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**The Journalistic Field and the City:  
Some Practical and Organizational Tales about  
the *Toronto Star's* New Deal for Cities**

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## **The Journalistic Field and the City: Some Practical and Organizational Tales about the *Toronto Star's* New Deal for Cities**

### Abstract:

This article presents Pierre Bourdieu's field theory as a way to approach the under-theorized relationship of journalism and the city. The concept of field provides a way to conceive of the conditions of possibility for what journalists do in, through, and in relation to the urban. Bringing this concept together with practice theory and organizational sociology, I examine four practical and organizational tales – two narratives and two episodes – related to the *Toronto Star's* New Deal for Cities campaign. These tales demonstrate how journalistic practices are not only performed *in* and distinctively oriented *towards* urban space, but also are at the same time regulated by, oriented towards, and positioned in the journalistic field. I highlight how journalistic practices take place in multiple organizational sites, through changing regimes of managerial authority and legitimacy, and with shifting positioning in and orientations to the journalistic field and other social fields of the city.

## **Introduction**

It is early 2002. As is the case nearly every day of the year, in and around the city the *Toronto Star* lands on doorsteps, is deposited in mailboxes, and is sold in shops or newspaper boxes. For policymakers and other specialized readers, staffers select articles from within the paper, collating and photocopying them into news clippings. On this day in January, however, the front page is taken up not by breaking news, nor a journalistic investigation or item of human interest. Instead, extending across the top of the front page is a grand pronouncement in black typeface: “This city needs a crusader”. The headline runs atop a special column by well-known Toronto City Hall Columnist Tim Fenn<sup>1</sup>, who complains that Canada’s largest city is self-contented: “The pillaging of Toronto has occurred with only sporadic whimpers from the city’s complacent citizens, disheartened advocates, satisfied business elite and pitiful political representatives.” As evidence, he points to a survey the newspaper has conducted of federal and provincial cabinet members, showing a demonstrable lack of involvement or interest in urban affairs. Below Fenn’s column is a highly unusual front page editorial. John Honderich, the *Toronto Star*’s Publisher-Editor, argues bluntly that Canada’s cities are in the midst of a crisis: crumbling infrastructure, failing social systems, inadequate governance. As Honderich puts it: “Great cities don’t happen by accident. They are built on a foundation of daring ideas, smart investments, and political determination.”

With these not-so-humble front page pronouncements – along with a package of related news, features, and opinion placed throughout that January 2002 newspaper – the *Toronto Star* inaugurated its “New Deal for Cities” campaign. In the weeks following, a torrent of *Toronto Star* articles, features, columns, and editorials illustrated and advocated for

solutions to the problems facing Canadian cities: antiquated governance arrangements, and intergovernmental relations, unbalanced taxation systems, net losses of city revenues, and the “decline” of Toronto after so many years of accolades. It was a campaign of grandiose evocation, but also more banal, sustained reporting. Through it, the *Toronto Star* was placed, as in so many other episodes over the preceding century, at the centre of Toronto’s politics and public life. Its journalistic campaign appealed to the very future and “health” of Toronto as a political and economic entity. The newspaper acted in, through, and even presumed to act for the city.

This article presents an approach for theorizing the relationship of journalism and the city, drawing upon the empirical example of the *Toronto Star*’s New Deal for Cities campaign. There is a growing literature on the implications of emerging media practices and technologies for urban life and its environments (e.g. Hampton and Wellman, 2003; Centner, 2008). However, this article emphasizes not only media in the general sense, but also what is sometimes generically labeled “*the media*” to refer to news professionals and their organizations. What is the interface between urban spaces and the social spaces of such professions? My starting premise is that, although the relationship of journalism and the city has received some attention, it tends to be under-theorized, offering a weak conceptual and analytical account of what writers drawing on Bourdieu call the “journalistic field” (see Benson and Neveu, 2005). The concept of field provides a way to conceive of the conditions of possibility for what journalists do in, through, and in relation to the urban, and its recognition as specifically journalistic. Today, owing to the rise of Internet-related technologies and practices, this is of empirical as well as theoretical concern. Myriad new “citizen” and “hyper local” media seem to present an uncertain future for journalism in relation to urban life. An important articulation of this

uncertainty is the newspaper, traditionally a significant medium representing, mediating, and speaking for and to the city as public, market and material environment. Indeed, the decline or “death” of newspapers has not only interested academics (e.g. Franklin, 2009), but has also been the subject of attention and even anxieties in popular print publications (e.g. Alterman, 2008), documentaries such as PBS Frontline’s *News War*<sup>2</sup>, and even television drama portrayals, such as HBO’s *The Wire* (see Rodgers, forthcoming; Sabin, 2011).

I therefore seek to pry open the “black box” of journalism in relation to the city. One objective in so doing is to transcend urban studies’ frequent treatment of media as a separate domain that has “effects” on the city or urban life, or as operating within a functionalist system of urban relations (cf. Rodgers, Barnett and Cochrane, 2009).

Rather, I place primary emphasis on the constitution of journalism as an urban *practice*.

Referring in particular to Pierre Bourdieu’s (1990) theory of practice, I propose a sense of journalism as those practices regulated through and positioned in relation to the space of possibility the journalistic field represents. At the same time, I position journalism practices in and through particular organizational configurations, in this case, an urban newspaper. Here I concur with McQuarrie and Marwell (2009), who argue that organizations should be seen as productive of, and not merely derived from, urban social relations. Though I do not adopt most of McQuarrie and Marwell’s (2009) approach, the paper broadly aligns with their contention that organizational studies and process theories have much to offer in elucidating how organizational forms are both structured by and structuring of their relation to the city.

The next theoretical section unpacks some conceptual dimensions of the journalism-city relation. I begin with a brief consideration of how urban sociology has tended to conceive of journalism, and conversely, how the journalism literature has understood the city. Although these literatures make useful observations, in particular regarding the political economy of the journalism-city relationship, they also tend to push the specificity of journalism practices as such into the background. In response, I offer a conceptual outline for understanding journalism as a particular form of urban practice that is structured by and structuring of its organizational and field relationships.

This approach is then applied to the empirical complexities and contingencies of a particular organizational and urban situation. Drawing on ethnographic research at the *Toronto Star* between 2005 and 2011,<sup>3</sup> I provide an account of some practical and organizational “tales” of the newspaper’s New Deal for Cities campaign. By “tales” I mean two main types of narrative: first, the two main *stories* organizational members recounted concerning the origins of the very idea of a New Deal for Cities; and second, two organizational *episodes*, one a faltering 2005 effort to re-launch the campaign, followed by a subsequent effort to rebrand it in name and journalistic outlook.

The next analytical section argues that these tales highlight three contingent phenomena of the journalism-city relation. First, forms of urban advocacy journalism such as the *Toronto Star*’s New Deal for Cities campaign manifest unevenly through multiple organization sites, many of which are differentially interwoven into the practices and settings of non-journalistic fields. Second, that the apparently distinct approaches of Publisher-Editor John Honderich and his successor to the New Deal for Cities campaign resulted less from differences of personality than from managerial performances in the

relational milieu of the media organization vis-à-vis the journalistic field and wider Toronto urban context. Finally, an observed transition between the early and later New Deal for Cities -- from a deliberate campaign to a packaged “conversation” on existing public issues -- should be seen as field strategies making alternative claims about the practice of urban affairs journalism. I conclude that a better understanding of the journalistic field and its organizational expressions is critically important for the pursuit of urban sociology at a time of intense media change.

### **Unpacking the journalism-city relation**

Contemporary approaches to understanding urban life and urban affairs have often assumed a prominent place for journalists, their organizations and their mediums. Arguably, however, the specificity of the journalism-city relation has been a subject urban sociology tends to approach indirectly. Beauregard’s (2003) seminal argument, for example, that a “discourse of decline” defined the trajectory of postwar US cities clearly implies an important role for journalists as creators and disseminators of discourse. Journalists appear alongside other important “commentators” (e.g. mayors, senators, etc) perpetuating dominant discourses on the problems and possibilities of cities (see also: Martin, 2000; Boyle and Rogerson, 2001; and Dreier, 2005). Journalism is also implicated in the literature on the entrepreneurial marketing, promotion, and commodification of urban places under late capitalism. For example, by helping propagate a branded version of cities through urban lifestyle magazines (Greenberg, 2000), through the “best places” rankings of business publications (McCann, 2004), and by establishing linkages with local marketing campaigns under the auspices of traditional local news coverage (Ward, 2000). Journalists appear here among a broader field of “cultural intermediaries” (cf. Zukin and Maguire, 2004) that assemble cities as consumption spaces, increasingly for middle class

niche markets. The journalism-city connection also appears prominently in theories of the specifically *urban* political economy of media institutions. Logan and Molotch (1987), expanding on Molotch's "city as a growth machine" thesis, argued that city newspapers were crucial actors within urban growth coalitions, those locally-dependent, pluralistic interests that unite around the objective of urban growth and compete with other urban areas for mobile capital investment. Journalism practiced in locally-dependent newspapers mediates among urban coalition members and often sets agendas for urban growth as coincident with the wider urban good, creating or co-opting city pride and jingoism (see Logan and Molotch, 1987, p. 70-72; cf. Parisi and Holcomb, 1994).

It is perhaps unsurprising that urban theorists and researchers have considered journalism in these indirect ways. After all, their principal focus is on understanding the nature of cities rather than journalism. Yet the inverse applies within the journalism literature, which naturally has a primary interest in media. As a result, there it is the urban that is secondary and treated indirectly. This is certainly the case even for research on specifically "local" media, of which Phyllis Kaniss' (1991) *Making local news* – despite its datedness<sup>4</sup> – remains an excellent example. Though she also considers local television and alternative newsweeklies, her study well describes the journalistic approach to the city through large North American "metropolitan newspapers," a particular evolution of the big city newspapers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century United States. Early city newspapers were revolutionary both as a business model and as a way for organizing publics (e.g. Barth, 1980; Henkin, 1998). They were unprecedentedly cheap (typically one or two pennies), and defined their "mass" public simply by residence in the city, rather than by narrower characteristics such as class, ethnicity or political party affiliation. As other media such as television flourished and urban areas became increasingly dispersed and

diversified, a smaller number of metropolitan newspapers established monopolies in cities that previously had numerous competing newspapers. For Kaniss, what is distinctive about this modern metropolitan newspaper is that, irrespective of its association with a named city, its business model is principally based upon farther-flung suburban audiences. Journalism at such newspapers therefore tends to offer a highly symbolic version of the city, emphasizing such phenomena as downtown politics, major development schemes, and crime (Kaniss, 1991, p. 71-100).

This portrayal of metropolitan newspapers illustrates the strong interests of the journalism literature in the encroachment of market logic into media and its implications for local journalism. As McManus (1994) influentially argued in his study of American local television, commercial concepts dominate contemporary mainstream news media. Journalism generates news “products.” Its areas of circulation or signal are its “markets”. This increasing emphasis on capturing markets makes the media literature pessimistic about the veracity of local media’s localism and in turn, the political remit of local journalism. Many local media outlets are holdings of larger media conglomerates, many of which are thinly differentiated templates also applied to other local “markets” (Eliasoph, 1998, p. 227). Indeed, Franklin (2005) argues that the displacement of relatively high-quality local journalism by standardized and packaged newspaper titles may represent another extension of the “McDonaldization” processes of rationalization (Ritzer 1993). Alongside the growth of transnational companies and the decline of large locally-based businesses, assumptions that local media organizations are locally grounded business establishments, or that local journalism is embedded in deep emotional, social, and political relationships with a locality, have become highly questionable (Aldridge, 2003).<sup>5</sup>

The urban sociology and journalism literatures both begin from a broadly political economy point of view or at least depart from such a view to offer related perspectives nuanced by social and cultural theory. To be sure, questions of political economy cannot be avoided in understanding the relationship of journalism and the city. Virtually all journalism practices, even amateur ones, take place through commercialized and often globalized organizations or platforms. However, to understand how journalism practices take place in and through urban environments, these questions of political economy cannot be accepted *a priori*. It does not necessarily follow that local media, although commercialized, are “the ‘front’ or the ‘PR’ vehicle for a powerful elite” (Thomas 1994, p. 317-318). Thomas’ study of the *South Wales Echo* showed that the newspaper’s favorable portrayal of redevelopment proposals for Cardiff’s waterfront emerged principally from a shared interpretive world among routinely-interacting editors, journalists, politicians, and bureaucrats. Journalists can also often sidestep such established news sources and adopt “grassroots” framings of contentious urban issues (Roth and Vander Haar 2006). In a study of reporting on urban conflict, Cottle (1993) suggested that although television “news products” are certainly market-driven, they are relatively differentiated in practice. A solely political economic analysis is inadequate to reveal such contrary or nuanced evidence.

Thomas (1994), Roth and Vander Haar (2006), and Cottle (1993) hold in common a broadly sociological approach to journalism. This is a tradition with a relatively long pedigree, traceable back to a heyday of newsroom ethnographies conducted in the late 1970s (e.g. Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978)<sup>6</sup>. The most distinctive contribution of this tradition has been to assert that practical journalism work itself

ought to be treated as a serious object of study. As Becker and Vlad (2009) have argued, this approach has been inspired by sociologies of work in particular, engendering three prominent lenses for understanding journalism: first, as highly routinized work practices; second, as subdivided into specialized areas or “beats”; and third, as constrained by the various bureaucratic structures, news philosophies, and commercial brands of different news media organizations (Schudson, 2003). However, Marr, Francis, and Randall (1998), writing from an ethnomethodological standpoint, convincingly argue that an important weakness of sociological approaches is their reliance on notions such as “professional culture” to explain what motivates journalism practices. Their example is Gans (1979), but it is a tendency also evident in Kaniss’ (1991) descriptive typology of local journalists’ professional values. Such approaches explain practices by reference to transcendent cultures or maxims followed to a greater or lesser extent, when professional journalism culture is rather an effect, indeed an accomplishment, of the activities themselves (Marr, Francis and Randall, 1998, p. 115).

I will argue that this inversion, in which situated practical activities produce professional culture, is central to theorizing journalism as an urban practice. Yet this claim does not amount to a naïve validation of individual agency. Rather, complex practices such as “journalism” are defined precisely by the fact that they refer to shared understandings and rules, as well as specific forms of normativity and emotions that are expected and acceptable for those performing the practice (cf. Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2002).

The notion that organized practices share these relatively identifiable qualities is well captured by Bourdieu’s (1990) concept of “field”, which has attracted recent sociological interest for understanding journalism specifically (e.g. Benson and Neveu, 2005). Broadly

conceived, fields can be described as “conditions of possibility”. In contrast to the physical spaces of embodied, improvised practices, fields are the social spaces through which practical actions become regulated over time (i.e.. they condition what Bourdieu calls “habitus”). A common metaphor for fields is to say they operate like a “game” in which actors participate on the basis of its unspoken presuppositions (“doxa”) and an investment in its stakes (“illusio”). In journalism, what counts as authoritative performances, ethical actions, and acceptable forms of “instinct” (Schultz, 2007) is defined by performing in accordance with field conditions (cf. Butler, 1999).

In this way, “field” is basically a phenomenological concept, in that it assumes practical experience is always already structured. However, many of the structuring conditions of possibility for the journalistic field are irreducible to those of other fields. This means that the structuring of journalism practice is not *a priori* of a political economic nature: field theory suggests that there are aspects of journalism practices which are relatively autonomous and not reducible to the logics of the economic field.

However, I do not wish to weigh down my argument with field theory’s attendant Bourdieusian conceptual armature (e.g. habitus, forms of capital, etc.). One critical flaw of Bourdieu’s field concept is that it is too often applied in an overly deterministic fashion, where the specificities of situated practical action are conceived of as wholly subjected to field domination (see Friedland, 2009; Bottero and Crossley, 2011). My point is simply that the concept of field provides a very useful heuristic for thinking through how journalists’ practices in and in relation to urban spaces are at once structured and structuring. This more open-ended approach draws not only from field theory, but also from recent ethnographic and anthropological studies of journalism as

practice (e.g. Bird, 2010; Paterson and Domingo, 2008) and from work at the intersection of practice theory and media studies more broadly (e.g. Bräuchler and Postill, 2010; Couldry, 2012).

Field theory has recently gained traction as a heuristic for understanding urban life. As Savage (2011) argues, a radicalized conception of the field concept views urban life as taking place not only amid physically proximate material qualities (e.g. open space, infrastructures, buildings), but also in relation to hierarchically-ordered social spaces beyond the immediate local milieu. The latter might include professionalized fields, along with other social groups or classes, which in turn find concrete expression in urban space (cf. Isin, 2002, pp. 42-50). The journalistic field manifests itself through conferences, journalism schools, industry organizations, legal proceedings, and media organizations, and the actual occupied positions making up the journalistic field are notably intensified in and constituted through urban settings. For example, this means acknowledging the distinctly urban settings of nationally- or globally-oriented media outlets. Indeed, a critical weakness in the journalism literature is its undertheorization of the “local,” a term deployed mainly to delineate an industry category of locally-focused media. This fails to capture a more multifaceted interface between journalism and the city that a relational conception of journalism coupled with relational urban theory might engender.

Finally, newspaper organizations like the *Toronto Star* are not only manifested in urban space, but also exhibit a decisive journalistic orientation *towards* urban space. The case study that follows shows that the specific forms and orientations of journalism practices in relation to the city often depend on their positioning in, or orientation to a media organization and on the nature of that organization. Media organizations materialize in

many forms through the city. For example, media buildings house much of a news organization's staff and infrastructure, and also often project its importance through exterior aesthetics or a symbolic location in the city (see Rodgers, forthcoming 2013). Journalism practices are also oriented to media organizations as "macro actors" (Feldman and Pentland, 2005). Many media organizations, particularly city newspapers, have symbolic importance as entities identified with taken-for-granted qualities, such as an historical relationship with the city and its residents, or certain forms of authority in urban public culture. Let us now flesh out these conceptual points further, with reference to the *Toronto Star's* New Deal for Cities campaign.

### **Two organizational stories**

The *Toronto Star* launched its New Deal for Cities campaign during a period of fairly intense policy debate around the governance and fiscal arrangements relating to Toronto and other Canadian cities. At least initially, the debate primarily involved a specialized academic and policy community. The context of these debates is well addressed in the existing urban studies literature (Boudreau, 2000; Keil, 2002; Keil and Young, 2003; Donald, 2005; Bradford, 2007). Here, however, I focus on the stories, tales and narratives that *Toronto Star* journalists and those with whom they closely interacted related about the New Deal for Cities. A key insight of organizational sociology is that the narratives organizational members tell about past events or histories can tell us a good deal about their taken-for-granted understandings of their organization and its place in the wider world (e.g. Czarniawska, 1997; Feldman and Pentland, 2005). Although such narratives might usefully indicate aspects of the past, they also tell us just as much about the moment at the time of telling (Law 1994, pp. 52-57).

*The urban policy story*

There were two main organizational stories about the New Deal for Cities. The first was an *urban policy story*. This story was less an account of a *Toronto Star* advocacy campaign than a shared vision of the wider political or policy world in which the newspaper was seen as entangled. Here, the New Deal for Cities was about the development, evolution, or maturation of the longstanding political debates over financial and jurisdictional autonomy for Toronto, its surrounding region, and in time, for Canadian cities more generally. Some traced this story back far and wide; usually, however, it began somewhere around the mid-1990s, in the wake of the long recession that began in the late 1980s. This was a time when the Liberal Party reduced the federal deficit primarily through deep cuts in transfers to provincial governments, which in turn had deep implications for urban areas. It was also a time when the Progressive Conservative Party, the newly elected provincial government of Ontario, was implementing a neoliberal “common sense revolution.” A central aspect of their reform agenda was a controversial realignment in how provincial and municipal government services were funded and delivered, widely condemned as an unfair deal for local municipalities.

Those telling the urban policy story tended to see these reform initiatives as bad news for many municipalities, and especially for the City of Toronto. Toronto had long been mythologized as a North American city to admire, a “city that worked,” with proven structures of governance, quality transit, social cohesion, and harmonious ethnic relations. But there was a growing sense that Toronto had been resting on its laurels. Toronto had a very high proportion of Ontario’s ageing infrastructure and social service needs, and so the city was rather suddenly re-imagined as crumbling and fiscally troubled.

During the same time period, the Progressive Conservative government forcibly amalgamated the former city of Toronto with five other municipalities and the upper-tier Metropolitan Toronto government, creating a single City of Toronto. For those recounting the New Deal for Cities as an urban policy narrative, this highlighted the inadequate political and legal status of Canadian cities. Canada's constitution considers the scope, status, and finances of cities to be matters primarily enacted through provincial legislation. As governmental units, Canadian cities were seen essentially as corporations, or "creatures", of provincial governments. Following a failed campaign against Toronto's amalgamation and new worries about Toronto's fiscal situation, discussions took place about new forms of legal autonomy for Canadian cities – even fantasies that Toronto could become a city-state.

In early 2002 came the *Toronto Star's* bold front page inauguration of a "crusade" for a New Deal for Cities. Yet many telling the urban policy story either omitted or downplayed this aspect. This was a story about the world outside the newspaper, the numerous actors and organizations involved in discussing, debating, and campaigning for new fiscal tools and new governance arrangements for Toronto and Canadian cities more generally. Moreover, by 2005, those telling this story could point to recent urban policy successes. By then, both the federal and Ontario governments had agreed to dedicate a portion of their fuel taxes to municipal transportation investments. The Ontario government had announced a major review of the *City of Toronto Act* with the intent of granting new powers to the City of Toronto government. Federal and provincial elections of Liberal governments helped, as did the election of a new left-leaning Mayor of Toronto. Perhaps most notably, there had been a major shift in urban policy talk *per se*. The Mayor, city councillors, and the leaders of most of the major political parties all

spoke of a “New Deal for Cities” without any reference to a newspaper campaign. The New Deal for Cities had gradually become a kind of brand, a digestible and legitimate way to frame discussion of urban policy not only in relation to Toronto, but Canadian cities in general.

### *The Toronto Star story*

Many people working at the newspaper preferred the *urban policy story* of the New Deal for Cities to the alternative *Toronto Star story*. This second story was, for some, more professionally embarrassing. It was inwardly oriented, focused on particular characters and sets of activities, and considered to be yet another chapter in the *Star*’s self-proclaimed “crusading” tradition. Almost invariably, this story started with former Publisher John Honderich. A tall, confident man, always wearing his trademark bowtie, John was the son of longtime *Star* editor and publisher Beland Honderich. He was, as a result, a well-connected representative of the voting trust of families controlling the newspaper’s publicly-traded parent company Torstar. Through this unique ownership arrangement, the *Toronto Star* is steered, not unproblematically, into accordance with the socially progressive principles of the newspaper’s founder, Joseph E. Atkinson. So John Honderich was, by his own admission as well as in the perception of others, deeply tied to the grand histories of the *Toronto Star*. His father’s distinctive mark on the *Toronto Star* had been to shift the organizational image from its sensationalist pre-war years to a new era as a modern metropolitan newspaper of credible journalism, community responsibility, and more measured campaigning on social issues it saw as important. The younger Honderich envisioned a decisive role for himself in continuing that tradition.

Somewhat unusually, when he was first appointed Publisher in the mid-1990s, John Honderich retained his previous role as Editor, maintaining a clear role in the newsroom, not just the newspaper. The signed front-page editorial that began the New Deal for Cities crusade was not Honderich's first. Just one year after being appointed Publisher, Honderich appeared on the front page initiating an influential campaign on the future governance of the Toronto region. Not only did that campaign prompt the then Ontario New Democratic Party government to commission a Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Task Force on regional governance but, at least at the *Toronto Star*, it eventually solidified "Greater Toronto Area" and "GTA" as terms of public discourse:

I was absolutely flabbergasted as I watched the *Toronto Star* invent the GTA. No one ever fucking used the expression Greater Toronto Area, and then all the sudden ... was this, (knocking hand on table) GTA, GTA, GTA, we're inventing the phrase, and when you invent the concept, the reality will follow. And my god it did! (Assistant City Editor)

By 1995, the Progressive Conservatives had assumed their majority from the NDP in the Ontario Legislature, and largely shelved the GTA Task Force report. However, they did adopt the Task Force's recommendation to create a new, amalgamated City of Toronto. This time through the *Toronto Star* Editorial Board, Honderich was remembered as a vociferous and controversial advocate of the amalgamation.

Few telling the *Toronto Star* story thought Honderich's style to be out of line with their general expectations of the organization. The newspaper had a long and well-recognized history of campaigning – even if on the amalgamation matter it ended up atypically supporting a right wing party. For many, Honderich embodied the *Toronto Star*. Despite some reservations, it was organizationally acceptable that Honderich would use Canada's largest newspaper to achieve certain objectives related to urban affairs:

People listen to what the *Star* had to say about this [the New Deal for Cities]. And because it resonated, we didn't, we wouldn't let it go, we just kept on hammering again and again and again.

So, people will say you were just a churner, to make this an issue. And I'll say, you're damn right I was. That's exactly it. We used the paper as a vehicle to get it. I don't apologize for that one iota. (John Honderich, former Publisher)

While this *Toronto Star* story of the New Deal for Cities usually began with Honderich – his persona, his desires, or his political connections – his mixing of “I” and “we” in this quotation hints at another side of the story: the places and activities across the organization, in which the campaign was discussed, analyzed, written, and implemented. During the first six months of 2002, the New Deal for Cities was devised in specific places and through specific managerial performances: at the Editorial Board, through the ongoing work of the municipal editorialist; in the newsroom, through the City Editor at the time, fabled for his eagerness to please Honderich; at the City Hall Bureau, the newspaper's locus of city politics news; and importantly, through the activities of the so-called “inner circle” composed of Tim Fenn (the City Hall Columnist), Nadya Isirov (the City Hall Bureau Chief) and Irvin Owens (a features editor). Through these sites and others, a succession of “New Deal” editorials, articles and features – often spread over two full pages – were produced.

Like the urban policy story, the *Toronto Star* story was, at the time of its telling in 2005, set into a narrative context of recent changes. Just one year prior, John Honderich had surprisingly and apparently unwillingly resigned as Publisher-Editor, after clashing with Torstar's CEO. He moved on to an appointed position in the City of Toronto as the Mayor's Special Ambassador on the “cities agenda” (implying advocacy for policy reforms in the vein of the New Deal for Cities). Honderich's valued City Editor, a major figure leading the early crusade, had been dismissed from his job around a year earlier, after rather scandalously forging the signature of the Managing Editor on expense claims.

A new Publisher (Osborn Chamberlaine) and Editor-in-Chief (Irwin Connolly) had been appointed, who were not viewed to be typical *Star* material, neither having previously worked at the organization nor originally coming from the Toronto area. There was also a new City Editor (Lee Bourrier) who, along with others, was excited by what seemed like unprecedented possibilities for innovative organizational changes that would move away from the hierarchical *Toronto Star* of years past (see Rodgers, 2010). To be sure, some at the newspaper still spoke proudly of the New Deal for Cities as continuing the newspaper's longstanding advocacy traditions. For others, however, the New Deal was remembered as overbearing and overdone, something that thankfully, along with its chief architects, was fading into memory, clearing room for other journalistic concerns and other career agendas. The New Deal for Cities crusade was not exactly dead, but following Honderich's departure, it was in a certain stasis.

### **Two organizational episodes**

Taken together, these two *stories* do provide an account, however imperfect, of how the New Deal for Cities as urban policy, on one hand, and as *Toronto Star* campaign, on the other, emerged and evolved until an end point in early 2005. These competing stories primarily tell us about held-in-common understandings about the situation at the time of their telling. I now shift to two organizational *episodes* that took place at this 2005 juncture. To underline the contemporaneity of these episodes rhetorically, as contrasted to the above stories<sup>7</sup>, I use the present tense.

#### *Re-launching the New Deal*

It is the first Saturday of February 2005. Tucked away into a small, page 2 spot in the *Toronto Star* Saturday edition is a short editorial from the recently-appointed Editor-in-

Chief Irwin Connelly. It carries the headline “Push pedal to the metal on New Deal campaign”, below which is a diminutive sub-headline, “Backgrounder.” Connelly reflects on the *Toronto Star*’s launch of the campaign in 2002, praising its meteoric rise up the political agenda. Yet he expresses dismay about the timidity of political action to date. He points readers to the editorial page, where the entirety of the day’s space is occupied by a single editorial: “Time For Boldness: Future of Toronto Now at Crossroads”. For the average reader, it is doubtful that this “Backgrounder” and lead editorial convey a bold re-launch of the New Deal for Cities crusade, but for organizational members at the *Toronto Star*, it does:

I’m not sure why [Irwin Connelly] sort of picked up the issue again? I mean the first we knew about the re-launched crusade for New Deal was when he wrote a little page two in the paper. He didn’t talk to us even personally. [Tim Fenn’s] still a bit livid over that. So he just woke up one day and said we’re re-launching the New Deal, without knowing whether there’s enough stuff happening to actually do it. (Miranda Crawford, City Hall Bureau Chief)

One month later, early March, there is still little follow-up on this muted re-launch. Pressure is mounting on City Editor Lee Bourrier to supply some content related to New Deal for Cities. That week, Lee convenes a meeting with Tim Fenn, the City Hall Columnist, and Miranda Crawford, the City Hall Bureau Chief. They come to Lee’s office on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the *Toronto Star*’s lakefront building and develop a special “New Deal sked”<sup>8</sup> listing an ambitious series of Saturday features to run every 1 or 2 weeks from mid-March to early May. Listed at the very top is a lengthy feature for that week’s Saturday edition, on which Tim Fenn and Irvin Owens immediately begin work. Owens is a special features editor who often worked with Tim in the early days of the New Deal campaign. Their idea for the feature is ambitious: a high-profile front page column by Tim, leading to a two-page spread inside the paper, where textual and visual elements present a campaign recap under the title “101 reasons for a New Deal”.

As is typical for a columnist, Tim does his work more-or-less independently alongside Owens. Lee Bourrier, meanwhile, begins the process of assembling a broader package of specifically news-led content to offer Saturday Editor Vince Quinn:

10.55am. Lee and I return from the morning news meeting, as usual, heading straight to the city desk. Leaning against a desk, Lee punches away at his Blackberry and checks for emails. As soon as he is done, he puts the device to his ear. He's making a phone call to Miranda Crawford, and is asking her, or more accurately pressing her, on whether the City Hall Bureau has some news content that might complement Tim Fenn's Saturday feature. But Lee doesn't seem to be getting the answers he wants. His voice strains and rises slightly, as the call goes on. He gets off, and he doesn't seem happy. (Observation Diary, 5 March 2005)

11.16am. Arrival in the editorial conference room. We are at the weekly features meeting, at which ideas and plans for weekend features are discussed. When it is his turn, Lee begins to outline Tim Fenn's planned feature. Vince Quinn interjects, wondering aloud whether the front page is the best location to place it. Lee: "Well it's either go big or go home, okay, I mean, the way that this thing is meant to work is to remind people why this whole thing was a part of the public conversation ... and that sometime this year, there will be some very big decisions impacting the city, negotiations are underway now, and people should be paying attention." Vince is sympathetic, but also skeptical: "My only concern is that we throw this on the front as we do so often, New Deal for Cities, and people are going to look at it and go, oh, here we go again." (Observation Diary, 5 March 2005)

Without doubt, Lee is under pressure to push for the feature. Yet by most accounts, including his own, he is more interested in other city news, topics he thinks are more meaningful and engaging. Whether Lee has been directly ordered by Irwin Connelly to push for this specific feature is unclear. Indeed, it is possible Connelly's short editorial a month earlier was simply an attempt to send the right message to the voting trust that controls the newspaper. What is clear is that Lee was at least under implicit pressure to follow through on a re-launched campaign.

Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup> arrives, the day the Saturday edition gets finalized. Most of the flagship Saturday edition is paginated over the preceding week, but content for the main news section and city-focused GTA section is not finally decided until today. And on this day, there is an added complication. Low-cost Canadian airline Jetsgo has gone under:

17,000 marooned passengers on the eve of the school spring break; 1,350 people have lost their jobs; and Jetsgo appears to have unethically continued ticket sales until the last moment. It is big news. The Saturday edition suddenly needs deconstruction and reordering. Tim Fenn's New Deal for Cities feature, presumed to be for the front page, seems heading for demotion.

### *Re-branding the New Deal*

Just over a month passes after the big news day of Friday March 11<sup>th</sup>. On the front page of the following day's paper, Tim Fenn's feature had barely preserved its place, relegated to a small corner below the fold. In the meantime, the re-launched New Deal for Cities campaign has had mixed results. The ambitious New Deal sked of Saturday features has faltered. Here and there have been small news items vaguely connected to a New Deal for Cities, but no stream of themed, branded, or sequential features that might add up to a campaign. Possibly this is due to the fact that Miranda Crawford, just days after the last episode, was moved from the City Hall Bureau to the Queen's Park Bureau at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It may also be due to competing city news events over that month, and a comparative lull in stories around city politics specifically. Or, perhaps, it is that those key figures at the newspaper who might have pushed forward the campaign regardless – Tim Fenn, Irvin Owens, and Miranda Crawford among others – feel disheartened following the aborted re-launch a month prior.

Only two articles appear over this month explicitly branded, via textual elements, as New Deal for Cities. Both are credited to Miranda Crawford, writing from her new post at the Queen's Park Bureau, and both articles address the *City of Toronto Act* review, a matter led by the provincial government. This second episode focuses on the string of events that

ensue following the second of these articles, which reports on rumors that the provincial government wants significant reforms to Toronto city council.

Miranda learns from anonymous sources on her beat, denoted in print as “some provincial officials,” that an overhauled *City of Toronto Act* granting new autonomy to Toronto would be paired with drastic changes: a “strong mayor” system, an executive committee, and potentially even a halving of city council’s size. The article draws a good deal of attention, particularly at the Mayor’s office. It might have ultimately been dismissed as little more than an obvious “trail balloon”, but for the response of the *Toronto Star*’s Editorial Board the next day:

10.20am. I arrive at the City Hall Bureau. Huddled in a small congregation are Tim Fenn, two *Toronto Star* city hall reporters, and Bill Drew, a reporter from a local community newspaper across the hall. They are discussing Toronto city council, and whether it’s “dysfunctional”. I listen in, and briskly leaf through today’s *Toronto Star* until I arrive at a lead editorial on the issue, appearing under the heading “Council could use dose of discipline.” They seem to have concluded it was written by municipal affairs editorialist Naveen Kumar, and speculate that perhaps the editorial is the result of a rant Naveen and Miranda Crawford shared over the phone. But Tim Fenn seems less interested in gossip, more so in the issues. He argues that city council is more complex than the article or editorial suggests. The rest are cynical: “It’s all about potholes, not policy” says Bill Drew. “But I could argue both sides of this...” says Tim, outlining the enduring legacy of pre-amalgamation Toronto, which he had covered as a beat reporter. They go back and forth for quite a while. Eventually it all subsides, with Tim making some knowing jokes; clearly, however, the matter has caught his interest. (Observation Diary, 19 April 2005)

For the *Toronto Star* Editorial Board, Miranda’s article was an occasion to underline their own re-launch of the New Deal for Cities campaign more than two months earlier:

... whenever we do one of these [campaign re-launches], we don’t just, okay well that’s it, next year will be another one, you know, it’s like, we look for, whenever we can, (to) repeat this message? ... So when [Miranda]’s story appeared, there was, okay that’s a good hook, we’re gonna hit ‘em, we’re gonna hit it again. And we hit it again, and our view is already quite clear, we’re strongly in favor of an executive committee and a more centralized sort of system. (Naveen Kumar, Editorialist)

Back at the City Hall Bureau, the discussion between Tim Fenn and the others ranges from experienced assessment to flippancy. For example, Naveen had not at all had a rant with Miranda. In any event, Tim Fenn’s part in the debate is far from idle. Tim has

himself served on the Editorial Board as the municipal affairs editorialist. He knows how they arrive at their positions. As he argues with his colleagues, he reasons through his next column aloud. He will subtly and without directly pointing to the Editorial Board question their position point-by-point:

The reason I wrote that column was because I didn't want the *Star* to be jumping in, and be saying this is what we want, long before the discussion took place! And I knew that they would be embarrassed when someone said they were doing that, because they hadn't thought about all the issues, they hadn't thought about, man, who'd they talk to? ... They sat in there, in the Editorial Board and knocked it around and said, oh yeah, yeah, we'll have an executive. Well okay, what about this, what about that, what about that? ... To me it was just too knee-jerk, and I wanted to send a signal out that this isn't the *Toronto Star*, everybody at the *Toronto Star* thinking this. (Tim Fenn, City Hall Columnist)

As a columnist, Tim has a degree of autonomy regarding what he might write about and how he could do it. His expressed point of view in the column, however, is not just a byproduct of this partial autonomy, but also of a simultaneous side project. Along with Irvin Owens and Nadya Isirov, both close collaborators in the New Deal for Cities campaign three years earlier, he has persuaded City Editor Lee Bourrier to develop another two-page Saturday feature for early May. This receives ready approval from Lee and his Deputy City Editor Wilson Omstead. The feature was not pitched as another occasion for the *Toronto Star* to propound on the need for a New Deal, but rather as a juxtaposition of various "voices" on possible governance models for the City of Toronto.

The final puzzle piece in this episode is the reaction of the Mayor's office. Any reforms imposed by the provincial government are blatantly against the Mayor's stated principles, so his communications staff arrange a formal visit to the *Toronto Star* Editorial Board, through Editorial Page Editor Eliot Defoe. On the day of the meeting, April 28<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Miller and his press secretary arrive at the offices of the Editorial Board. After

handshakes all around, the Mayor is soon seated in Eliot Defoe's office, near the window, his back to the city's downtown skyline. In the room are not only Eliot Defoe and most of the Editorial Board, but Lee Bourrier, Tim Fenn, and several reporters. Miller opens with some grand statements, his visions for the city, but quickly arrives to his point. He asserts that reforms to Toronto's governance are a matter for Toronto City Council to decide, not for the province to impose. A rather adversarial question and answer period follows.

For a naïve researcher, this is initially surprising; it is not the cordial meeting of elites theory would have us expect. However, for everyone present, including the Mayor, this adversarial game is banal. Cordiality resumes after 30 minutes of questioning, when Eliot Defoe relieves the tension by indicating with a raised hand the end of the meeting. He asks the Mayor if he has any last words. Miller nods, and praises the *Star's* advocacy on the New Deal for Cities, noting its great success as a campaign. Even the Prime Minister, he says, understands the vision and agrees on the need for a New Deal: "the *Star's* role in this is critical, and the *Star* continuing its campaign is crucial."

Just over a week following Mayor Miller's visit to the Editorial Board, a two-page feature by Nadya Isirov and a column by Tim Fenn appear in the *Saturday Star*. Both are related to governance models for Toronto. In marked contrast to Tim Fenn's "101 reasons for a New Deal" feature two months prior, these do not press an agenda, nor refer to a campaign or crusade. Instead, there are five noted experts' suggestions for improving Toronto's governance, alongside a graphic box outlining Mayor Miller's views articulated during his Editorial Board visit. In editing the content, Lee Bourrier and Wilson

Omstead deliberately avoid branding the feature as “New Deal for Cities”. Instead, the headline and associated textual inlays read “Making Toronto Great.”

**Analysis: organizational sites, managerial performances and field interference**

The stories and episodes just recounted highlight three themes related to the complexity and contingency of journalism acting in and in relation to the city. The first is that journalism, and particularly journalistic advocacy, occurs unevenly through multiple *organizational sites*. In interviews, various policy-related actors typically credited the *Toronto Star*, in the singular, with a major role as advocate of the New Deal for Cities. Yet it is clear from the above episodes that these journalism practices unfolded through a manifold of particular, selective, and not always coordinated sites whose practices are variably identified with the *Toronto Star*. Since the campaign emerged in certain sites and not others, it produced insiders and outsiders. An apt example of the latter was Elias Dallon, an urban affairs critic not mentioned in the stories or episodes:

I wrote about him [Paul Bedford, the former chief city planner] when he retired. I wrote the retirement story. ... and I saw him in the newsroom one day. So I went over to say hello to him, asked him what was going on. And he'd been invited to a meeting with the City Editor and some people from the City Hall Bureau, um, and this is about what changes do we need to the *City of Toronto Act* to make Toronto a better city, yadda, yadda, yadda. And when the City Editor came to get him, I was actually talking to him, and he kind of dragged him away, and they went off to this meeting, to which I was not invited. Two days later the City Editor came up to me and said, oh I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be so rude and pull him away from you, and, you know, we're just having this meeting, he said, and I know you didn't want to be a part of it, but you know, feel free to write about that sort of stuff whenever you want to. So, you know, I mean I guess the conclusion is that, um, they recognize the worth of what I do, but they don't want me to be part of the official, you know, team. (Elias Dallon, Urban Affairs Critic)

This inside and outside was not so much a matter of individuals as of practical spaces through which the campaign emerged: editors conferring in the conference room; journalists debating at the City Hall Bureau; encounters between the Editor-in-Chief and senior editors; and so on. Crusading or advocacy involved activities at several sites, in

which organizational unity was highly contingent. Moreover, it was not always desirable, as was illustrated by disagreement between Tim Fenn and the Editorial Board.

The varying participation of organizational sites in the New Deal for Cities was also partly related to their positioning in or orientation to non-journalistic fields and their associated material settings and interpretive communities (cf. Berkowitz and TerKeurst, 1999; Marchetti, 2005). Consider Miranda Crawford's career move from the bureau at City Hall to its counterpart at Queen's Park, the provincial assembly premises in Toronto. Although she remained associated with the *Toronto Star*, moving from one beat to another entailed traveling between both journalistic subfields as well as political subfields. She became a partial outsider in her previous beat space, yet a member of her new-found one. In contrast, the varying participation of organizational sites was also related to practices of actors outside the *Toronto Star* organization, notably, of politicians, and their positioning in or orientation to the journalistic field. Consider Mayor Miller's visit to the *Toronto Star* editorial board, at the newspaper's lakefront offices. The expected performance of Miller here differs from one he might enact at, for example, a press conference at Toronto City Hall. The practices and arrangements of the Editorial Board, and the presence of reporters at the meeting, signaled Miller to approach the newspaper as a journalistic institution.

The second theme highlighted in these stories and episodes relates to differentiated *managerial performances*. The *Toronto Star* story told by organizational members imagined the New Deal for Cities as virtually embodied by John Honderich; he deployed "his" newspaper to assemble a crusade in the *Star* tradition. Many editors and journalists interviewed stressed Honderich's rigid chain of command as crucial to the early crusade.

Later, in the 2005 episodes, there was a significant *absence* of this sort of managerial performance.

Here it is important to qualify what is meant by ‘absence’, for theories of practice tend not to be concerned with anything not made present through practical action. What is being referred to here is how absences get noticed (Sacks, 1992, p. 294). For example, when Irvin Owens reflected in an interview on the placement of Tim Fenn’s “101 reasons for a New Deal” feature, he described a lack of coordination, direction, and editorial authority: “previously we were guaranteed space, we would have got it ... re-launching New Deal ... no matter what piece of it we’re putting out, it’s gonna be above the fold, people are gonna see it.” Deputy City Editor Wilson Omstead also noticed an absence, but with a different assessment on the outcome: “what we have now is a situation where the Publisher is not involved in the day to day workings of the *newsroom*, not just the newspaper, um, as the previous Publisher was ... Editorial is now in control of its own destiny.”

The managerial performances of John Honderich might be compared with those of his successor Osborn Chamberlane as distinct “modes of ordering” (Law, 1994). By this, I mean that each not only performed managerial tasks differently, such as their distribution of resources or delegation of decisions, but did so with differing positioning in and orientation to the *Toronto Star*, the journalistic field, and the city. Honderich performed the visionary crusader, prefigured by his background in Toronto, recognition of him as a public personality, his career and familial lineage at the newspaper, and his participation in circuits of talk about the future of Toronto. Osborn Chamberlane, in contrast, performed the principled manager, prefigured by his status as organizational outsider, his

personal background and career in Montréal, and his more substantial orientation to the business operation of the newspaper. His Editor-in-Chief, Irwin Connelly, was delegated responsibility for the Editorial Board and the newsroom. Chamberlane and Connelly both sent out many signals about the continuing histories and traditions of the newspaper, but not in the same ways as Honderich. None of this is to suggest that John Honderich was unprincipled or Osborn Chamberlane was without vision or personality. This analysis is not at the level of individuals. Rather, a mode of ordering is an *effect* of relations (Law, 1994). Honderich or Chamberlane were exemplars of the wider ordering of practical fields, material arrangements, and organizational identities, with relatively different outcomes in terms of journalistic advocacy.

The final theme concerns *field interferences*, and in particular, the ways in which orientation to and positioning in the journalistic field overlaid orientation to and positioning in the city as material space and imagined public. The initial New Deal for Cities crusade was advocacy directed at affecting and indeed, effecting particular policy discussions around institutional, financial, and political matters argued to be problematic for Toronto and Canadian cities more generally. Through the repetition and high profile of this “crusade” (as it was called, with religious connotations), an area of previously esoteric policy discussion on cities became circulated to broader publics, which in turn eventually led to the normalization of previously specialized discussions. From the perspective of *Toronto Star* editors and journalists, this early phase of the New Deal for Cities represented a journalistic orientation of taking responsibility for the city. The newspaper assumed the responsibility to bring the issue to the forefront of political discussion, claiming to act in the interests of Toronto’s public. Between the first and second episodes, however, there

was a hesitant but nevertheless palpable journalistic reorientation that went from taking responsibility for the city to instituting a “conversation” around the city:

I'm not sure I'd call it a campaign anymore, I mean, I think the *Star* got this on the agenda, ... well I mean the terminology became part of the public conversation ... at this stage, what I'm interested in is – since the debate is there, and people are having it, and people are engaged, and there seems to be a set of outcomes that are likely – I'm interested in covering it from that perspective. I'm interested in looking at the people talking about it at this point, because when it's just the *Star* talking about it, there wasn't a public conversation. I mean only a small number of people, who were sort of engaged with it ... and so when we did the piece a couple of weeks ago on the governance issue, the various models for the city ... we didn't actually put New Deal. (Lee Bourrier, City Editor)

This reorientation to “conversation” should not be taken uncritically, as a shift to a more dialogical or participatory outlook. Although Bourrier's intentions are clearly earnest, the shift should also be regarded as an attempt to reposition in relation to the journalistic field. This is not quite to suggest that there was a reorientation away from the city and towards journalism. In any event, the material existence of the English-Canadian journalistic field is highly concentrated in the Toronto region. Rather, the turn symbolically validated “conversation” as an alternative strategic field play with regard to what journalism about Toronto or urban affairs generally ought to be.

## **Conclusions**

This paper has sought to theorize the journalism-city relation, bringing theories of practical action, organizational form and social fields into dialogue with four empirical tales. It recounted two divergent stories about the New Deal for Cities, which illustrated how the *Toronto Star* was envisioned as partaking in urban policy and politics, as either a chronicler or an active agent. It has also recounted two episodes highlighting the fragility of direct involvement in urban affairs, and how campaign journalism reflects different orientations to the journalistic field and the city.

Together these tales account for the performance of journalism not only in a general urban environment, but also in the environment of a particular organization. The *Toronto Star* does appear to present us with a relatively unique case compared to the usual political economic patterns in the literature on local media. The *Toronto Star* is not merely a holding within a larger newspaper chain, unlike most North American newspapers. According to industry organization Newspapers Canada, less than 3% of Canada's 95 daily newspapers are independently-owned, meaning outside of any larger media group. The United States press is somewhat less consolidated, but nonpartisan organization Free Press suggests that only 20% of approximately 1,400 US daily newspapers are independently-owned. Based on these definitions, the *Toronto Star* itself is not "independent," as it is a holding of Torstar Corporation, a media company that also owns three other dailies, over 100 community newspapers, a 90% stake in commuter newspaper *Metro's* Canadian operations, several new digital media properties, and romance novel publisher Harlequin. Yet the *Toronto Star* is the flagship holding of Torstar, a corporation controlled by an unusual voting trust specifically committed to ensuring that its flagship newspaper pursues a broadly social-progressive editorial direction, and an explicit commitment to the city as a community.

This somewhat paradoxical corporate environment made for an interesting six years, between 2005 and 2011, the period of the larger study. At the newspaper, there was an unprecedentedly aggressive round of staff buyouts which brought on huge structural changes in the newsroom. At Torstar, there was an aggressive expansion in its digital media properties. Boardroom battles were fought, not only resulting in two further turnovers in the Publisher and Editor, but the remarkable return of John Honderich as Torstar's Chair of the Board. Honderich, a faithful believer in newspapers, has been

instrumental in making the *Toronto Star* one of the few major North American daily newspapers in recent years to reinvest some of its attained savings. In the year preceding 2011, the *Star* hired many well-regarded but disaffected editors and journalists from other news organizations. In sum, the *Toronto Star* in 2011 still looked like an “exception” in the newspaper business.

This uniqueness, I would argue, illustrates both the enduring importance of political economy as well as its clear limitations. Urban sociologists should attend to the performative, eventful, situated, and contingent aspects of journalism as an urban practice. By approaching these concerns through the heuristic of field theory, I have also proposed looking at journalistic practice as both structured and structuring. A focus on practice does not imply pushing aside political economy, but rather approaching it as particular symbolic and material conditions of possibility that are contingently made real through practical action. These conditions of possibility are not only abstract fields (e.g., journalism, politics, business), but also particular organizational situations. While the “Toronto Star” can be seen as symbolically enacted across multiple practical sites in Toronto and elsewhere, it can also “act” on its own. This aligns with the arguments of urban sociologists who suggest that organizations are not just outcomes, but also help produce or structure the relations or networks of urban life (McQuarrie and Marwell 2009; Small 2009).

Finally, this case study of a newspaper provides a relevant lens for understanding the contemporary relationship of journalism and the city. This claim might at first seem shaky, for it is highly likely the printed newspaper as such will eventually wither away as a significant urban medium, given the sweeping technological and cultural changes to the media environment in recent years. Many familiar media brands historically connected to

city newspapers will ultimately be unsuccessful in migrating to new media platforms.

Nevertheless, the newspaper studied here is an *expression* of the journalistic field, one that has often possessed symbolic capital as a medium representing, mediating, and speaking for and to the city as public, market, and material environment.

Which formations of journalistic media practices and technologies will fill the apparent vacuum being created by declining newspapers? This is a question with interesting and important implications, particularly in a moment where it is frequently claimed that anyone can become a journalist. Some have even suggested we are witnessing the downfall of the very idea of “the media” (e.g. Bennett, Kendall, and McDougall, 2011). Couldry (2009) however rightly argues that, if anything, we are more likely to see renewed contestations and claims around just who “the media” are, who they speak for, and with what justifications. Understanding and analyzing such claims and contestations as they pertain to the specificities of journalism as an urban practice should, at least in part, be an object and subject of critical attention for urban sociologists.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The names used when referring to *Toronto Star* staff in this paper are pseudonyms. The only exceptions are former *Toronto Star* Publisher-Editor John Honderich and his father, Beland Honderich.

<sup>2</sup> For a wealth of information related to this well-researched PBS documentary, see: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/newswar/> [last accessed October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012]

<sup>3</sup> This research formed part of a larger project on the evolving relationship of the newspaper and the city, focusing on organizational change at the *Toronto Star*, 2005-2011. The larger study period was bookended by two more intensive ethnographic studies: the first taking six months of research in early 2005, which entailed six weeks of participant observations, 58 interviews, an analysis of secondary documentation, and the tracking of news content over six months; and the second taking two months in 2011, which entailed four weeks of participant observation, 23 interviews, and in-depth archival research.

<sup>4</sup> Kaniss (1991) is "dated" largely due to the time of its writing, rather inopportunistically, just prior to the rise of widespread web access. Thus, in her concluding survey of future directions in local media (1991, p. 227-34), she refers at length to "videotext" (describing the precursors to web browsers) and "audiotext" (such as talking telephone directories). Concepts such as "the Internet" or "web" were not yet even intelligible.

<sup>5</sup> Further research is needed as to whether a market logic pervades emerging networked and digital media seeking to build specifically urban audiences. Anecdotally, many new city-focused websites demonstrate similar features. Gothamist LLC, for example, operates a network of city-focused websites for young middle class urban audiences, thereby generating advertising value. Metropolitan newspaper organizations in particular have sought to carry over their business model of urban-regional capture to the online environment (see Barnhurst, 2002).

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<sup>6</sup> We might also include Harvey Molotch's work with Marilyn Lester here (see especially Molotch and Lester, 1974), as it was influential in advancing a social constructionist analysis within the sociology of media. However, their very detailed and careful accounts did not substantially inform the analysis of journalism within urban politics, as presented in Logan and Molotch (1987).

<sup>7</sup> The organizational stories in the previous section are drawn mainly from interviews. In contrast, these episodes draw more on participant observation, alongside detailed interview anecdotes. Extracts from observation diaries and interviews are used periodically to shift from general to more detailed descriptions.

<sup>8</sup> "Skeds" are printouts from the *Toronto Star's* content management database listing stories, by department, pursued over a specific time period (usually daily), ordered by importance, placement, or date.