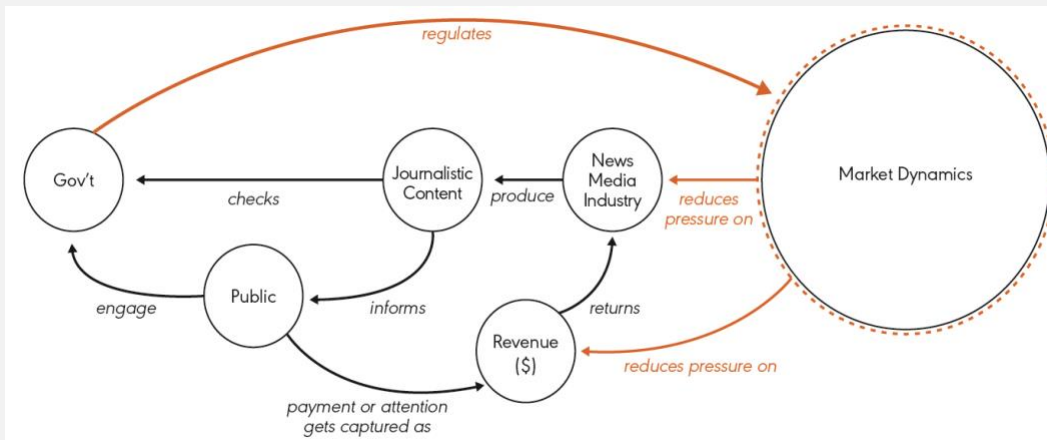


Figure 8. Government regulates the market

- **Scenario 3:** The Government can support the broader Media Ecosystem – such as training, or incentivizing partnerships – to improve the production of journalistic content.

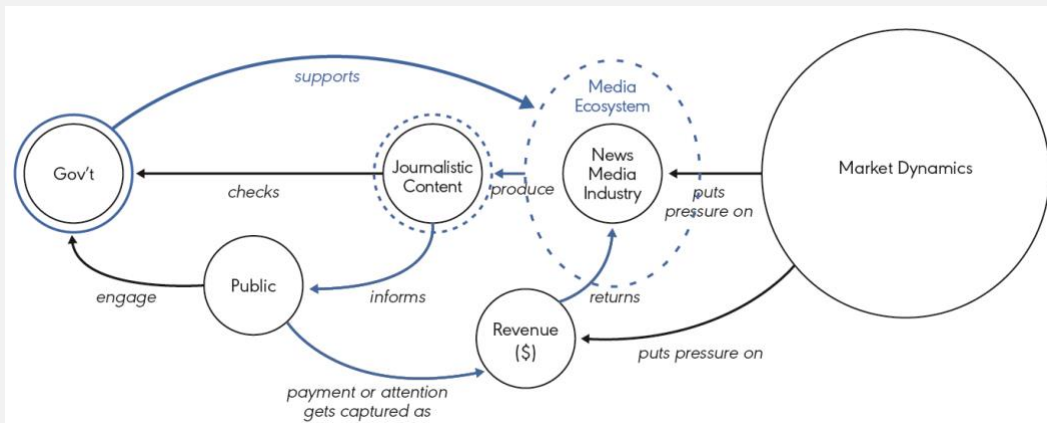


Figure 9. Government supports the media ecosystem

Please see all other system maps and modelling scenarios in Appendix A.

In Scenario 1, the Government's support of News Media can be seen as a legitimate means of ensuring the civic function of journalism. Another approach in Scenario 2, could see Government take measures to regulate the broader market environment – could be targeted towards tech platforms as an example - in a way that helps the News business models and journalism production. Or in Scenario 3, the intervention is shifted towards the media ecosystem to prevent Government favouring any particular type of business or actor over another.

Each of these scenarios emphasize a different intervention depending on the boundary that the stakeholders includes as part of their desired transition pathway.

Again, these visualizations, taken all together, demonstrate the systemic design notion of appreciating and reflecting complexity, not reducing it.

Research Finding 3 doesn't directly rely on a visual method, but does present the frequently cited examples of collaboration in news media as indicators of a preferred future.

RESEARCH FINDING 3:

Notable collaborations are generally seen as a step in the right direction by most stakeholders and come from taking a wider, more systemic, view

The notable collaborations in the media industry (examples shown in figure x), are generally seen as a positive step by the stakeholders.

These collaborations seem to emerge from stakeholders who tend to take a more systemic view of the media ecosystem and their role within it.

By taking this view, they're more willing to seek out partnerships that are mutually beneficial. It shows they've found ways to share resources and complement each other's' strategic goals.

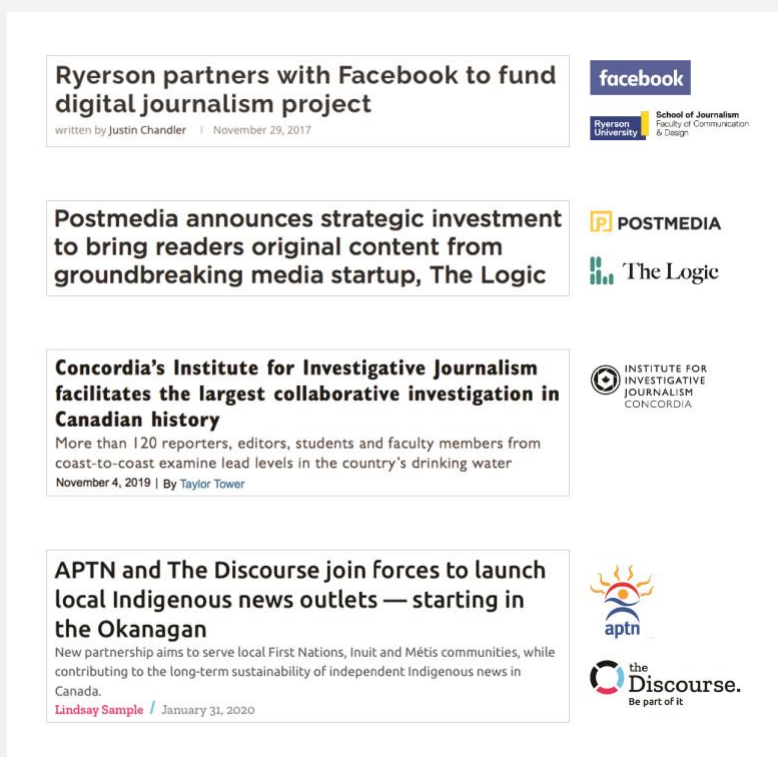


Figure 10. *Examples of collaboration in Canadian News Media*

Similar to a strategic communication approach that generates an *insight* as a way to frame an opportunity for design intervention, these collaborations *signal* a positive step towards the ideal state of Canadian news Media.

5. STRATEGY

The strategy reflects, and uses, the variety found in transitions, rather than reducing it to narrow pathway

Strategy setting in strategic communications articulates a single unifying way to move the organization to a more favourable position, given the context. In a systems-oriented approach, the proposed strategy reflects the variety of viewpoints of how a whole system could transition.

STRATEGY:

Complicate the competing narratives about transition

To create the conditions for media collaborative, perhaps IMAC can tell a more complicated narrative about industry transition.

A complicated narrative could have messaging that holds multiple, alternative views in place, instead of eliminating them (Ripley, 2019).

This type of messaging could make it easier for stakeholders to see the advantages of collaboration and increase their willingness to take part in it (which is the communications objective).

The strategy, though still a single proposition, the strategy provides enough space for multiple transition pathways to be recognized as legitimate. This is referred to as a *complicated narrative*, as a reference to American journalist and author Amanda Ripley. In her article for *Complicating the Narratives* (2019), she takes a complexity view of the role of journalists and their coverage of controversial issues. She encourages the coverage of complex topics in ways that break simplistic narratives.

Porting this idea over to the case study, For Canadian News Media, this approach meant having to counter the oversimplified, zero-sum, narratives about how to create a healthier media industry.

For example, strictly viewing the Government's support as a necessity, is tamed by also recognizing that Government support should come with a provision for the newsroom innovation and legitimizing the perceptual concerns of *bailing out* the legacy news orgs. (And this goes both ways. The inverse is also recognized: those who view Government's support as a bail out is counter-balanced with recognizing that the Government has a legitimate involvement with the civic function of journalism, Government funding is intended is only for a transition period, the use of tax mechanism limits direct involvement, etc.)

Systemic design approaches enable agreement to be discovered through different boundary frames, and so the purpose of interventions can be negotiated and redesigned. The widening of the strategy was a way to deliver this intended effect. In a way, the systemic design's strategic value is that it keeps possibilities open.

6. MESSAGING

A messaging architecture reflects the multi-level system and issues

A communications message in a systems-oriented project requires a structure that works at both levels: the system level and within it, at the issue level. In systemic design terms this was a way of *ordering* a concept.

MESSAGING ARCHITECTURE:

Getting stakeholders to realize the advantages of collaboration

The overview of a structure for the messages that IMAC could use in its communications is shown below.

Systemic-level

- **Complex issues facing Canadian News Media:** *Let's work together to transition towards a healthier, more vibrant, and even competitive, industry.*

Issue-level

- **Gov't Support:** *Support the conditions for innovation by incentivizing news partnerships, collaborative research, and industry training*
- **Tech Platforms:** *Use platforms to amplify the positive impact of journalism, but stay critical of the platforms' practices and negative consequences*
- **Sustainable Business Model:** *Protect the practice of journalism, not just a single business model*
- **Role of CBC:** *Find opportunities to collaborate with CBC*

In the case study, the proposed message for collaboration, works at the system level, but is also expressed through the issues. For example, IMAC's overall objective to encourage collaboration is translated at the 'Government support' (issue level) as an investment into the conditions for innovation.

This structure is similar to strategic communication engagements when a *Masterbrand* strategy is required for a high-level brand or campaign. A Masterbrand architecture helps organizations deliver key messaging through its brand, according to different strategic pillars (could be operations, products, services, themes, etc.).

Messaging that invites audiences to create shared understanding

The message itself, developed via a systems-oriented approach, does not fit the traditional description of a single, narrow, unambiguous, proposition. Rather, the message aims to reflect complexity and invite the audience's point-of-view towards a shared understanding.

MESSAGE TESTING:

Using stimulus to discuss the potential impact of the messaging

If the strategy is to complicate the narrative, then the messaging system can deliver this by highlighting an issue of concern and offering a way forward, but recognizing the variety of viewpoints on the issue.

This messaging structure below could be a way for IMAC to get their message out and at the same time invite a richer and nuanced discussion.

- **For this issue:**
This is the systemic issue that emerged from conversations in research.
- **IMAC's message is:**
This is what IMAC would communicate in order to inspire action towards a preferred outcome/direction.
- **While recognizing this context:**
Lists of some surrounding, relevant, perspectives on the issue.

For example, though the proposed messaging for IMAC would encourage Government support for collaboration in the *media ecosystem*, the structure of the message is designed to recognize other points of views (Government require provision for innovation, perception as bail out for legacy news orgs, erosion of independence between news media and Government) that may lead to a different outcome than the proposed message. This is a way to signal an appreciation of diverse views and open the door for audiences to enrichen the discussion. It aims to add nuance, depth, and a higher-resolution dialogue to the contested views.

In the case study, this couldn't be developed as a concept, due to limitations of the project. Ideally, the full structure would be presented as an artifact, perhaps an installation or an immersive experience. For this case study, a messaging structure was proposed that would stimulate discussion and provide feedback on the viability of the message.

Gaining feedback on messaging from IMAC associates

The messaging was tested with IMAC associates to gain feedback on the extent to which the structure would invite an appreciation of complexity and a systemic view.

MESSAGE TESTING

Gaining feedback about the messaging from IMAC associates

To understand whether this narrative architecture would have the intended effect of inviting a more systems perspective, and a willingness to collaborate, I test the messages with IMAC members.

They can offer value feedback on the impact of the messaging, as well as how they think the messaging would fit IMAC's position.

I use the messaging structure from figure x as a stimulus in a semi-structured, one-on-one discussion with five IMAC members.

Table 16. *IMAC associates engaged for message testing*

ORGANIZATION	NAME	POSITION
The Narwhal	Emma Gilchrist	Editor-in-Chief and Executive Director
Taproot Edmonton	Mack Male	Co-Founder
Canadian Association of Journalists	Brent Jolly	National Director
The Public Record	Joey Coleman	Publisher
The Pointer	San Grewal	Founder

Table 17. Feedback from message testing on the issue of Government support

MESSAGE	FEEDBACK
<p>For this issue: <i>Federal Gov't support of news industry (through new policy and tax mechanism)</i></p> <p>IMAC's message is: <i>Encourage Gov't to support the conditions for innovation by incentivizing: news partnerships, collaborative research, and industry training</i></p> <p>While recognizing this context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gov't consideration - not a knee jerk reaction, Gov't is trying to consider its action carefully</i> • <i>Unusual market - news business is unique market in that it contributes to a critical social fabric</i> • <i>Invitation by market - Gov't has been invited to intervene by the market</i> • <i>Mechanism - tax mechanism and industry-panel are intentionally used so the Gov't stays out of the newsroom, they do not want to be in there</i> • <i>Timeline - it's a 5-year program for transition support, not the long-hall</i> • <i>Existing Gov't support for journalism - periodical fund, local journalism fund, etc.</i> • <i>Provision for innovation missing - lack of clarity around what / how innovation efforts will be managed</i> • <i>Perception of bailout - can be seen as rewarding mismanagement of mainstream publications</i> • <i>Bias towards saving jobs - presupposed the solution, instead of asking how to protect journalism</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>May not be convincing enough to incite alternative view from those who have existing and entrenched views about nature of Government's support</i> • <i>Messaging would need real examples that show the benefits of Government's support of the conditions for innovation</i> • <i>Would appeal more to smaller or digital players than other stakeholder groups</i>

Please see message testing feedback for all other issues in Appendix B.

Table 18. Feedback from message testing on overall messaging architecture

MESSAGE	FEEDBACK
<p>For this issue: <i>The pathways to transition to a healthier media ecosystem is contested</i></p> <p>IMAC's message is: <i>Let's work together to transition towards a healthier, more vibrant, and even competitive, industry.</i></p> <p>While recognizing this context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gov't Support: <i>Support the conditions for innovation by incentivizing news partnerships, collaborative research, and industry training</i> • Tech Platforms: <i>Use platforms to amplify the positive impact of journalism, but stay critical of the platforms' practices and negative consequences</i> • Sustainable Business Model: <i>Protect the practice of journalism, not just a single business model</i> • Role of CBC: <i>Find opportunities to collaborate with CBC</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Structure has potential to for audiences to appreciate the complexity of media ecosystem and interdependence of the issues</i> • <i>Could help create safer space for much needed conversations in the arena</i> • <i>Is too idealistic because in practice, stakeholders do not operate with this systemic view in mind</i>

In the case study, IMAC associates based their feedback on how different stakeholder groups might interpret the message. This showed that the associates considered how meaning is made across the ecosystem, not just from their own perspective. This was an early indication that there's potential for this messaging structure to act as a mediator for sensemaking in Canadian News Media, since the associates were taking in a systems-level view.

ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The systems-oriented communication plan could help inspire action in the contested media transition

Case study research question: *How might systems-oriented communications help IMAC reflect and respond to the real-world complexity of the issues facing Canadian News Media and its stakeholders?*

IMAC can reflect and respond to real-world complexity by using a systems-oriented approach to communications to attenuate to the variety of views, opinions, concerns, and interests of media stakeholders.

This approach would see IMAC:

- Invite stakeholders towards a more nuanced and rich discussion about media transition.
- Reflect the complexity – multiple boundaries, causes and effects – of Canadian News Media in its communications.
- Take a position that encourages a more systemic and multi-perspective view.

The proposed messaging for IMAC needs to be revised and reworked, to truly be used to drive collaboration in media ecosystem

Would the proposed [systems-oriented] messaging increase stakeholder's willingness to collaborate on media projects?

Likely not in its current format.

The messaging requires revisions based on feedback and it needs to be further developed as a concept, rather than just a text-based prompt.

OVERALL FINDING

To summarize the findings from the case study, a systems-oriented approach communication plan could help IMAC create the space for collective sensemaking around the complex issues facing Canadian News Media, while achieving its objectives. This space could invite multiple perspectives and consider more nuanced discussion (potentially through mediated artifacts) to find well-reasoned agreements on the pathway forward.

V. PROJECT LEARNINGS

This section aims to answer the project’s research question by summarizing how strategic communication is influenced by a systemic design approach. This adapted practice is labelled *systems communications* and an early description is offered. Further clarity is provided by offering distinctions between systems communications and the traditional strategic communication.

THE ADAPTED PRACTISE: SYSTEMS COMMUNICATIONS

The principles of systemic design, when applied to strategic communication, widen the scope and breadth as *systems communications*

Research question: *How might Systemic Design shift the practice of strategic communication so organizations can reflect and respond to the real-world complexity of their issues and stakeholders?*

A proposed advanced practice – *systems communications* – is offered as a title to describe the outcome of this shift; a more systems-oriented approach to communications.

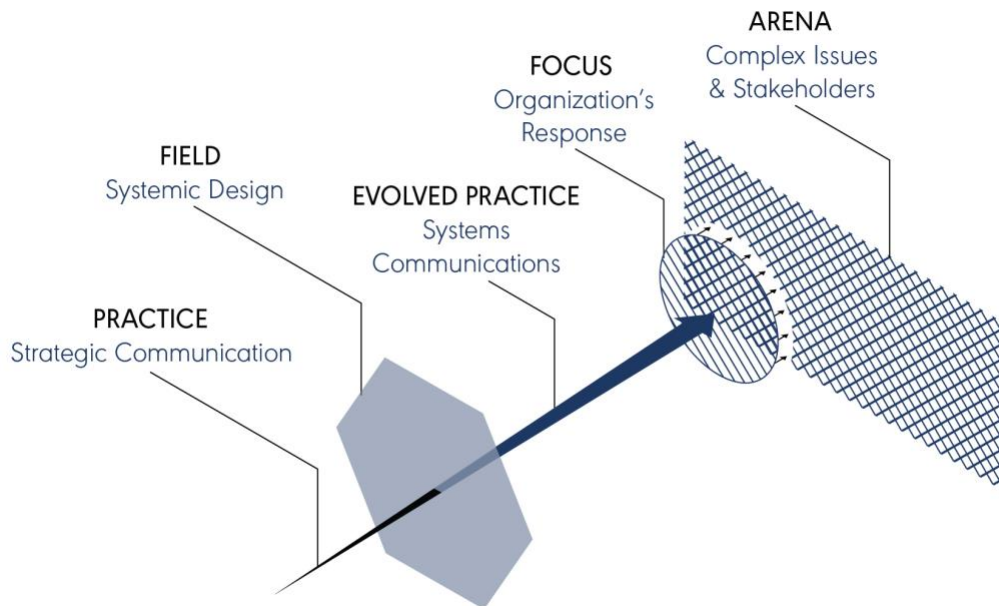


Figure 11. Elements of Research Question with evolved practice shown

Table 19 answers the research question by showing how and where the principles of systemic design influence the development of systems communications.

Table 19. *Influence of systemic design principles on systems communications*

PRINCIPLE	HOW STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION ADAPTS TO THE PRINCIPLE (AS SYSTEMS COMMUNICATIONS)	EXAMPLES FROM CASE STUDY (WITH REFERENCES TO CASE STUDY SECTION)
Idealization	Allows for the discovery of alternative futures throughout the process and makes continuous adjustments towards the ideal goal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Findings – stakeholders identified the idealized state of Canadian News Media, indicating that agreement can be found and worked towards • Strategy & Messaging – allows for the ongoing discovery of preferred transition pathways towards the idealized state
Appreciating Complexity	Acknowledges that no single person/org has a full understanding of the issue space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Findings – uncovered multicausality and complexity at multiple systems levels (regulation, technology, business, and cultural [as in CBC]) • Strategy & Messaging - structure indicates inherent complexity of the system, multi-causality, and multi-perspective framing
Purpose Finding	Encourages the framing of meaningful problems for multiple stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Findings – showed stakeholder disagreement on transition pathways, which indicates there’s opportunities for multiple framing options • Strategy – framed collaboration as a way to find agreement by trying to keep various pathways open • Messaging – structured around a hierarchy of purpose between the issue-level and system-level

PRINCIPLE	HOW STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION ADAPTS TO THE PRINCIPLE (AS SYSTEMS COMMUNICATIONS)	EXAMPLES FROM CASE STUDY (WITH REFERENCES TO CASE STUDY SECTION)
Boundary Framing	Tries out different problem framings, which may be meaningful to stakeholders, before committing to action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Findings - showed that different stakeholders drew different boundaries around the issue, shifting the weight of influencing contexts compared to dominant frame: i.e. reframing Gov't support towards media ecosystem vs. specific businesses models • Messaging - structure recognizes different framings of the issue by listing the context and influencing boundaries
Requisite Variety	Aims to represent the variety of the system that's being addressed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Method: in interviews, stakeholders suggested or referred to other stakeholders' perspectives to include which showed the research was moving towards representing more of the system variety • Context & Objectives – influenced by the variety of competing interests found in Canadian News Media and attempted to attenuate to the variety
Feedback Coordination	Invites opinions by modelling and visualizing knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message Testing – using text-based stimulus invited feedback in a style that helped mediate understanding of transition pathways, and has potential to be used in systems as a medium for reasoning through complexity • Research Findings – developed system maps and modelled scenarios, but would ideally have done this as co-creative process to create richer depictions of the contested transition and get stakeholder buy-in for finding agreement on pathways forward

PRINCIPLE	HOW STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION ADAPTS TO THE PRINCIPLE (AS SYSTEMS COMMUNICATIONS)	EXAMPLES FROM CASE STUDY (WITH REFERENCES TO CASE STUDY SECTION)
System Ordering	Creates coherence around the plan due to ongoing structuring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messaging – structure tried to create coherence around pathways forward at a systems-level and issue-level so that the messaging in systems communications reflects ordering of the transition system • Overall – the entire communication plan can also be seen as a structure to offer coherence to IMAC

Key distinctions made between strategic communication and systems communications
 With a preliminary understanding of systems communications, distinctions can be made between it and traditional strategic communication.

The key distinctions between strategic communication and systems communications are shown in table 20.

Table 20. *Distinctions between strategic communication and systems communications*

STAGE	STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION	SYSTEMS COMMUNICATIONS
Context <i>How to establish the context</i>	Immediate environment Based on organization’s immediate environment, direct relationships, and linear effects.	Higher-order system Identify the higher-order system – the containing system for the target of the communications, and its dynamics (multi-causal relationships, multi-level and non-linear effects)
Objectives <i>How to set comms and marketing objectives</i>	Immediate environment Based on organization’s goals, within its immediate environment.	Higher-order system Based on organization’s goals, given the outcomes that will appear in the higher-order system.

STAGE	STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION	SYSTEMS COMMUNICATIONS
Audiences <i>How to identify audiences</i>	Narrow ideal Ideal and best fit with organization's strategic objectives	Represent system's variety Based on variety of orgs, stakeholders, lifeworlds (ontologies) within the containing system that needs to be attenuated to
Research <i>How to approach research</i>	Isolated, audience-centric Hone in on audience, and analyze (inwards)	Connected, relationship-centric Starts with relationship – stakeholders to issue space, and stakeholder to stakeholders – and expands outwards to draw larger boundaries
Strategy <i>How strategy guides the comms</i>	Single pathway Defines a single pathway to best meet stated objectives	Multiple pathways Highlights multiple pathways to achieving stated objectives, and allows for reasoning between stakeholders and host organization to be enacting strategy
Messaging <i>How to craft message(s)</i>	Reductive, singular, closed Reduce complexity to a single, unambiguous, message.	Reflective, multi-sided, inviting, open Reflect system complexity in message(s) to invite the multiple, legitimate, perspectives on meaning-making in communications.

These learnings offer an initial description of systems communications and how it emerged from a systemic design practice. These learnings are also manifested in the context of the case study; IMAC's respond to the complex issues facing Canadian News Media.

VI. DISCUSSIONS

While this is a limited study with only an initial offering of *systems communications*, this shift does open new possibilities to further explore.

In this section, I cover some of the limitations surrounding the project, innovation opportunities for different organizations, future research spaces, and finally a concluding reflection.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

A complete systemic engagement was not completed

A complete systemic design engagement wasn't in scope for the research. Previous projects, which used a systemic design approach to research news media ecosystem, provided a baseline understanding of the arena.

There is a strong possibility that the outcomes from a systemic design engagement would cover off the majority of the context, objectives, audience, and research stages of the strategic communication process. Or at least provide a strong indication for each stage.

Canadian News Media was defined to fit scope of research and during a set time period

There was no clear definition provided for Canadian News Media, instead a description was made based on characteristics from the environmental scan.

Also, since complex issues are always changing, the project had a fixed view of the issue and did not reflect changes after March 2020.

IMAC as host organization might indirectly influence the approach

IMAC is just one organization within news media ecosystem, and so it's unknown how much the learnings are based off the choice of organization and if the learnings are applicable to other organizations.

Strategic communication process can vary by practitioners and field

The process was based on my professional experience and select references. It's not universal, and the process can vary by practitioner, amongst a wide range of fields that also use strategic communication.

A deep exploration at each step of the strategic communication process wasn't achievable in the project scope

There were limitations at each stage of the strategic communication process. These were a result of the need to gain an initial set of findings, within the scope of the MRP.

Table 21. Limitations at each stage of strategic communication process

STAGE OF STRATEGIC COMM PROCESS	LIMITATIONS	RATIONALE
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavily relied on situation that was top-of-mind at the time: Fed Gov't support • Did not account for changes that occurred to policy overtime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fed Gov't support was relevant subject to use to set context, at the time of research
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic objectives were taken as is from IMAC, without complete strategic planning process • Omitted marketing objectives, which normally describe goals by hard (marketing) metrics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning and marketing tactics were outside scope of research question
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder groups and interviewees not representative of full news media ecosystem (i.e. missing citizens and other categories) • Quebec, and its unique media stakeholders are notably missing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not possible to represent full system - all stakeholder groups, contexts and geographies - given scope of project
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context and dynamics of each stakeholder interview varied • Certain aspects of issue space left uncovered such as trust, media literacy, diversity in media, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete coverage of all aspects of media ecosystem issues was beyond scope of project
Strategy and Messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tested with IMAC participants only, not other intended audiences • Messaging was text-based only, did not have creative or conceptual artifacts to support it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message testing was a way to get sense of viability of the Strategy and potential impact of Messaging • Strategy and Messaging would be refined if doing full engagement

FUTURE RESEARCH

Opportunity to further develop the practice of systems communications using the broad resources within, and related to, systemic design

Since this project wasn't connected to a full systemic design engagement, nor did it complete all the stages of the strategic communication process, future research could deeply examine each step to better understand systems communications.

Table 22 offers some research questions to further explore systems communications, as well as potential reference material to integrate.

Table 22. *Further research opportunities by stages of strategic communication process*

STAGES OF STRATEGIC COMMS PROCESS	POTENTIAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO FURTHER EXPLORE SYSTEMS COMMS	POTENTIAL REFERENCES OR RESOURCES TO EXPLORE
Context	<i>How do systemic design practices help establish a rich understanding of context for a systems communications plan?</i>	Systemic Design Toolkit (Van Ael et al., 2018)
Objectives	<i>How do systemic design practices inform the objectives - strategic, comms, and marketing - for an organization respond to complex issues?</i>	Strategic Foresight (Slaughter, 1999)
Audience	<i>How do we represent the variety of audiences of a higher-order system in a systems communications plan?</i>	Evolutionary Stakeholder Discovery (Jones, 2018c)
Research	<i>What research methods are most effective when developing a systems communications plan?</i>	Systemic Design Research Methods (Jones, 2014b)
Strategy	<i>What can we learn about strategy-setting within systems communications?</i>	Emergent Strategy (Mintzberg, 1985)
Messaging	<i>How do we develop coherent messaging structures for systems communications?</i>	Meta / Master-narratives (Stephens & McCallum, 1998; Halverson, Goodall Jr. & Corman, 2011)

STAGES OF STRATEGIC COMMS PROCESS	POTENTIAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO FURTHER EXPLORE SYSTEMS COMMS	POTENTIAL REFERENCES OR RESOURCES TO EXPLORE
Brief & Concept	<p><i>What does a creative/design brief for systems communications look like?</i></p> <p><i>How is it different? What makes it useful?</i></p> <p><i>How do we invite creatives to a systems communications development process?</i></p> <p><i>How do we evaluate the concepts generated?</i></p>	<p>Sense Sharing Model (Sevaldson, 2018)</p> <p>Rich Design Research Space (Sevaldson, 2008)</p>
Plan, Production, Launch	<p><i>How do we coordinate the efforts of a systems communications campaign?</i></p>	<p>Tetrad of Media Effects (McLuhan, 1988)</p> <p>Transmedia Storytelling (Scolari, 2009)</p> <p>Arts-Based Research (Leavy, 2019)</p>
Evaluate & Refine	<p><i>How do we measure the impact of systems communications? How is it different than traditional strategic communication measures?</i></p>	<p>Developmental Evaluation (Patton, 1994)</p> <p>Evaluating Systems Change (Cabaj, 2019)</p>

There are two particular intersections that are of interest to me.

1. Brief & Concept Development x Sense Sharing Model

The Sense Sharing Model (Sevaldson, 2018) may be an exciting way to explore how to frame the creative opportunity, brief it in, and develop concepts for systems communications.

Similar to advertising’s shift away from developing concepts by inputs (scientific proof points of the product or service) to outcome-based (the feelings people get from the communication) (Griffiths & Fellow, 2016), Sense Sharing may offer a way to describe the takeaways of systems communications.

Element of Sense Sharing Model:

- *Sense of the field*
- *Sense of Gestalt (hierarchy)*
- *Sense of degree of complexity*

- *Sense of timing and dynamics*
- *Sense of needed effort*
- *Sense of resistance*

2. Plan, Production, Launch x Arts-Based Research

Arts-based research may offer a classification of the types of media formats that Systems-oriented Communications can be expressed through: literature, performance, visual arts, audiovisual, and multi-method approaches.

Stephanie Fielding's report, *Close Encounters of the Creative Kind* (2020), establishes a rich foundation of examples of where these practices have been used to communicate, or stimulate, policy concepts.

There may be a future research area that explores this relationship: how systems communications leads towards a creative strategy and concepts which can be expressed through art-based practices.

INNOVATION POTENTIAL

Potential value of systems communications for organizations

If systems communications offers a way to invite stakeholders to create a shared understanding of a complex issue, then this could hold a high value for certain types of organizations.

The types of organizations that could use this approach may be ones which:

- have a direct responsibility to respond to complex issues
- conducting deep research on a complex issue that needs to be clearly communicated or understood
- want to invite collective sensemaking around a complex issue

Below is a list of some types of organizations that might find value in this practice, though future research is needed to discover the value-proposition fit.

- **News Media (within journalistic content)**

Distinct from the ecosystem perspective of the case study, the journalistic content that News Media organizations develop could benefit from a systems communications approach. This would encourage journalists and reporters to facilitate sensemaking process that occurs through media and help find ways to better reflect real-world complexity of the subject that's being reported on.

Some of the aforementioned works by Chaplin and Christopherson (2020) as well as

Ripley (2019) are deliberate ways to integrate a systems approach to the production and distribution of journalism.

- **Researchers & Academia**

The growing use of inter and trans-disciplinary research broadens the scope of stakeholders that academia must account for. Therefore, the communication of these types of research projects, and their findings, need to attenuate to the variety of modes of understanding (and sensemaking). Perhaps the traditional forms of reports and presentations are insufficient at reflecting the real-world complexity of their research.

- **Governments**

Governments – at all levels - have a legitimate role in responding to complex issues. This often comes in the form of policy and regulations, which contain a high number of stakeholder variety. Here again, the channels that Government typically consider may no longer reflect the real-world complexity of the issues they're trying to respond to. Systems communications may be a way to broaden the approach that Governments take in forming their own communication plans.

- **Innovation Labs**

These organizations are commonly formed around complex issues, and already use systems and design methods to address the challenges. Despite the adoption of these methods, the communication methods still rely on reductive means to communicate about their work or impact. So, it may be appropriate for systems communications to provide an advanced way of disseminating knowledge that could fit the Innovation Lab structure.

- **Philanthropy**

The sector is experiencing a reorientation towards addressing root causes of persistent societal issues. This reorientation has given rise to an emerging field of *Systems Change*, which tackle complex challenges using systems approach. Systems communications could be a fit for philanthropic organizations that have a need to communicate about subject complexity in ways that better reflect the complexity for their stakeholders (funders, grantees, partners, etc.).

- **Think Tanks**

Their focus on research and recommendations requires a deliberate effort to communicate complex subject matter to a variety of audiences. Again, systems communications might be an approach that could be integrated into the work process, or communication teams, at these institutions. The shift towards *think-and-do tanks* presents an opportunity for the breadth of systemic design practices to be better integrated into these organizations.

CONCLUSION

Systems communications as a way to express humility in the face of complexity

In Section V. Project Learnings, systems communications is described as an adapted practice of strategic communication, through the lens of systemic design. The characteristics of this practice would require organizations to consider higher-order systems, attenuate to their ecosystem's variety, focus on the interconnectedness of complex issues, and invite multiple perspectives and modes of reasoning.

These learnings stem from the *technical* shifts in how strategic communications is practised through a systems-orientation. But, beyond just a shift in the technical aspects of the practice, perhaps the more profound learning that underpins this MRP comes from seeing systems communications as an *attitudinal* shift in how organizations develop responses to complex issues (wicked problems).

The very act of strategically communicating to an audience is itself resource consuming and signals a bold commitment. The communication expresses a firm stance of what the organization wants its audience or stakeholders to understand.

But when it comes to complex issues, the way organizations communicate tends to reduce and compress complexity until only a narrow, or lower resolution, understanding remains. The confidence of the communication is unfit for the complexity of the issue. So the organization ends up tricking themselves and their stakeholders: *they feel certain about issues they don't fully understand, instead of feeling certain that the issue is not fully understandable.*

So, to stay grounded against the pull of reduction, there's a need to embrace the slower, nuanced, and multi-sided perspectives demanded by a complex issue. Systems communications might be a function that enables organizations to engage in this deeper understanding.

It could help organizations reflect, not reduce, the complexity of an issue through creative and artistic expressions that restore a healthy amount of doubt to their communications.

So instead of imbuing communications with certainty and confidence, systems communications may be a way for organizations to express *humility*. This is the attitudinal shift that systems communications could enable, where organizations approach the development of communications for a complex issue with humility.

By expressing humility and a genuine desire to learn, organizations can recognize the limits of cognitive understanding when it comes to a complex situation -- a situation no single person can fully understand alone.

Perhaps the way to respond to complexity is with humility. And that is what systems communication affords.

REFLECTION

I'm not the same person I was yesterday.

I'm definitely not the same person I was when I started this project and this program.

At the end of my Master of Design program, I've come to realize that design education has a, potentially flawed, bias towards action. The *how might we's*, the design jams and competitions, the theatre of innovation, and other traits show this default-to-action mentality.

It seems to me, that design education assumes that action needs to be taken to address problems. But defining things as *problems* creates a fixed frame on a moving issue. It imposes a convenient way to design actions against the nature of the unfolding, ever-changing world. The consequences of good intentions acted upon through a design framework might be causing the very *problems* that designers set out to *solve*.

So, when I think about reflecting real-world complexity, I now see that it should apply to my own design framework.

Perhaps there's a need for design education to appreciate the value of *inaction*. That is, paying attention to what is changing; the patterns of change, the natural flows of change, the long timelines of change, etc.

In a world of endless interventions, might there be wisdom in deliberate non-intervention?

In the case study of this project, what if instead of proposing a communication strategy, I exposed the multiple patterns of change in the media ecosystems to reveal deeper wisdom on what NOT to do, or what little (in)action can have profound effects.

And for this MRP, instead of offering systems communications as an evolved practice, what if I revealed the dissonance between complex issues and our media ecology. Maybe this approach helps swap the design bias towards action and trains our attention to what is changing.

This brings me to a realization that perhaps the balance between intention to change (design) and attention to changing (nature) is a revolving act of humility and learning.

Be humble.

Always be learning.

This is a realization I take seriously into my future.

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APPENDIX A. SYSTEM MAPS AND MODELLING FROM CASE STUDY

Tech Platforms:

Tech platforms can be seen as part of the problem and/or part of the solution

- **Baseline:** Tech Platforms have a strong influence on how information is accessed and distributed.

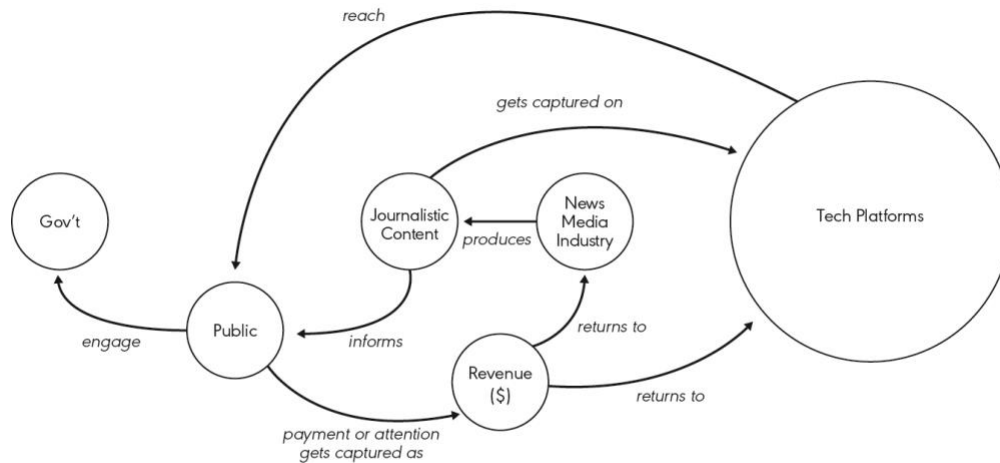


Figure A1. *Tech Platforms role in information access and distribution.*

- **Scenario 1:** Government regulates the tech platforms to try and improve the quality of information that gets shared.

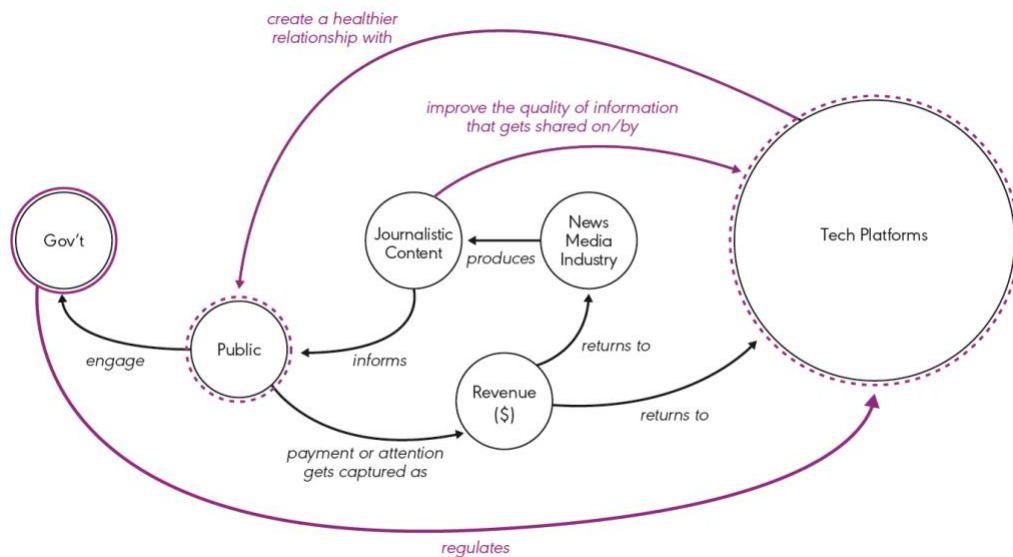


Figure A2. Tech platforms are regulated by Government

- **Scenario 2:** The Tech Platforms and News Media Industry form closer partnerships to improve their resource and value exchange to drive positive impact on developing journalistic content.

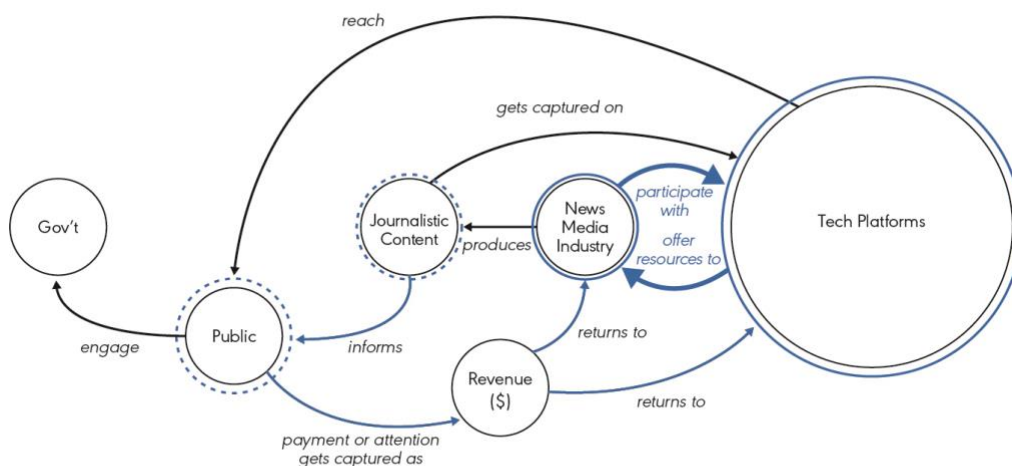


Figure A3. Tech platforms and News Media Industry form partnership.

News Media Business Model

Strategies for creating sustainable business models vary amongst news orgs

- **Baseline:** The traditional business model for journalism, which relied heavily on ad revenue, is no longer (financially) sustainable.

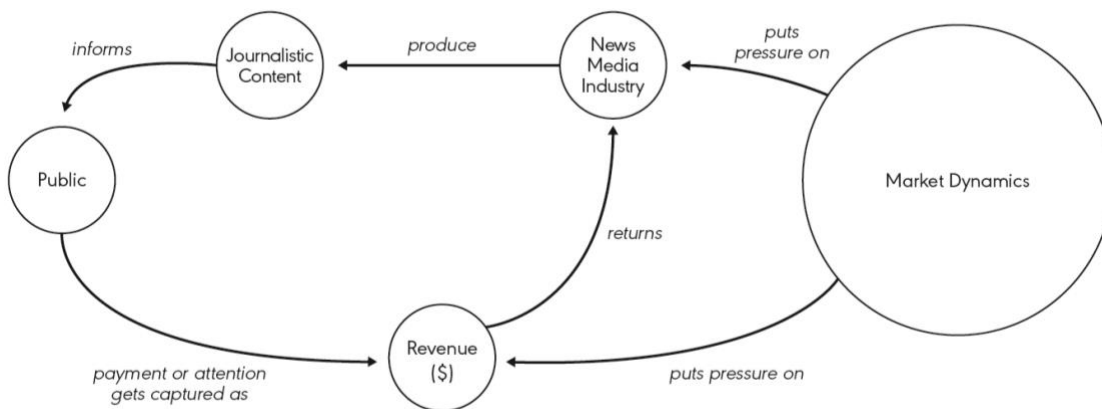


Figure A4. News Media's business model

- **Scenario 1:** News orgs take measures to internally cut costs and overhead to try and stabilize their operations, financially.

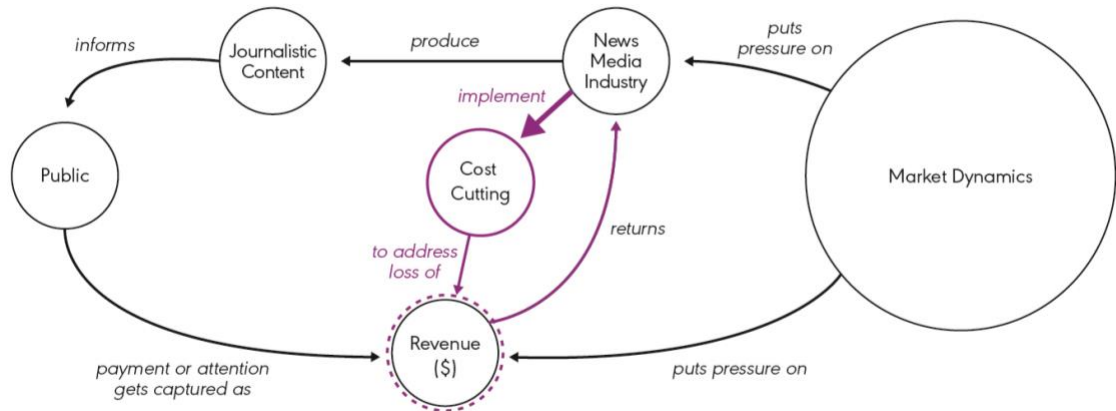


Figure A5. News Media engage in cost cutting

- **Scenario 2:** News orgs form partnerships with actors in the media ecosystem to find ways to deliver journalistic content in more financially sustainable ways.

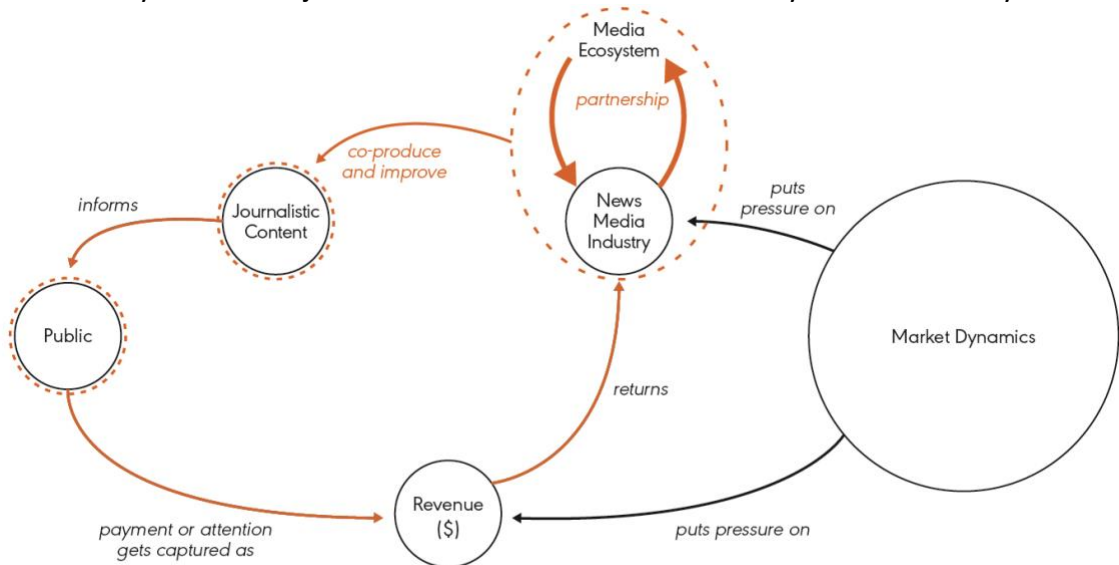


Figure A6. News Media partnership with Media Ecosystem

- **Scenario 3:** News orgs refocus on their core value proposition – what they uniquely provide the market better than others – to produce journalistic content in financially sustainable way.

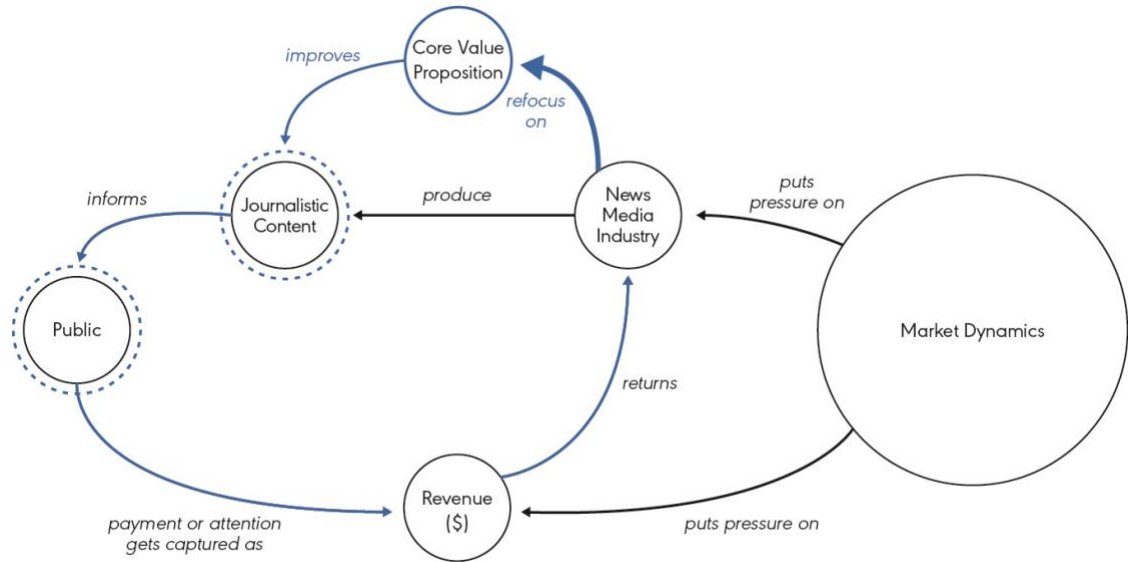


Figure A7. News Media refocus on core value proposition

Role of CBC

CBC is seen as part of the ecosystem, but its role can be reimagined

- **Baseline:** As the publicly funded national broadcaster, CBC plays a pivotal role in Canadian News Media.

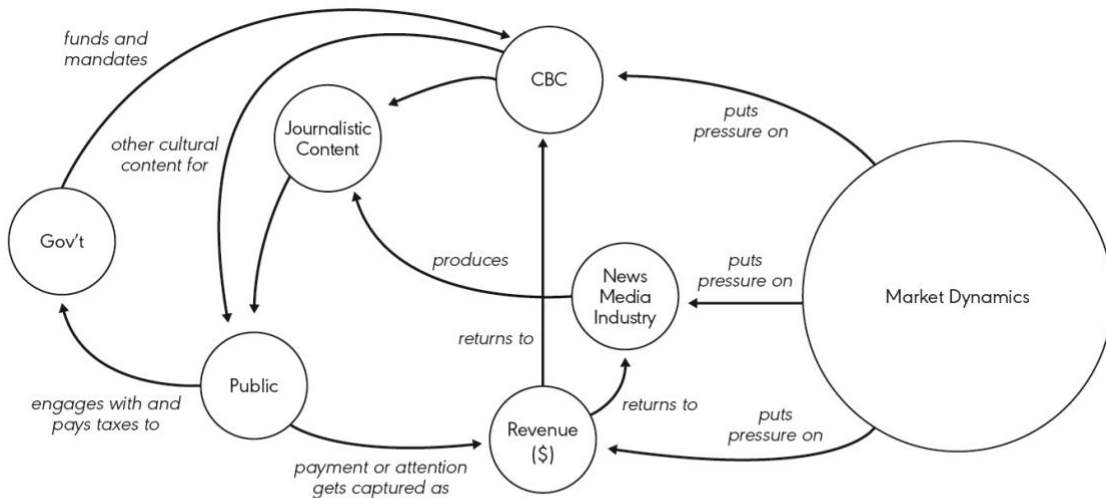


Figure A8. CBC's role in Canadian news media environment

- **Scenario 1:** The Government revises CBC's mandate to scale back the scope and focus of its news production and distribution.

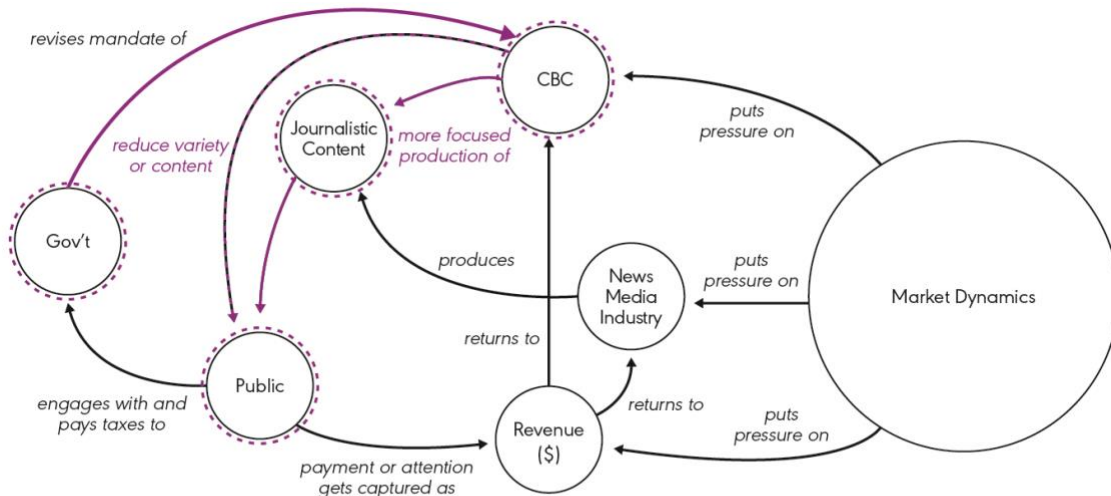


Figure A9. Government scales back and refocuses CBC's mandate

- **Scenario 2:** News Media and CBC find collaborative ways of co-producing journalistic content in public's interest.

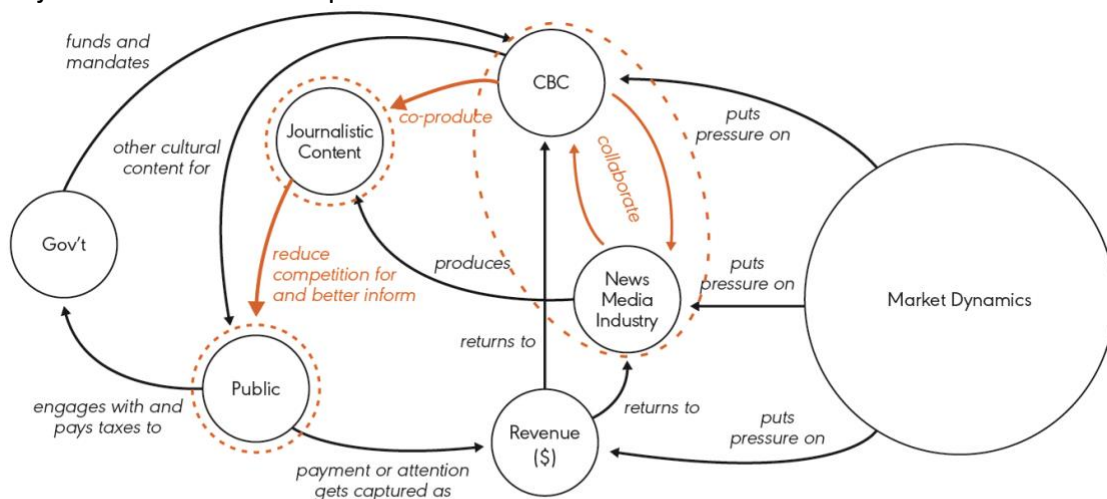


Figure A10. News Media collaborate with CBC

- **Scenario 3:** Government revises the mandate of CBC and turns it into an open platform that amplifies news stories but doesn't produce any original journalism material.

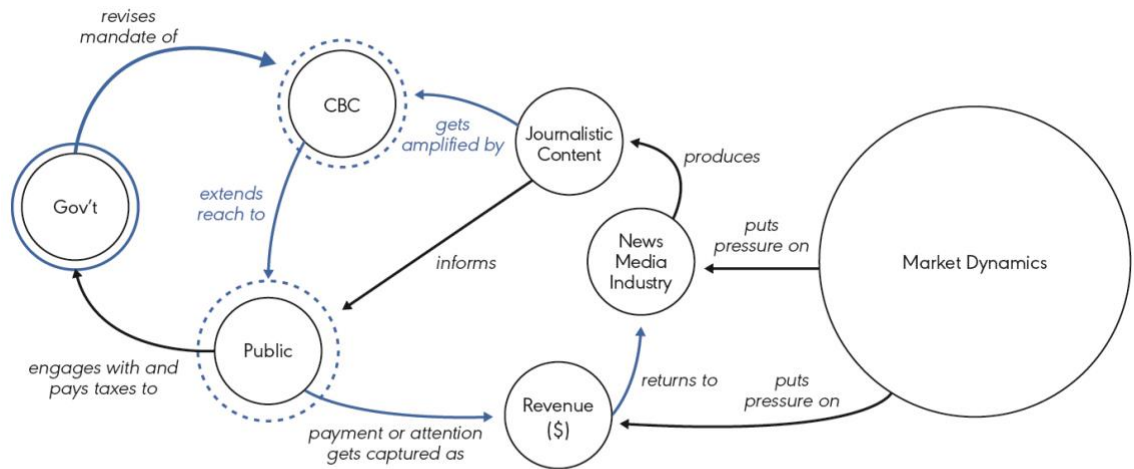


Figure A11. CBC as an open platform

Role of Canadian Broadcasters

Broadcasters see unfair playing field, and opportunities to rebalance

- **Baseline:** Canadian Broadcast Media need a license to operate. They are required to produce Canadian content. The streaming platforms do not have the same requirements.

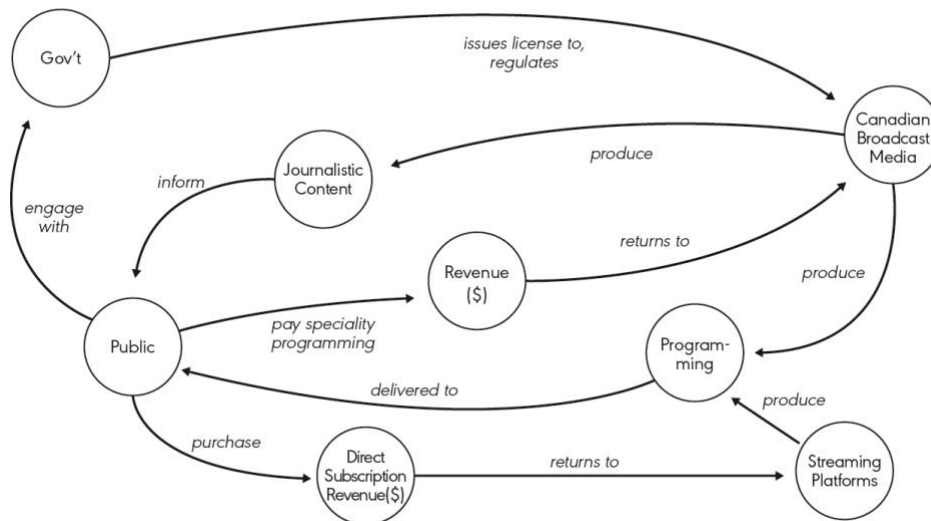


Figure A12. Canadian Broadcast Media compete with streaming platforms for public attention

- **Scenario 1:** Government creates a cultural fund based on a tax paid by the streaming platforms, which is distributed or made available to Canadian Broadcast Media for Canadian content.

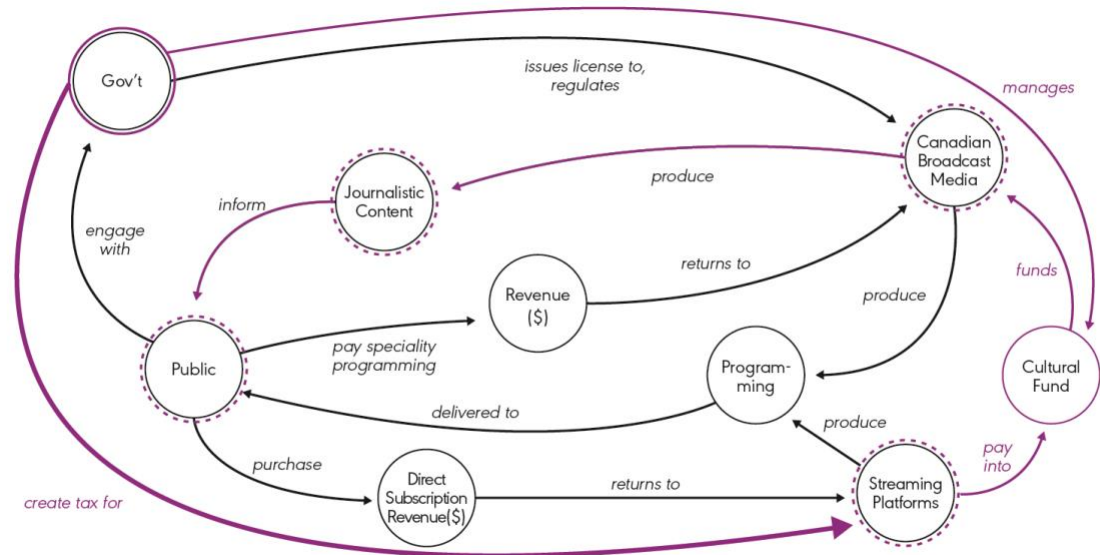


Figure A13. Government creates cultural fund

- **Scenario 2:** Government offers incentives and rewards to Broadcast Media for the production and distribution of Canadian content, including journalism.

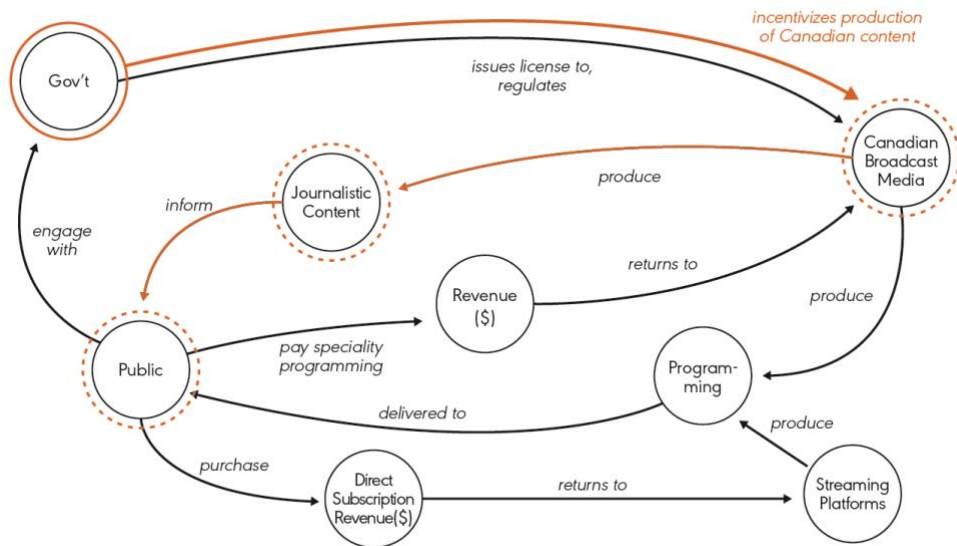


Figure A14. Government creates incentives for Canadian Broadcast Media

- **Scenario 3:** The Government allows Canadian Broadcast Media to charge customers to pay for local stations to help fund the production and distribution of local journalism.

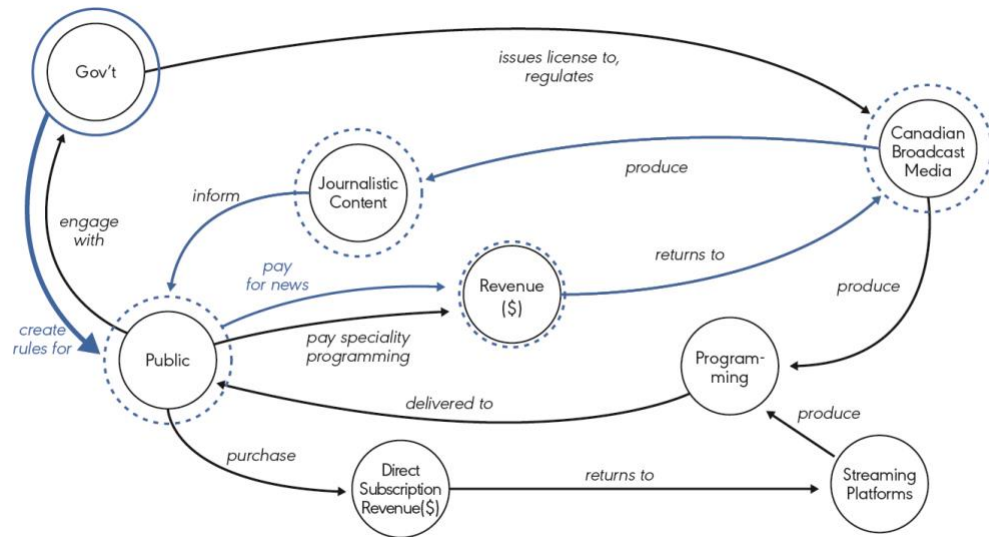


Figure A15. Government creates incentives for Canadian Broadcast Media

APPENDIX B. FEEDBACK FROM MESSAGE TESTING

Tech Platforms

Tech message has potential for nuanced discussion, but issues are still unfolding

Table B1. *Feedback from messaging about Tech Platforms*

TEXT-BASED STIMULUS	FEEDBACK
<p>For this issue:</p> <p><i>Tech platforms' negative impact on news media ecosystem.</i></p> <p>IMAC's message is:</p> <p><i>Use the tech platforms' resources and offerings - funding, capabilities, and knowledge - to boost the positive impact of professional journalism, while remaining critical of the negative impact of the platforms.</i></p> <p>While recognizing this context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ad revenue - FB and Google take up majority of ad revenue • Unbalanced concentration - the health of the information ecosystem is jeopardized when audiences are concentrated in two platforms • Canadians still access news from traditional online sources -- not just FB and Google • Issues surrounding fake news, misinformation on platforms can have damaging effect on society • Not classified as publishers - not beholden to journalistic standards / ethics / practices • Access to audience - FB and Google can help news pubs access audiences • Co-dependant on industry - future success of FB and Google depends on a healthy, vibrant news industry • Actively funding and supporting - both FB and Google are supporting efforts to create a healthier media ecosystem, because it's better for everyone in the long run, and they have the resources and means to do so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has some potential to invite more nuanced take on relationship with tech platforms • Adding positive examples could be helpful • Hard to avoid thinking about value exchange and what tech platforms get, i.e. PR value • Might not be able to position this as a 1:1 relationship (between a single news org and platform) given the perceptual boost that tech platforms can get in ecosystem • Don't yet settled on tech platforms, increasingly being seen as bad actors by many

Table B2. *Feedback from messaging about news business models*

TEXT-BASED STIMULUS	FEEDBACK
<p>For this issue: <i>The business model for journalism is failing.</i></p> <p>IMAC's message is: <i>Working together to protect 'journalism' itself - rather than just a single business model - will allow for new and sustainable models to emerge.</i></p> <p>While recognizing this context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining revenues across industry • Business decisions behind cost-cutting and closures • Closures of newsrooms and pubs, especially at local level, pose risk for democracy • Quality of reporting is impacted by increased pressure on journalists • Startups and community publications are trying to innovate and create new business models in a variety of media formats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has potential to invite deeper level of thinking about the issue • Helps signal that the industry is looking inwards to addressing its issue, and is taking responsibility, not deflecting it outwards • May benefit from being less abrasive in tone • For some stakeholders, it might only reinforce existing views

The Role of CBC

Receptivity to collaborating with CBC greatly depends on the audience; their experience, pre-existing notions, size, capabilities, etc.

Table B3. Feedback from messaging about role of the CBC

TEXT-BASED STIMULUS	FEEDBACK
<p>For this issue: <i>CBC is unfairly competing with other news organizations because it is publicly funded.</i></p> <p>IMAC's message is: <i>Develop collaborative pilot projects with CBC, in a way that's mutually beneficial, for the common goal of keeping citizens informed.</i></p> <p>While recognizing this context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBC's local presence - CBC continues to serve local communities, that would otherwise be in the dark. • CBC's digital presence - transformation to digital is a natural part of keeping in step with people's media habits • CBC's mandate across all of Canada the mandate for CBC is across the nation: 6 time zones, English, French, +8 indigenous languages in North - this is not comparable to obligations of other broadcasters/news orgs • CBC can better serve public interest - CBC can do more to use its resources towards building a news environment that's better for everyone, not necessarily one where they compete • Unfocused programming - CBC's programming is unfocused and needs to be attuned to the issues facing news media today • CBC is keenly self-aware that they play an important role in being part of a healthy media ecosystem and are not interested in being 'the competition', they are open and willing to collaborate and create a cultural change in industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might peak curiosity, but not for all stakeholders; larger news orgs may be less inclined, and some smaller news orgs may give up too much control • Highly dependent on CBC, which hasn't showed proof of this collaborative mindset • Would require significant cultural shift at CBC to adopt this mindset and way of working, which is not currently evident