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# Realism, social cohesion, and media policymaking: The case of Swiss public broadcasting

**Abstract:** More than any other integrative social theory, Realist Social Theory (RST) focuses on the different ontological properties of agency and structure, such as their distinct power and durability. RST explains social change as being caused by outcomes emerging from human agency and complex, more or less durable structures that constrain and enable agency in ways that actors often are not aware of. This unique focus of RST helps understand, explain and elaborate media policy in multilingual environments.

This paper draws on multimethod analyses of situated activities in the Swiss public broadcaster SRG SSR *IdEE suisse* to reconstruct language policymaking as a multi-layered, inclusive and interactive process. In doing so, it first defines and connects the key concepts of public broadcasting, RST, and inclusive multilingualism (Part 1). Then, it explains divergences in media stakeholders' expectations (2) as starting points for an inclusive way of policymaking (3) in which inclusive multilingualism applies not only to organizational communication, but to the process of organizational development and understanding itself (4). The paper concludes by outlining evidence-based principles for making news language policies in Europe (5).

**Keywords:** realist social theory, transdisciplinary action research, ethnography, progression analysis, newswriting

**Zusammenfassung:** Mehr als jede andere integrative Sozialtheorie betont die *Realist Social Theory* (RST) die unterschiedliche Dauerhaftigkeit von Strukturen, die das Handeln ermöglichen und beschränken und umgekehrt von ihm mit beeinflusst werden. RST erklärt gesellschaftlichen Wandel als verursacht durch Emergenz, durch das Entstehen von kategorial Neuem im Zusammenspiel von menschlichem Handeln und komplexen, mehr oder weniger änderungsresistenten Strukturen, wobei dieser Zusammenhang zwar unhintergebar Auswirkungen zeitigt, aber den Handelnden selbst oft nicht bewusst ist.

Der vorliegende Beitrag baut auf Ergebnissen aus Mehrmethodenanalysen auf, mit denen solches Zusammenspiel von Handeln und Strukturen untersucht

wurde für den Fall des öffentlichen Schweizer Rundfunkanbieters SRG SSR IDÉE SUISSE. Ziel war es zu erklären, wie die Sprachenpolitik des Rundfunkanbieters funktioniert als ein Prozess, der auf sehr unterschiedlichen Ebenen abläuft und der die unterschiedlichsten Teilhaber auf je eigene Weise einschließt. Zuerst bestimmt der Beitrag die Schlüsselbegriffe: öffentlicher Rundfunk, RST, integrative Mehrsprachigkeit (Teil 1). Dann erklärt er, inwiefern die Erwartungen der Teilhaber auseinanderlaufen (2) und warum dieser Befund nach integrativer Sprachenpolitik ruft (3). Bei solcher Sprachenpolitik prägt integrative Mehrsprachigkeit nicht nur die Kommunikation nach innen und außen, sondern auch das Selbstverständnis und die Entwicklung der Organisation und ihrer Richtlinien (4). Der Beitrag schließt mit empirisch verankerten Prinzipien zur Gestaltung von Sprachenpolitik im Rundfunk in der komplexen, dynamischen Mehrsprachigkeit Europas (5).

**Résumé:** Plus que toute autre théorie intégrative, la *Realist Social Theory* (RST) met l'accent sur les aspects ontologiques du double mouvement qui caractérise les actions humaines: les agents créent des réalités sociales émergentes dans le même temps qu'ils sont contraints par elles. Ils modifient ainsi les structures mêmes desquelles ils dépendent en ayant contribué à les accomplir. Cependant, les agents eux-mêmes ignorent largement leur pouvoir agentif propre. Dans ce sens, la RST explique le changement autant que le pérennité du social d'une manière nuancée qui aide à mieux comprendre la politique médiatique dans des environnement plurilingues.

Cet article propose une multi-méthode d'analyse des activités situées du média de service public suisse SRG SSR IDÉE SUISSE. Il s'agit de mettre au jour les politiques linguistiques de ce média en les considérant comme des produits interactivement accomplis à différents niveaux. Dans un premier temps, l'article définit le service public suisse et l'environnement plurilingue qui le caractérise tout en les articulant au cadre de la RST et de ses enjeux (partie 1). Ensuite, il explique les divergences de vues des différents agents dans la manière de réaliser la politique linguistique à l'œuvre (partie 2). Ces bases permettent une considération intégrée de la politique linguistique en tenant compte de tous les niveaux engagés (partie 3). A ce titre, le plurilinguisme ne représente pas seulement une ressource de la communication organisationnelle en tant que telle mais un moyen de mieux comprendre celle-ci pour la développer de manière optimale (partie 4). Enfin, en conclusion, l'article évoque la perspective de nouvelles politiques linguistiques en Europe (partie 5).

# 1 Introduction: *Idée Suisse*, RST, and inclusive multilingualism

Public service broadcasting companies are among the most important broadcasters in Europe. In Switzerland, there is one public broadcaster, SRG SSR, which is also the Swiss market leader. As a public service institution, SRG has a federal, societal, cultural, and linguistic mandate to fulfill: SRG has to promote public understanding in order to foster social cohesion. “[the SRG] promotes understanding, cohesion and exchange between the parts of the country, linguistic communities, cultures and social groupings [...]” (Swiss federal programming mandate 2006, article 24, paragraph 1).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this means linking speech communities with other speech communities on two levels: first between the German-, French-, Italian-, and Romansh-speaking parts of Switzerland, and second within these parts (e.g. Widmer et al. 2004). Urban and rural, rich and poor, lay persons and experts, immigrants and citizens, ... different speech communities speak different linguistic varieties and interact with different views of the world. This context challenges public service broadcasters in terms of their “language ecology” (Kramsch and Whiteside 2008), even within single linguistic regions.

In a Swiss national research project called *Idée Suisse*<sup>1</sup>, we investigated whether and how SRG SSR, caught between public service demands and market forces, should and actually does fulfill such language policy requirements. Four research modules were combined: module A focused on language policy expectations; module B on media management’s interpretation of these requirements; module C on media production itself; and module D on journalists’ reflection of their own production in the newsrooms. Methodologically, ethnography of news was extended through grounded theory and Transdisciplinary Action Research in the framework of RST.

Ethnographic researchers are interested in discovering what the people and communities under investigation actually do and why they do it, or put differ-

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<sup>1</sup> The research project *Idée Suisse*: Language policy, norms, and practice as exemplified by Swiss Radio and Television was funded from 2005 to 2007 with EUR 120 000 by the Swiss National Science Foundation. It is part of the National Research Program 56, Language Diversity and Linguistic Competence in Switzerland, 2005–2010. Outlines and reports of the program and its projects (in German, French, and Italian) can be found on <http://www.nfp56.ch>. Follow-up projects include Argumentation in newsmaking process and product, a Prodoc Research Module funded from 2011 to 2014 by the Swiss National Science Foundation with EUR 470 388.

ently, why it makes sense to them. Ethnography of news focuses on processes of text production and on sense-making practices of journalists instead of only analyzing media products. Classical ethnography, however, tends to be limited to single case studies. Research can overcome this limitation by combining ethnography with complementary research frameworks: with Grounded Theory in order to develop theories that are grounded in data and explicit procedures of generalization; with Transdisciplinary Action Research in order to systematically share knowledge with the practitioners involved and to solve practical problems together; with RST in order to relate situated activity such as writing to social macro structures; with Dynamic Systems Theory in order to identify conditions that foster emergence and functional change in complex dynamic settings.

In our transdisciplinary framework, RST enabled researchers to distinguish between variegated social structures with different durabilities and to situate activity within this multi-layered social world. RST outlines the interplay between situated activity and social structure, between micro and macro development, as a basis for emergence and change (for the field of situated *linguistic* activity see Carter and Sealey 2000, 2004 and Sealey and Carter 2004). As for the world humans live in, RST separates four domains, four highly interactive layers (Layder 1998, 2005):

- Situated activity means what people do in context, for example making or criticizing policies, writing news, or interacting with peers while editing source materials. This activity is enabled and constrained by the journalists' agency, which interacts with fairly flexible mental and social structures and highly durable contextual or cultural resources.
- Psychobiography consists of the individual's mental structures that represent physical, emotional, and cognitive experiences – for example, their “individual truth” (Craib, 1998: 31) in their roles as media policymakers, media managers, editors-in-chief, or news journalists.
- Social settings are the social contexts of human agency, for example a newsroom and its staff's shared and mostly routinized practices of language use. Whereas social settings can be changed by individuals' organized willpower, contextual resources tend to be more persistent.
- The domain of contextual resources comprises the cultural capital available to a particular group of people at a particular place and time, such as democracy, national wealth, the language of a community into which a person is born, and the increasingly mediatized and multilingual world.

Applying such key concepts from RST to the *IDÉE SUISSE* data results in the empirically and theoretically grounded assumption that implementing media language policies in a sustainable way requires an organizational understanding

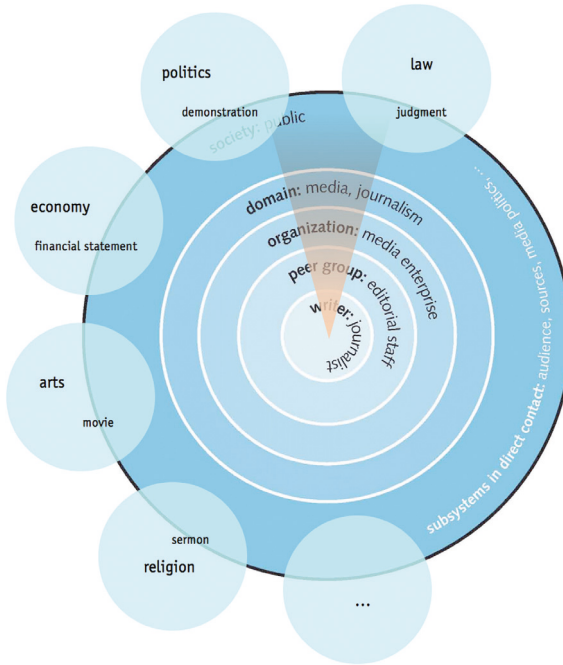
in which all the stakeholders collaborate systematically in order to identify “what works for whom in what circumstances” (Sealey and Carter 2004: 197). Language policies of whatever kind cannot be implemented top-down, but have to be developed through mutual learning by all the parties involved (Blommaert et al. 2009).

From an applied linguistics perspective, such a collaboration implies inclusive multilingualism (Backus et al. 2013): the competence and willingness of all the stakeholders to understand each others’ contributions within and across the organization, be it by using technical languages or *linguae receptivae* – or by translating and code switching between natural languages as well as their pragmatic intra-lingual variants. This is what the *IDÉE SUISSE* research project focused on: How does SRG actually do what it is expected to do in terms of promoting public understanding – and what else could be done under what alternative conditions.

## 2 Identifying divergences in media stakeholders’ expectations

We conceptualized the public mandate’s key concept of *promoting public understanding* (PPU) as a complex situated activity taking place throughout the SRG media organization, from the executive suites down to the newsrooms as the engines of production. PPU interacts with psychobiographical, organizational, and wider contextual structures of variegated durability and power, ranging from journalists’ individual language awareness to the cultural resources of Switzerland as a rich multilingual country in Western Europe. All these structures enable or constrain newswriting activity and are reproduced or altered by it.

Figure 1 visualizes PPU as connecting discourses between societal subsystems with partly incommensurable contextual resources, such as politics, economy, and society at large. Whereas the technical discourses within these subsystems do not have to overlap, each societal subsystem’s discourse partly overlaps with public discourse in society-at-large. Demonstrations and socially relevant judgments, for example, connect public discourse to technical discourse in politics and law respectively. Journalists produce news as communicational offers to mediate or translate between political and legal enablements and constraints and the way they are understood by representatives of society-at-large, such as most of the media audience, sources, and policymakers in democracies. By doing so, the journalists are embedded in and interact with social structures and their resources of layered durability, such as their peer group, the entire media organization, the domains of media and journalism, and their stakeholders in society-at-large.



**Figure 1:** Promoting public understanding as situated activity in complex contexts.

Within this framework of contexts, promoting public understanding involves agents, requires resources, is realized through journalistic practices, causes impacts as new, emergent resources, and triggers evaluations by those involved:

- An agent involved in PPU is an individual or collective being engaged in the implementation of the mandate. Examples are journalists, lobbies, or the media.
- A resource required for PPU is a non-human, non-social entity needed to implement the mandate. Examples are money or laws.
- A journalistic practice that realizes PPU is an activity performed in the newsroom in order to fulfill the mandate. An example is how others are presented authentically.
- An impact caused by PPU is a phenomenon that is triggered by implementing the mandate. Examples are financial expenditures or societal integration.
- An evaluation triggered by PPU is an estimate of the relevance, feasibility, or degree of implementation of the mandate. An example is PPU being desirable but difficult to achieve.

Starting from this conceptual grid, the IDÉE SUISSE research group aimed to identify what PPU means (evaluations) to media policymakers and SRG management (agents) – and where their views complement or contradict each other. Guided interviews were held with 23 experts, based on the above conceptual grid and the analysis of documents containing mandate-related propositions from the perspectives of media policy and management.

The experts all had professional experience in at least two of the three domains of media policy, media management, and journalism. In addition, most of them had been involved as decision-makers in the structural changes of the Swiss media landscape since 1984, when media markets in Switzerland were opened step by step and SRG lost its monopoly as the only Swiss provider of radio and television programs. The experts represented three linguistic regions of Switzerland: eleven interviews were held in German, eight in French, four in Italian; all recordings were transcribed and coded by trained native speakers of the respective languages.

The result of the propositional interview analysis is a knowledge base describing how media policymakers and SRG management relate agents, other resources, practices, impacts, and valuations of the mandate ([www.news-writing.net/knowledgemap](http://www.news-writing.net/knowledgemap)). Based on theoretical sampling of 23 cyclically selected and analyzed cases within the Grounded Theory framework, this map of propositions and relations as coded in the interview reveals systematic discrepancies in the understanding of the mandate: Media policymakers expect the public service broadcaster to contribute to national integration by promoting public understanding, whereas managers usually are frustrated by these expectations. Excerpts 1 and 2, from the knowledge base, highlight this discrepancy:

moi je discute beaucoup avec mes collègues français | par exemple | mes collègue espagnols et cetera | et ils sont totalement stupéfaits de constater | qu'on arrive à travailler avec ces différents contextes | et à conduire une politique des médias « medienpolitik » | qui est quand même à peu près cohérente | ils trouvent un exploit hors du commun | c'est un peu l'europe | c'est un peu l'europe (mandate\_060918\_marchand\_interview, lines 130–139)

I often discuss things with my French colleagues, for example with my Spanish colleagues and so on, and they are totally astonished to realize that we manage to work with these different [linguistic] contexts and to pursue a media policy that is, after all, quite coherent. They find it an extraordinary exploit. It's a bit like Europe.

**Ex. 1** Evaluations of relevance, e.g. PPU PROVIDES A MODEL FOR EUROPE. Vertical lines indicate line breaks in the original transcripts.

das ist | wie wenn ich plötzlich in der wirtschaft den auftrag bekomme | einen titel zu machen | der sowohl den kleinen den grossen den dicken | den zarten den alten und den

jungen und was auch immer – | da kommt einfach nichts gescheites heraus (mandate\_060404\_walpen\_interview, lines 461–466)

This is as if, in business, I were suddenly given the job to create a [media] product that [would appeal to] both the short and the tall, the fat and the delicate, the old and the young and whatever – nothing decent will come of it.

## Ex. 2 Evaluations of feasibility, e.g. PPU OVERBURDENS THE MEDIA

The overall view of the management is far away from finding PPU relevant and feasible in an environment of increasing media market pressures. This means neglecting demands of public service in favor of market orientation. If the media organization were to act according to the pessimistic position that this project has revealed in its research modules A and B (see above, Part 1), it would clearly risk losing its status and financial support as a public service provider.

On the other hand, SRG is the national market leader and generally perceived as fulfilling its mandate to the satisfaction of its stakeholders. Thus, from a systemic point of view, there must be solutions to overcome the conflict between the public mandate and market forces and to meet both organizational and public needs at the same time. If the knowledge about such solutions cannot be found in the executive suites, it must be located on the ground floor of SRG, in the newsrooms.

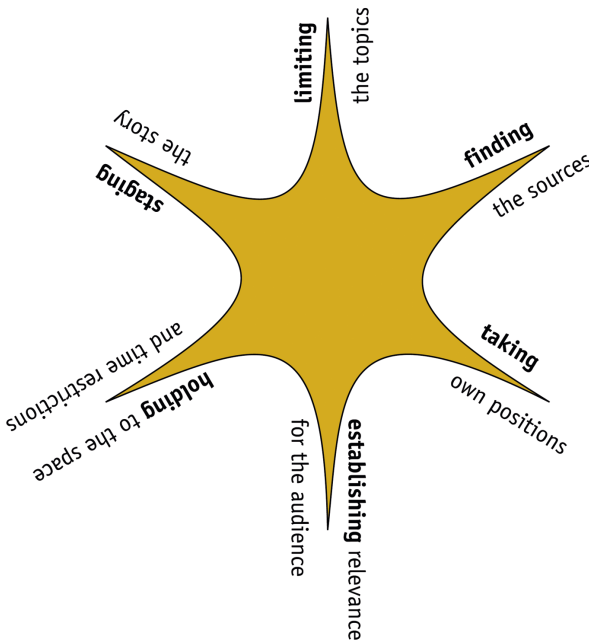
## 3 Investigating inclusive policymaking

The findings from modules C and D (see above, Part 1) of the IDÉE SUISSE project show that, whereas the managers are usually frustrated by the expectations of media policymakers, some experienced journalists actually find emergent solutions to overcome the conflict between the public mandate and the market. In-depth analyses of newswriting practices in the IDÉE SUISSE project and four similar research projects (Perrin 2013: 170–172, 188–190, 223–225, 246–248) provide empirical evidence that overcoming this conflict means finding a third way out of seemingly contradictory activities in fields such as STAGING THE STORY to sell it on media markets and ESTABLISHING RELEVANCE FOR THE AUDIENCE in line with the public mandate.

Figure 2 visualizes the interplay of activities in six fields of newswriting out of 16 as identified in the IDÉE SUISSE project (Perrin 2013: 150–151). In contrast to the other, more process-oriented fields, activities in all of these fields directly impact the emerging text product, the news piece. They shape its length (HOLDING TO THE SPACE AND TIME RESTRICTIONS), genre and dramaturgy (STAGING THE STORY), focus and content (LIMITING THE TOPICS), sources and intertextuality (FINDING THE



SOURCES), objective-/subjectiveness and uniqueness (TAKING OWN POSITIONS), and audience design (ESTABLISHING RELEVANCE FOR THE AUDIENCE).



**Figure 2:** Interplay of activities in six fields of newswriting.

Due to conflicting expectations in partly contradictory contexts (Ruhmann and Perrin 2002), such as catering to media markets and a public mandate at the same time, the journalists permanently have to solve conflicts while writing (Zampa and Perrin 2015).

In the interest of the media enterprise, for example, they should be brief and fast (HOLDING TO THE SPACE AND TIME RESTRICTIONS) while, in the public interest, addressing socially relevant topics in a nuanced way (ESTABLISHING RELEVANCE FOR THE AUDIENCE). Such conflicting demands lead to problems in balancing the basic practices of journalistic text production: the more one of the sixteen (or six in the simplified visualization of Fig. 2) activities is realized, the fewer resources there are for other practices and expectations. An illustrative, albeit construed example:

- a) Optimizing factual recency and relevance by **LIMITING THE TOPIC** may result in a highly elaborated approach to complex key issues that turns out to be hardly accessible to a larger, yet uninformed audience. > Conflict with b)

- b) Optimizing accessibility to a rather uninformed audience, by ESTABLISHING RELEVANCE FOR THE AUDIENCE, may result in focusing on text agents who know how to simplify problems and positions. > Conflict with c)
- c) Optimizing discursive authenticity by FINDING THE SOURCES may result in a democratically correct, but uninspired news piece in which all relevant opinions are represented – and cancel one another. > Conflict with d)
- d) Optimizing author’s uniqueness by TAKING OWN POSITION may result in problems with genre conventions that, according to widespread professional ethics, require separation of so-called facts and so-called opinion. > Conflict with e)
- e) Optimizing symbolic conventionality by STAGING THE STORY according to genre conventions of newswriting may result in excluding relevant facts and voices that do not fit into the dramaturgy of the genre. > Conflict with a)
- f) Optimizing production costs by HOLDING TO THE SPACE AND TIME RESTRICTIONS may result in hasty production and rash decisions in all the other activity fields. > Conflict with a) to e)

One example out of the *IDÉE SUISSE* corpus that explains such a conflict and its emergent solution is the *UN ELECTIONS* case. The journalist in this case is a professional with over 20 years of experience as a foreign correspondent and news editor for Scandinavian and Swiss print media and television. He criticizes the loss of influence of journalists in the newsroom, feels underestimated by his boss and colleagues, and dares to challenge existing policies (“doing forbidden things”) if he thinks this will enhance the quality of the news. At the time of the study, he was working for the *Tagesschau*, SRG’s German-speaking flagship television newscast.

In the production process investigated in the *UN ELECTIONS* case, the journalist first viewed the video sources at his workplace and took notes by hand. The language of most of his sources was English. Then he took the pictures to the cutter’s workplace, together they compiled the videos, and he wrote the text. He jotted down notes of quotes from the video sources by hand while he composed the text in German on the computer. Between writing phases, he read the expanding text aloud. The most remarkable activity for the present analysis, however, could be observed at the very beginning.

Before the journalist starts writing, he has a clear idea of how to start – and he counts on getting other ideas for the rest of the text while writing it. His idea of how to start: he will split the story. The idea and the corresponding practice emerge when the journalist tries to contextualize recent events – as can be seen in the cue-based retrospective verbal protocol in Excerpt 3. Such protocols are generated within the methodology of Progression Analysis (e.g. Perrin 2003; 2013:

63–65) by exposing the writers to a video recording of their screen activity right after text production.

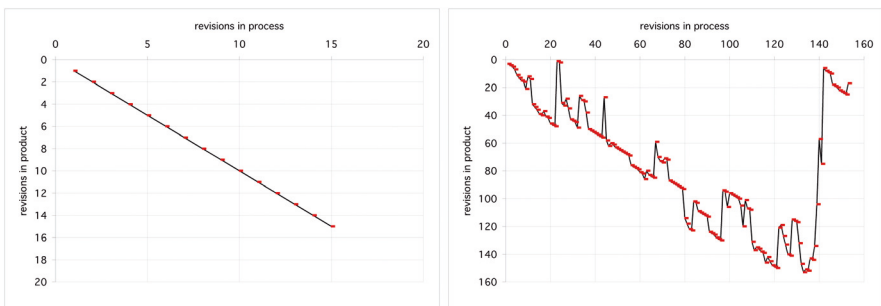
- 0076 und was ich jetzt da versuche ist eigentlich die geschichte  
*and what I'm trying to do here actually is (to give) the story*
- 0077 die schlicht mal einfach eine wahl ist in den sicherheitsrat sozusagen  
*which is simply just an election to the security council as it were*
- 0078 in den kontext zu setzen  
*to provide a context for it*
- ...
- 0092 das sind zwei verschiedene geschichten  
*there are two different stories*
- 0093 die man da erzählt  
*to tell here*
- 0094 und mit den bildern  
*and with the pictures*
- 0095 kann ich natürlich die zweite geschichte schlecht erzählen  
*I can't tell the second story very well of course*
- 0096 das sind konkrete bilder  
*these are the pictures we have*
- 0097 auf denen man den wahlablauf sieht  
*which show the election procedure*
- 0098 wo die quotes sind  
*where the quotes are*
- 0099 die sich wohl nur indirekt auf das beziehen  
*which really only relate indirectly to it*
- 0100 das heisst in der moderation muss ich jetzt versuchen  
*that means that now in the anchor's introduction I have to try*
- 0101 den kontext sozusagen zu umschreiben  
*to sort of describe the context*
- 0102 und weil wir ja sehr aktualitätsbezogen sind  
*and because we really focus on current topics*
- 0103 muss ich irgendwie schauen  
*I have to somehow make sure*
- 0104 dass es eine aktualität hat  
*that there is a connection to recent events*
- ...
- 0113 chavez das ist noch schwierig in zwei drei sätzen  
*chavez this is quite difficult in two or three sentences*
- 0114 für leute die nicht wissen  
*for people who don't know*
- 0115 was chavez für eine rolle spielt  
*what chavez's role is*

Ex. 3 Excerpts of the cue-based retrospective verbal protocol (original German and translation)

In Progression Analysis, a propositional analysis of the retrospective verbal protocol leads to the description of the repertoire of the journalist's conscious activities (e.g. Perrin 2013: 63–64). In the UN ELECTIONS case, the most remarkable set of activities consists of practices (doing X) and strategies (doing X in order to achieve Y, or doing X because Y is true; (e.g. Perrin 2013: 258) that help the journalist overcome a restriction by existing policies and to deal with background and recent information in a dramaturgically new way we called the *background-recency split*:

- Distinguish between two stories: the recent story and the background story (see Excerpt 1, e.g. line 92).
- Tell the recent story in the news text because it matches the recent pictures available (e.g. lines 94–99).
- Tell the background story because not all of the audience is up-to-date on this item (e.g. lines 113–115).
- Tell the background story in the anchor's text because there are no pictures (e.g. lines 94–95).

Having researched the core sources and decided to split the story, the journalist sees one clear thematic focus for each of the two short stories he will write. This writing can be evaluated visually in the progression graphs of the two writing processes. It becomes visible as he produces the introduction for the anchor-woman first and the news text next. The progression graphs in Figure 3 show that the journalist writes his ideas fluently in the order they will be read or heard. The background story for the anchor is generated in a single linear sweep. The recent story is written in an initial, composing sequence, followed by a second, revising sequence.



**Figure 3:** Progression graphs of the background story for the anchor (left) and of the recent story (right).

The *background-recency split* practice emerged in the journalist's conflict with two basic activities: He had to cover market demands (STAGING THE STORY) and policy demands (ESTABLISHING RELEVANCE FOR THE AUDIENCE) at the same time; on the one hand, the pictures he had only covered recent events, on the other hand, he needed to provide background information. However, he decided not to compromise – not to overburden the pictures with inappropriate text (in order to maximize), but not to sacrifice background information due to the lack of appropriate pictures (in order to maximize STAGING THE STORY).

Instead, the journalist opted for an emergent third way: reaching both goals properly by writing two different texts. For the news item text itself, he took into account recent events, the market for short and well-illustrated news, and the pictures available. For the anchorwoman's introduction, he supplied the background information he expected to be useful for the less informed of the audience. This is how he practiced promoting public understanding.

However, this goes against unwritten policies in his newsroom. Normally, *Tagesschau* journalists leave most recent information to the anchor and keep the background story for their news items. In another case study from the IDÉE SUISSE project, a journalist explained this policy as enabling the editorial teams to pick up on the latest information in the introduction even immediately before broadcasting. Whereas the item with its complex interplay of pre-recorded text and pictures cannot be instantly rewritten and recut, the anchorman or anchorwoman can adapt his or her introduction on the spot to recent developments.

Thus, the *background-recency split* is part of the journalist's tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1966) about collaboration modes, text-picture ratios, storytelling, and combining public and market needs. By allowing the journalists to do what the media policy expects them to do, it belongs to a set of *good practices* of experienced, but isolated professionals, as identified in the IDÉE SUISSE and similar projects. It deserves to be detected and transferred to the knowledge of the whole organization of the media company, as a situational alternative to the widespread practice of always leaving the production of the introduction to an anchor who might have less thematic competence.

## 4 The role of inclusive multilingualism in organizational development

Just like the *background-recency split* in the UN ELECTIONS case, new practices can emerge from journalists' solving the conflict between seemingly contradictory

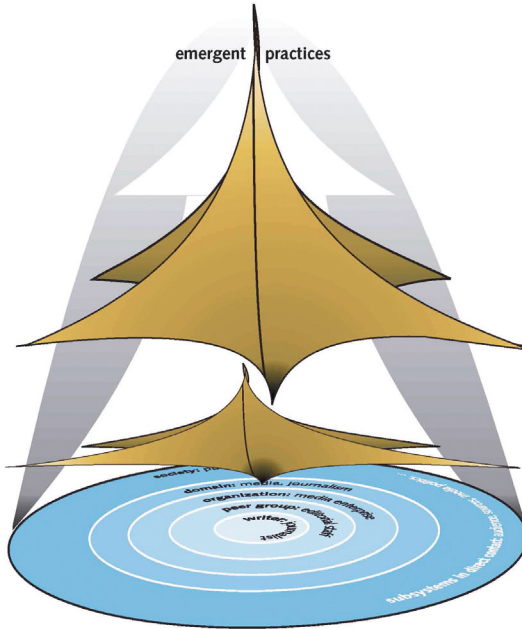
activities, policies, and expectations. This is what an analysis of the data from modules C and D of the *IDÉE suisse* project has shown (see above, Part 3). By doing so, journalists working at the ground floor of the media organization effectively deal with problems left open on much higher levels such as the media management and external policymakers, as findings from the project modules A and B revealed (Part 2, e.g. Excerpts 1 and 2).

An emergent individual solution based on positive deviants' tacit knowledge (e.g. Agar 2010: 295; Spreitzer and Sonenshein 2004) is not yet an organizational practice and is still far from changing more durable structures such as policies. However, such an emergent solution can scale up and be a starting point for change on higher levels. In line with the concepts of *emergence* and *upscaling* from Dynamic Systems Theory (e.g. Larsen-Freeman and Cameron 2008; Perrin 2013: 235–243), RST conceives social macro change as being caused by micro outcomes emerging from human agency and social structures – structures that constrain and enable agency in complex, more or less durable ways that actors often are unaware of.

In doing so, RST is able to explain why positive deviants' emergent ideas from the ground floor matter for sustainable organizational policymaking. These individual agents' tacit practical knowledge about filling the gap between market demands and policy requirements is the missing link between policy talk and policy 'walk'. Made explicit, the knowledge can trigger functional changes in an organization's shared awareness and reconstruction of the public mandate as a social reality and, in particular, of the policy of promoting public understanding.

How does change scale up in the real-life setting of the public broadcaster? In the *IDÉE suisse* project, we tracked the discursive consequences of changes such as the emergence of the *background-recency split* in the *TAGESSCHAU* newsroom. We found evidence for the following negotiation process and innovation flow, similar to the lexicalization of neologisms: Positive deviants such as the *UN ELECTIONS* journalist dare to do "forbidden", but reasonable "things"; during quality checks in the workplace, the peers and superiors accept the solution implicitly or explicitly, e.g. for its superiority to the standard variant; in the editorial conference, the newsroom team approves it as a new way that works under certain conditions; more and more journalists benefit from the new option to overcome specific critical situations.

In an RST view, such new options can be conceived as middle-range changes, between individual cases and explicit policies. Actually, the *IDÉE suisse* data provide evidence of a series of macro policy changes following meso-level changes of newsroom practices and micro changes that emerged in the workplace. It could be shown that bottom-up changes of policies tend to be well received and accepted on the media organization's ground floor and in the media



**Figure 4:** Emergent solutions scale up and overcome the dilemma of contradictory expectations.

management. Yet, a few changes, albeit reasonable in terms of existing policies, were perceived as face-threatening by some of the management and therefore hardly accepted. Such persistence of dysfunctional structures has been explained as organizational “hypocrisy” (Brunsson 2002) and “two-faced” (see also Agar 2010: 296; Perrin 2013: 33).

The above principle of upscaling emergent solutions is visualized in Figure 4. Nested in social environments with their specific contextual resources (the blue circles from Figure 1), writers deal with conflicting enablements and constraints of variegated durability, such as stakeholders’ expectations and related activity fields (the lower yellow hexagon, from Figure 2). Shifting towards one set of expectations and related field of activity, such as ESTABLISHING RELEVANCE FOR THE AUDIENCE to meet public service policies, inevitably increases the distance to all the others, such as STAGING THE STORY to sell it (see above, Part 3, a–e).

The dilemma can only be overcome with an emergent solution (the upward move in the lower hexagon). This emergent solution is categorically new in that it opens up a new dimension of reframing and dealing with the problem, one beyond compromising within the expectation conflict, as explained with the UN ELECTIONS case (Part 3). Through processes of co-adaptation, the emergent solution then scales up from an individual to an organizational level (the upper

hexagon). Finally, transforming the knowledge state from tacit to explicit changes the way the entire organization, from journalists to management, is able to reconstruct the policy and to understand and realize a non-hypocritical organizational function within society-at-large (the grey arch).

But what has this all to do with multilingualism? In a media organization, language is a twofold resource: On an object level of mass media activity, language serves as a semiotic resource in a chain of value creation (Jakobs and Perrin 2014b), in which source texts are sequentially processed into target texts (Jakobs and Perrin 2014a: 3). On a meta level, language enables organizational communication and development (e.g. Perrin 2015; Tietze et al. 2003). Understanding the others' languages and pragmatic variants enables stakeholders to collaborate and to develop policies as shared and embodied knowledge, including positive deviants' emergent solutions.

Strictly speaking, it is only by practising inclusive multilingualism across stakeholder groups such as journalists, managers, policymakers, sources, and audience, that media organizations, first, translate source to target texts, and, second, communicate across hierarchical levels and professional cultures in order to reflect upon and develop. For example, top management can only learn from the ground floor (and vice versa) if both sides are able and willing to communicate their understanding of the public mandate in a way the others can and want to understand: A way that fits with their reality, this is their view of the world and their means of referring to it in their pragmatic variant of professional language.

But there is more. Public service media providers, just like traditional media institutions in general, find themselves increasingly challenged by the internet and the social web (e.g. Revers 2014). Emergent ideas are in growing demand, both on the operative level of content production as well as on the meta level of organizational policymaking, development, and the sheer survival of journalism as a key agent of highly mediatized democracies (Christians et al. 2009) in Europe. Again, innovation research shows that solutions tend to emerge in the workplace, as "microdevelopment" (Granott 2002). This raises the fundamental question of how to benefit from micro change in order to achieve durable macro change. Operationalizing and systematically applying RST is a reasonable answer.

## **5 Conclusion: Operative principles for policymaking in European news production**

As shown so far for the case of SRG, media policymakers explicitly and overtly considered the public mandate relevant and feasible. In contrast, media manage-



ment did not, despite lip service to it in their public talk. Experienced journalists, though, did, albeit only implicitly and tacitly. They faced the challenge of contradictory expectations by developing emergent practices of promoting public understanding. Guided knowledge transformation through explicit communication was needed to make the organization realize how some exponents did what media policy expected the entire broadcaster to do. While sharing this knowledge, stakeholder groups learned to understand each other's language, that is each other's pragmatic variant of referring to – and dealing with – the issue of promoting public understanding. This is what we call inclusive multilingualism in organizational communication.

Systematic knowledge transformation requires methodological principles. Although such principles have not been developed within RST itself, they have within the neighbouring research framework of transdisciplinary action research (TDA; see Apostel 1972). TDA aims at facilitating theoretically grounded and systematic collaboration between researchers and practitioners, such as applied linguists and communication researchers on the one hand and journalists, media managers, and media policymakers on the other. Not surprisingly, the methodological principles and practices of TDA have referred, from the very beginning of TDA, to concepts of reality, reconstruction, and language use such as translating between practitioners' and researchers' languages (e.g. Klein 2008: 407).

By theoretically connecting practical and academic domains, TDA adds the formerly missing link, the methodological dimension, to projects in RST frameworks. Based on a tradition of substantial practical experience and theoretical reflection of it, TDA explains why and how researchers and practitioners can systematically use and develop their variants of languages in shared projects to foster mutual learning and solve real-world problems such as promoting public understanding or policymaking. The methodological principles of TDA, as explained below, match the key concepts of RST, the variegated durability and persistence of structures that enable and constrain change as a social reality, independently from being known or not by social agents. The following catalogue groups the principles around the conceptual key aspects of transdisciplinary action research: *trans-*, *action*, and *research*.

– The *trans-* aspect

TDA *transgresses* boundaries on three levels of institutional range and durability: between domains such as science and journalism; between disciplines such as applied linguistics and communication studies; and between organizations such as universities and broadcasting companies. This aspect of TDA is covered by the general methodological principle of *integrating instead of excluding relevant stakeholders throughout the project*. It expands to specific principles such as:

- getting support from the relevant parties (Pohl et al. 2008: 417). The research-based theoretical support of inclusive media policymaking in Europe, for example, has not yet found its funding body. Creative solutions are in high demand.
- overcoming the incompatibility of targets (Hammersley 2004). Inclusive policymaking lives from the diversity and contrast of needs and views. It requires approaches that do not smooth away or ignore incompatibilities in favor of dominating positions by, e.g., media managers *or* policymakers. On the contrary, exposure to incompatibilities can serve as a starting point for emergent solutions, as shown in the UN ELECTIONS case.
- resolving differences in timescales and well grounded theories (Agar 2010: 8). Practitioners, from journalists to politicians, tend to ask for solutions that help them dispose of, once and for all, their policy problems. However, sustainable solutions of inclusive policymaking require practicing inclusive multilingualism. This takes time.
- fostering communication and mutual learning. All the European public service broadcasting companies have to fulfill top-down mandates like SRG’s *promoting public understanding*. Pragmatic hypocrisy in realizing such mandates can only be left behind if the parties in power realize that promoting public understanding requires, first of all, promoting shared learning and understanding within and beyond the media organization itself.
- The *action* aspect  
TDA is oriented towards solving a practical problem by taking action in a context of multiple expectations. While science strives for “true” mid-range theories about situated activity, practitioners look for “authentic” insights into their own circumstances and practices, and society at large aims for “prudent” measures for solving the practical problem (see Kemmis 1988: 46, based on Habermas 1974). This aspect of TDA is covered by the general methodological principle of *solving the problem on a level beyond contradictions* instead of shifting it by making compromises to accommodate conflicting forces (as in the lower hexagon of Figure 4). It expands to specific principles such as:
  - observing organizational power (Jones and Stubbe 2004). Progression analysis for example, as applied in the IDÉE SUISSE project and outlined above (Part 3), is used to identify emergent solutions in the newsroom. However, the same procedures could be misused to spy on workplace activity, for example to temporarily speed up workflows by eliminating slow work. Transparency towards all the stakeholders involved helps avoid inappropriate expectations.

- putting tacit knowledge to use. Being the only one who knows how to solve a seemingly unsolvable problem can both assure social positions and strengthen one's willpower to work. In the worst case, positive deviants may feel threatened by a shift from implicit to explicit knowledge because they fear the loss of exclusive production capital. Organizations must offer incentives for sharing knowledge in favor of better workflows and policies.
- motivating practitioners' superiors (Agar 2010: 24). Knowing better can be perceived as social capital, not knowing, in contrast, as lack thereof. This contrast is accentuated in hierarchical relations. Superiors can feel threatened when invited to learn from the ground floor of their organization. Therefore, a shift from top-down to inclusive policymaking requires careful TDA process management. In the *IDÉE SUISSE* project, both managers and journalists were coached throughout the project to handle potential problems of knowledge transformation across hierarchies.
- collaborating with practitioners (Davies 2007: 23). Whereas shifts from top-down to inclusive policymaking basically benefit from evidence-based TDA, researchers have to resist the temptation to benefit unilaterally from practitioners. Theory building is only one of the TDA goals, besides solving the practical problem in a sustainable way for the stakeholders who are directly involved and for society-at-large. For the practitioners involved, *IDÉE SUISSE* and all the related projects (Part 3, first paragraph) have resulted in measures of organizational development which, in turn, have been strong incentives for potential new project partners.
- The *research* aspect  
TDA, after all, is research, a theoretically-based enterprise, albeit oriented towards practical solutions. In contrast to disciplinary research, it aims at emergent “quadrangulation[s] of disciplinary depth, multidisciplinary breadth, interdisciplinary integration, and transdisciplinary competencies” (Klein 2008: 406). This aspect of TDA is covered by the general methodological principle of *developing as adequately as possible a multiperspective reconstruction of the interplay between layered structures and situated activity*. By doing so, TDA and TDA-informed RST aim at catalyzing instead of compromising theory and practice. Specific principles are:
- grasping the complexity of problems and reaching beyond “the bleeding obvious” (Harcup 2012). Promoting public understanding, for example, is more complex an issue than many media managers in the *IDÉE SUISSE* project considered it to be. By including all form of heteroglossia and intra-lingual variants, it reaches beyond translating between a country's national languages.

- exploiting disciplinary focus, precise knowledge, and rigorous methods (Arber 1964; Denzin 2010; Hirsch Hadorn et al. 2008). Multi-method approaches such as Progression Analysis in the IDÉE SUISSE project require thorough theoretical reflection not only of each of their individual parts, but also of the combination itself (e.g. Grésillon and Perrin 2014).
- integrating practitioners' views, by analyzing and reframing everyday concepts in a way that helps transgress seemingly obvious boundaries of seemingly clarified concepts and relations (Bergmann et al. 2010: 11; Kühl 2008: 178). Concepts such as inclusive multilingualism and inclusive policymaking reach beyond everyday experience of stakeholders such as the policymakers involved, offering alternative views onto the apparently well-known.
- generalizing the findings through theoretically sound procedures (Hammersley 2004). In the IDÉE SUISSE project, findings about the role emergent outcomes plays for inclusive policymaking in cases such as UN ELECTIONS had to be tested by generating contrastive case studies according to principles of grounded theory and theoretical sampling (Perrin 2013: 181–188).

To conclude, the IDÉE SUISSE project shows that inclusive multilingualism facilitates both inclusive policymaking – and the research thereof. Informed by methodological principles from Transdisciplinary Action Research, the research framework of Realist Social Theory fosters systematic communication and knowledge transformation across professional settings, conceptual approaches, and linguistic variants. The theoretically grounded management of mutual learning within the transdisciplinary collaboration of the IDÉE SUISSE project allowed different agents in their specific social settings (such as researchers, journalists, and managers) to effectively and efficiently overcome their differences between reconstructions of reality. As a result, the stakeholders of the public mandate got closer to a shared, more complex and thus more adequate (*more realistic* in terms of RST) view on the public mandate of promoting public understanding, the traditional, but endangered *raison d'être* of public service broadcasting in European democracies.

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