



The geography of celebrity and glamour: Reflections on economy, culture, and desire in the city[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Our goal in this paper is to trace out the main lines of symbiosis that link the cultural economy with celebrity and glamour. We observe two trends emerging with great force in the 21st century: The commodification of celebrity and its trappings, and the democratization of celebrity across the globe. These phenomena emerge in the context of the modern city, and they constitute a dynamic nexus of developmental effects. We proceed by deriving celebrity and glamour out of the logic of commercialized cultural production in association with localized scenes, fandom, and a specific kind of economic and cultural infrastructure. We show that this logic is most intense in major world centers of contemporary capitalism. Celebrity and glamour have major economic impacts on these centers both through their integration into localized systems of agglomeration economies and their effects on the marketing and commercialization of culturally inflected outputs, producing winner-take-all geographies responsible for the individuals and scenes that maintain the celebrity ecosystem. We conclude the paper with a critical examination of the wider social and political meaning of celebrity and glamour and their relations to commodified culture generally.

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Thesis and context

Preamble

Our objective in this paper is to examine the phenomena of celebrity and glamour and the ways in which they provide insights into the economic and cultural geography of cities, and, in particular, large global cities. We maintain that celebrity and glamour are socially-constructed within the machinery of contemporary commercial culture and its ever-increasing generation of a type of fame that is expressed in highly mediatized images and popular recognition. In the 21st century, stardom in these senses is something that is constantly and intimately present in our everyday lives yet simultaneously remote, and it proliferates ever more insistently in the international sphere. At the same time, celebrity and glamour do not represent merely cultural capital, but are also basic components of

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the economic system with significant ramifications on both the supply side and the demand side. Stars, in short, are emanations of a wider production system rooted in contemporary capitalism. We might ask, why are these phenomena so pervasive today? Why is there a constant circulation of new celebrities through the media? How is it that individuals of quite modest talent can – like Kafka's Josephine – rise to the pinnacle of renown? What is the cultural and economic logic of celebrity and glamour? What role does geography play in these issues? And most especially, how can our answers to these questions illuminate the dynamics of urbanization in the modern world? In what now follows we attempt to develop answers to these questions by moving through a series of analytical stages that take us from issues of the basic meaning of celebrity and glamour, through their genesis in the modern economy, to their role in helping to sustain the competitive advantages of cities – a role that has taken on special importance in the context of globalization.

Capitalism, celebrity, glamour

Our point of departure for addressing these tasks resides in the claim that capitalism has now entered a new phase

of development characterized in major ways by a great qualitative shift in the system of production and consumption. This involves a far-reaching intensification of cerebral and affective labor in the modern economy, as expressed in part in the increasing injection of aesthetic, semiotic, and libidinal values into the goods and services that circulate through the economic system (Lash & Urry, 1994; Molotch, 2002; Zukin, 1995). This turn of events signals the advent of a new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999) corresponding to a new kind of economic order variously identified in the literature by reference to terms such as the “knowledge economy”, (Etkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1997), the “creative economy” (Florida, 2002; Markusen and Schrock, 2006), the “third capitalism” (Peters, Britez, & Bulut, 2009), “cognitive capitalism” (Moulier, 2007), and the “cognitive-cultural economy” (Scott, 2007).

By comparison with the older fordist version of capitalism that flourished over much of the 20th century, the cognitive-cultural economy, and especially those segments of it that are explicitly geared to cultural production,¹ is posited on radically new forms of technology and productive organization with a strong focus on flexible labor processes. In addition, the digital technologies that underlie this new economy make possible, and indeed encourage the formation of a stratum of workers who are increasingly called upon to apply their cognitive capacities and their cultural sensibilities in very much more open-ended and personalized forms of productive activity than was the case in fordism (cf. Levy & Murnane, 2004). Reich (1992) alludes to the same phenomenon with his concept of “symbolic analysts,” and in a similar vein, Florida (2002) has put forward the idea of the “creative class” as a major new stratum in contemporary society. The recent expansion of culturally-oriented segments of the new economy is amplified on the demand side by the play of Engels’ Law, that is, by the growth of discretionary income in the hands of consumers and its increasing proportional disbursement on non-necessities. A large proportion of these non-necessities comprises experiential goods and services such as film, television programs, music, electronic games, magazines, fashion clothing and accessories, beauty products, gastronomy, and tourism.

The industries that produce these types of goods and services are typically (but not exclusively) located in large metropolitan areas (Aoyama, 2009; Markusen & Schrock, 2009; Scott, 2000), and from these sites their outputs are then distributed across the globe. With this emerging economic order come distinctively new urban outcomes and life forms, especially in major metropolitan areas of the Global North (e.g. New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris, and Tokyo), though to an increasing degree, cities of the Global South (e.g. Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul, Singapore, Mexico City, and São Paulo) also participate in the expanding global cultural economy (Scott, 2011; Shahid & Nabe-shima, 2005; Zukin, 1998). These cities are locations where much of the demand for cultural products is concentrated, not only because they represent major accumulations of wealth but because they are privileged sites of

immobile infrastructures of cultural consumption, such as theaters, concert halls, and art museums.

The point of intersection between production and consumption in this new cultural economy is a critical moment in the genesis of celebrity and glamour. This is the point where the stars of the cultural economy (in sectors like music, film, fashion, the plastic arts, and sports) emerge as both peak performers and as objects of desire. The stars are the primary vehicles of celebrity and glamour, and these ascribed qualities, intensified through insistent mediatization (cf. Marshall, 2006), bathe associated goods and services in a sort of radiance. As such, the star or celebrity functions in the symbolic order as a kind of fetish, and in the economic order as a type of brand. The branding effect is of major importance, because (in an increasingly unstable and competitive economic environment) it helps to stabilize and consolidate demand for specific products. Moreover, celebrity earned in one segment of the cultural economy can be transferred via product endorsements to other segments of the economy at large. These intertwined orders make it possible to earn significant rents, appropriated by both the celebrities themselves and the firms that make use of their services (Currid-Halkett & Ravid 2012; Marshall, 1997; Power & Hallencreutz, 2002; Rein, Kotler, & Stoller, 1997; Rojek, 2001). This feature is captured in part by the notions of the winner-take-all economy (Frank & Cook, 1995) and the superstar economy (Rosen, 1981).

There is, to be sure, nothing new about the existence of elites (or celebrities) in society, though we need to distinguish between different fractions of the elite and their changing social functions over time and space (Mills, 1956). Gundle (1999) locates the emergence of celebrity as a social phenomenon in the Paris of the *Belle Epoque*, while Mills (1956) identifies celebrities as a distinctive social type in urban life (in contrast to the old upper class world of *The Social Register*) in late 19th century America (see also Veblen, 1899, and Galbraith, 1958). However, the modern star system, in our sense of a group of individuals functioning as both fetish and brand, was essentially invented in Hollywood in the years around 1915 (Scott, 2005). With the growth of mass entertainment and the mass media over the 20th century, this system with its expression in celebrity and glamour has continued to flourish (Boorstin, 1961; McLuhan, 1964). Today, in addition, “reality TV stars”, “football stars” and of course “pop stars,” among others, have all been accepted into the pantheon. This very special elite group of individuals forms a distinctive cadre of high-level aesthetic and symbolic labor (Entwistle & Wissinger, 2006) whose privileged status is consolidated in large degree by its command of the top tier of employment and production in the cultural economy. Mediatized events and endless news cycles have further intensified the social significance of celebrities by publicizing their personal narratives in what Thrift (2008) has called “technologies of intimacy.”

In short, celebrities and the glamour that they radiate are now essential components of the commodity system of capitalism. The stars themselves are often quite ephemeral but the system of stardom is maintained through the continual social reproduction of cultural and symbolic capital and the physical settings, or scenes, in which the system takes shape. The aim of this paper is to trace out the

¹ Other major segments of the cognitive-cultural economy include technology-intensive production, business and financial services, and many different kinds of personal services.

main lines of symbiosis that link these human icons, the cultural economy, and the modern city together into a dynamic nexus of developmental effects. The city, in particular, functions in this analysis as a site of production, as a stage for the ever-shifting display of celebrity and glamour, as a milieu of associated consumption behavior, and as a relay point in an insistently globalizing star system. As such, our investigation is not only an exploration of the social logic of celebrity and glamour, but is also a window onto some of the wider geographic research questions now opening up as cognitive-cultural capitalism generally, and the cultural economy specifically, continue their expansionary thrust into the future.

The social meaning of celebrity and glamour

“It is from our disposition to admire, and consequently to imitate, the rich and the great, that they are enabled to set, or to lead what is called the fashion. Their dress is the fashionable dress; the language of their conversation, the fashionable style; their air and deportment, the fashionable behaviour. Even their vices and follies are fashionable”

Adam Smith *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790)

Three aspects of modern society are fundamental to any understanding of the dramatic growth of celebrity and the associated phenomenon of glamour, namely, (a) the great recent expansion in the production and consumption of commercialized cultural products, (b) the associated proliferation of star performers, and (c) the development of modern communications technology allowing for the widespread, virtually instantaneous diffusion of information and images related to these performers. As these developments have gone forward, we have witnessed a radical shift in the status of the star from something approaching royalty to someone more or less like the rest of us, only somewhat luckier perhaps in regard to appearance, aptitudes, or opportunities (Turner, 2004, 2006). Concomitantly, a link is formed between celebrities and the rest of society via diverse “mechanisms of fascination” (Thrift, 2008), which “aggregate and amplify” the workings of the cultural economy. In this regard, there is only an indefinite zone of ambiguity separating those endowed with celebrity and glamour from those not so distinguished, and a mass of aspirants is invariably waiting in the wings to join or displace the stars already established at the top of the ladder. The stars themselves are typically encircled by groups of mediatized individuals who sometimes become celebrities by proxy as it were (e.g. members of a social clique around a particular star; or fashionable hair stylists and publicists who are known for the stars they serve). Those who have attained to positions of stardom come from all segments of the cultural economy and its appendages, from film to architecture (cf. McNeill, 2009), and from the media to fashion (Crewe, 2010). Their fame and their auratic qualities are a function of their role within these industries as highly visible performers, as critical intermediaries, and as vehicles of commercial publicity. The old Hollywood star system remains a central point of reference here. Stars were and are primarily performers, but are then transformed into objects of fetishization or

fascination, which in turn ensures that the products associated with them are stamped with a unique and powerful brand that guarantees a core captive audience, thus generating high economic rents and related spillover revenues.

Today, the star system has diffused into scores of sectors in the cultural economy, and has been transferred geographically to many different parts of the world. The reputations of the stars, whatever their home base, are also increasingly global. David Beckham’s celebrity in the United Kingdom is complemented by rising interest in his persona and performances in the United States, Japan, and elsewhere. Likewise, superstars like Madonna, Tom Cruise, or Michael Jordan are familiar virtually everywhere (Ravid & Currid-Halkett, 2012). The search for publicity, moreover, goes well beyond mere branding in the sense of imposing an identifying mark on a final product, for star endorsements also create new products that commodify their glamourized personal attributes (e.g. supermodel Kate Moss’s sense of style is turned into a clothing line at Top Shop; Linda McCartney’s animal rights campaign translates into frozen vegetarian food). Further, the technologies of intimacy produce mediatized images of the star that ignite desires and cravings in the minds of certain segments of the audience so that they become not only simple consumers, but also avid if not obsessive fans (Jenkins, 2006a, 2006b) ensuring a durable commitment to the star as performer and greatly enlarging the sphere of opportunities for the marketing of parallel products. The star’s fan base is thus a crucial element of the nexus of symbolic and commercial relationships that sustain the modern cultural economy.

Cities and symbolic capital

Agglomeration, cultural economy, and talent

The outputs of the cultural economy are extremely diverse. They also embody high levels of aesthetic, semiotic, and libidinal meaning as opposed to purely utilitarian value. As such, they cater to various demands for entertainment, instruction, self-identification, social display, and so on.

The cultural industries usually exhibit high levels of spatial clustering, reflecting their search for the externalities and efficiency benefits that come with co-location (Currid, 2007a, 2007b; Scott, 2000). The basic mechanisms behind their locational concentration are not therefore remarkably different from those that engender the pull and stickiness of Wall Street or Silicon Valley (Saxenian, 1994; Storper, 1997). The opportunities, resources, and information concentrated in these agglomerations draw in would-be talent via what Menger (1993) has called “artistic gravitation” or what Scott and Power (2004) have described as an “irresistible pull”. This process is reflected in the endemic migration from peripheral areas to core cultural centers of ambitious and gifted individuals who would otherwise be unable to realize their full ambitions or potential. The centripetal process by which particular places attract more talent from all parts of the globe (see Glaeser, 2011; Quigley, 1998) creates a hyper-competitive and hyper-elite local labor market (Currid-Halkett & Ravid, 2012). Cultural economy clusters also capture what Molotch (1996, 2002) has called “place in product”, in other words the implicit and

explicit branding of cultural goods and services by means of their distinctive association with the places where they are produced, as in the case of Paris fashions, Bollywood films, or Nashville music.

In line with these remarks, one of the striking yet consistent features of the cultural economy in the 21st century is its absolute and relative concentration in major cities. For example, Currid (2006) shows that New York City possesses almost 16 times more fashion designers than any other metropolitan area in the United States. New York also has disproportionately more workers across the entire spectrum of the cultural industries than any other metropolitan area in the United States, with Los Angeles alone emerging as a close competitor. Similarly, London possesses the greatest concentration of creative workers in the UK, with approximately three times more workers in radio, television, film, and photography than anywhere else in the country (DePropis, Chapain, & Cooke, 2009; Pratt, 1997). Countries in the world periphery have also begun to experience developmental effects flowing from the cultural economy. China and India, for example, have become important hubs of cultural production and are noted for a rising consumer culture of glamour goods. Bollywood, India's film capital in Mumbai, is a major focus of a now globalizing star system, and in terms of sheer numbers, Bollywood produces more films and more stars than its Southern Californian counterpart (Lorenzen & Florian, 2008).

Even though stars are mainly excrescences of the cultural economy, the spatially embedded benefits of concentrated elite talent have also been observed in other sectors such as finance or high-technology industry (Zucker & Darby, 1996) and more broadly in "superstar cities" (Glaeser, 2011; Gyourko, Mayer, & Sinai, 2006). The stars of the cultural economy, unlike the top performers in many other kinds of industries earn more than just high material returns. Indeed, upward mobility within the star system with its rewards in terms of status and symbolic capital is in many ways more psychologically gratifying than mere monetary gains (Bourdieu, 1979). The mediatized nature of the award ceremonies, parties, gallery openings and other ostentatious events that come and go in cities with large cultural economies means that individual success translates into intense public awareness of and ongoing fascination with celebrities and hence also translates into their enhanced commercial and symbolic value within the cultural economy (Marshall, 2006). Celebrity also thrives on an economy of scenes, and thus not only the stars but the locations providing the backdrop to stardom also participate in certain winner-take-all aspects of the cultural economy.

Celebrities and commodity culture

The role of the celebrity is generally rooted in particular forms of work – e.g. in film, fashion, art – whose products are highly visible yet also often quite ephemeral. Thus, Jeff Koons' red aluminum heart may sell for \$25 million, but we remain unsure as to the durability of the artist's reputation or the intrinsic merit of his output. The same can be said for Damien Hirst, or the street artist Banksy who was nominated for an Oscar (best documentary) even though he re-

mains completely anonymous. The reputations of celebrities depend on gatekeepers, such as journalists, talent agents, critics, connoisseurs, and impresarios, as important decision-makers helping to mediate numerous relational aspects of the cultural economy and to pioneer new fashions (Becker, 1982; Currid, 2007a, 2007b). Reputations are also strongly influenced by awards and prizes such as the Golden Globe Awards, the MTV Europe Music Awards, or the Booker prize. As Ginsburgh (2003) has shown, these kinds of gate-keeping functions typically have big effects on the immediate commercial success of any given performer, but frequently fail to predict continued high levels of reputational esteem over the long term. Even so, if the cultural economy generates remarkable quantities of money for its top stars, it also bestows on them – for a time at least – the intangible but exalted prize of auratic stature. The individuals concerned become a sort of latter-day nobility rewarded with admiration and society's attention (Berridge, 2006; Braudy, 1986; Ravid & Currid-Halkett, 2012). The economic value of the star's raw labor power is always multiplied many times over by the aura of mystique that he or she radiates simply by reason of having attained to the status of stardom (Gamson, 1994).

Celebrities who attain their status on the basis of hard work and durable achievements can be referred to as "Braudy stars," a designation that reflects the ideas of Braudy (1986) who has extensively studied the relations between fame and achievement. In addition to those whose celebrity status is built on this foundation, there are others (Princess Di, Paris Hilton, Edie Sedgwick) whose basis for stardom depends on a wider social milieu that promotes public recognition, but not necessarily on intrinsic personal merit. However, these celebrities also function in the world of taste, fashion, and cultural commodities. Boorstin (1961) captures certain aspects of this form of stardom in the phrase

"Celebrities intensify their celebrity images simply by being well known for relations among themselves. By a kind of symbiosis, celebrities live off each other".

Celebrities of this type can be thought of as "Boorstin stars"; they are known for being well-known and emerge out of clouds of media attention. Clearly, many of the individuals, possibly the majority, who inhabit the world of celebrity and glamour lie not at one of these extreme poles but somewhere in-between. Whatever their different points of origin, then, celebrities reinforce their status through elite networks and a collective identity. One empirical study of celebrities (Currid-Halkett & Ravid, 2012) found that their social networks can be characterized as scale-free and small world (Barabasi & Albert, 1999), indicating that those within the network are closely connected and gain disproportionate benefits from membership. Celebrity status and penetration of celebrity networks is achieved not only in the workplace, but also through joint presence at events marked by displays of glitter and inter-personal competition created for purposes of publicity and global transmission. The public at large participates vicariously in events like these through the media's intense scrutiny.

Three other important features highlight the intertwined mystique and economic functions of stars and their ability

to generate glamour. First, they are everywhere (via newspapers, television, etc.) but are also paradoxically inaccessible by virtue of their elite social status and seclusion in residential fortresses (Davis, 1990; Galbraith, 1958; Mills, 1956). Second, stars are often boundary spanners, able to transfer their skills and glamour from one industry to another as their stardom projects them to ever higher levels of visibility. Stars are models/actresses, athletes/entrepreneurs, musicians/actors and so forth. The movement of Hollywood stars Ronald Reagan and Arnold Schwarzenegger into politics is a particularly acute example of boundary spanning. Third, and as we have already indicated, celebrity is intimately intertwined with commodity production and the consumer economy by way of branding effects. In recent years, celebrities have literally become brands with economic functions transcending the original social sites of their stardom, as exemplified by Linda McCartney's vegetarian cuisine, Paris Hilton's perfume collection, Michael Jordan's Nike line and steakhouse chain. Barron (2007) remarks that "Elizabeth Hurley has created a marketable and identifiable brand [of clothing] that is built entirely on her image and persona" (p 445). These moves across industries further underline the economic functions of celebrity status in a commodified world (McCracken, 1989).

Demand and desire

The commodification of celebrities is predicated on two important factors on the demand side. First of all, stars evoke desire in the minds of consumers (Barthes, 1972). We want to be like them and thus take cues both from their product endorsements and from their own forms of consumption – no matter whether this attempted mimesis involves buying the same brand of makeup as Elizabeth Hurley or drinking the same sports beverage as Usain Bolt. Companies increasingly use stars to brand commodities for the purposes of global marketing, as illustrated by Michael Jordan's endorsement of Nike shoes and the use of David Beckham's image in promoting a number of major sports and fashion brands (Smart, 2005, 2007). Similarly, companies hire celebrities to look enticing or powerful in their products, as exemplified by a smiling Liz Hurley in Lancôme mascara or Angelina Jolie wearing St. John suits. The implicit promise is that by buying these products we become more like the stars we admire. Second of all, stars also function as tastemakers who comment in interviews about the film they just watched, the designer they prefer, or the book they are reading. As the *September Issue* documentary on the fashion industry demonstrates (Cutler, 2009), Anna Wintour, editor-in-chief of American *Vogue*, early on recognized that substituting celebrities for anonymous models was an efficient and effective way to relate to consumers, and, by extension, encourage them to buy the magazine. The Midas touch of celebrities extends far and wide in terms of its economic implications. So much so that Hillary Swank provoked a corporate storm when she jettisoned Calvin Klein's dress for one by a more obscure designer to wear to a recent Oscar Awards ceremony (Currid, 2007a, 2007b). More recently, the actress Natalie Portman refused to wear Dior to the 2011 Oscar awards after its creative

director John Galliano was filmed making anti-Semitic slurs (she wore Rodarte to the ceremony instead). This public relations nightmare resulted in Dior firing Galliano, even though he himself is a star in his own right and the figure who is most credited with reestablishing Dior's position in the luxury fashion market (Saltmarsh, 2011).

These processes of commercializing the symbolic capital of stars provide us with an important window onto the cultural contradictions of contemporary society. Culture has moved in significant ways from being a product of the individual artist-as-genius to the commodity form, or what we might call the Warhol model of cultural production. In its most vivid sense, this evolution makes the celebrity a critical adjunct to the profit-centered firm through which many different streams of revenue flow. The stars in turn generate subsidiary employment opportunities for agents, publicists, media commentators and other go-betweens who create and commercialize celebrity status and help to underpin our obsessions with particular iconic figures (Currid-Halkett & Ravid, 2012). In much the same way, we are witnessing a continued democratization of celebrity and glamour in the 21st century, as represented in perhaps its most extreme form by reality TV. While many of the reality TV-based stars are not anointed with the same rarified status as many of their Hollywood film industry counterparts, these more demotic agents of celebrity and glamour are also exploitable in the world of commercial commodities. They are no doubt condemned to even greater ephemerality than their more prestigious counterparts, but in the world of commodities they play a useful role by helping to open up subsidiary market niches that might otherwise lie dormant.

Celebrity, glamour and place

Star clusters

While the images of celebrities are ubiquitous, the specific dynamics linking the cultural economy, stars, and the media typically play out in major urban areas where the production activities and public events that sustain the star system take place (Currid & Williams, 2010; Ravid & Currid-Halkett, 2012). This urban focus generates a distinctive geography of celebrity and glamour, sustained in part through the endless stream of awards ceremonies, charity events, gatherings at fashionable restaurants and clubs, and so forth, grounded in the same places. Thus, particular places acquire a glamorous halo by association with the celebrity fauna that frequent them. Specific places occasionally emerge for a time in a special blaze of publicity (e.g. Warhol's Factory, Swinging London, *le Tout-Paris*, and the present day young Hollywood nightclub scene). These passing interludes are intensely recorded in the tabloid press as well as in more durable form, such as Patti Smith's autobiography *Just Kids*, Andy Warhol's films, or the numerous publications retailing the Beatles' and the Rolling Stones' life stories. All of this media attention helps to intensify the aura of celebrity and the specialness of the places associated with it.

This specific place-enhancing relationship between glamorous cultural-cum-social circles and the media is not

found in all cities, but is concentrated at specific global sites of the cultural economy where the generation of celebrity events is especially intense and the backdrop more in tune with the mystique of stardom. A large resident press corps further helps to consolidate this process by making these sites “paparazzi-convenient.” As Lorenzen and Vaarst Andersen (2009) note, the specialized nature of the creative production system means that the number of cities with high quotients of stardom is quite limited. Documentation of stars in their characteristic habitats has always gone on in these cities, but such tracking is nowadays instant and ceaseless, and the proliferation of derivative images confers economic benefits on the particular places in which the stars are seen (Currid & Williams, 2010). In their analysis of photographs of cultural and entertainment events around the world, Currid-Halkett and Ravid (2012) have found that over 80% of photographs of entertainment celebrities are taken in just three major cities, namely, New York, Los Angeles, and London. The social network analysis carried out by these authors – based on records of which celebrities appear together in any single photograph – further indicates that New York, Los Angeles, and London constitute a dominating and interlocking cultural triangle within the global arts/culture/entertainment system. The work of Currid-Halkett and Ravid is based on abundant photographic documentation of stars in many different circumstances: walking in and out of nightclubs, throwing parties at restaurants, attending the Oscar awards ceremony, and other social events related to the cultural economy. Other analysts have studied the internal logic of major cultural agglomerations such as the New York and London art markets (Thompson, 2008), the Hollywood film industry (Scott, 2005), and the Paris and New York fashion worlds (Rantisi, 2004). In short, the cultural industries and the media work in tandem, *in situ*, to create and diffuse those ephemeral moments when celebrity, glamour, and place all come together in a single dramatic fusion.

The construction and cultivation of celebrity and glamour, then, emerge from the cultural economy and have distinctive geographic effects, even if these occur in only a relatively small number of places. Partly, this can be explained in terms of basic agglomeration principles, for not only are these effects dependent on a dense presence of many cultural producers and the media documenting their activities, but also on the formation of a critical mass of celebrities such that the spillover effects of their presence begin to appear in full force. In addition, high-level cultural workers with celebrity cachet, along with their cohorts of associates and imitators, create further beneficial externalities for the urban economy. Here we are referring to upscale service functions such as spas, cosmetic surgery facilities, elite hairdressing salons, beauty parlors, fashionable restaurants, and exclusive boutiques, not to mention auxiliary activities like security services and domestic labor agencies. Many of these services cluster within and around fashionable districts of the city such as Fifth Avenue in New York, Beverly Hills in Los Angeles, or Mayfair in London. Some of these districts, too, along with certain adjacent parts of the city, are the sites of a vigorous entertainment and leisure-time economy that comes to life especially at night. These enclaves of diversion, in their turn, feed on and reflect the celebrity and glamour of the city. Thus, on the one hand, celebrities are favored patrons of the

restaurants, bars, clubs, music venues, and other places of distraction that thrive in these enclaves; and on the other hand they are often engaged in live performances in the same facilities. The photographers, tabloid reporters, and gossip columnists-*cum*-bloggers who haunt the scenes of these spectacles feed a multitude of consumers with stories and images. By the same token, the places and venues that also figure in these reports acquire valuable publicity as desirable destinations for pleasure seekers. Moreover, in addition to the relation between the cultural economy and local symbolic capital, some cities glean an added measure of celebrity and glamour by reason of their wider economic dynamism and the spending power that it creates. For example, the finance industries of London and New York generate a mass of wealth that in part underpins their entertainment facilities, their night-time economies, and their “scenes” thus helping to intensify the already high levels of celebrity and glamour generated by local cultural economies.

In the penumbra of the star system

While only a few major centers are dense foci of celebrity and glamour, simulacra of these phenomena can be found everywhere in the domain of consumption, an observation that can in large degree be related to the commodification of celebrity and glamour and the increasing democratization of the celebrity lifestyle. Through reality TV and the machinations of the tabloid industry we are told that we too can be stars, and, to use the phrase of the celebrity glossy *US Weekly*, that the stars are “just like us”. The commodification and democratization of celebrity enable many consumer products and service providers to sell their wares on the basis of an insinuation that these will provide glamour-driven experiences that mimic and provide the trappings of an aspirational celebrity existence. In the same way, much real estate development involving new mixed-use condominiums with rooftop bars, clubs, hot tubs, and valet parking services offer a residential milieu with resonances of celebrity living. These venues are physically created to suggest glamour (velvet, leather, customized fittings, signed art pieces, uniformed service personnel, and other flamboyant signs of luxury). Much as the New Urbanism sought to recreate Jacobs’ West Village, many developers now physically create environments that notionally, at least, offer a surrogate experience of what it might be like to be a star. While these sorts of residential clusters, like many expensive nightclubs and restaurants, (e.g. Bungalow 8 in New York or Annabel’s in London) assume an aura of exclusivity, the larger point is that most of them are providing an experience of glamour that is actually relatively accessible. More specifically, glamour can be achieved by anyone for a price, whether through relevant housing or the purchase of table service at a nightclub. Similarly, the intricate webs of celebrity- and glamour-inflected commercial services that are increasingly available in large cities, from pedicures and face lifts, to personal trainers, wardrobe stylists, and Botox treatments are not simply for the economic elite, but are also increasingly being packaged for a much wider clientele.

At the same time, much of the behind-the-scenes work supporting these economic activities is performed by “third world service proletariats” (Soja, 2000) or the “new servile

class” (Scott, 2012) who both directly and indirectly help to maintain the celebrity lifestyles of the few and to shore up derivative services for the many. These observations, of course, reflect the wider condition of modern urban life, characterized as it is by increasing social polarization and inequality. Celebrity and glamour are indicative of these wider contradictions that haunt the logic of capitalism and that are evident in the central paradox of the large creative metropolis of the 21st century, namely, the escalating contrast between its surface glitter and its underlying squalor.

Celebrity, glamour, and the competitive advantages of cities

We have shown that the *locus classicus* of celebrity and glamour today is the big global metropolis. This is where we find the most important concentrations of the cultural economy in the guise of dense agglomerations of production activities in film, television, music, publishing, fashion, and the like. These agglomerations represent the primary spatial bases of celebrity and glamour in the 21st century, for it is mainly here that the high-level cultural workers who become the stars of the economy of signs are congregated as workers and (at least part of the time) as residents. The same agglomerations are the sources of the mediatized images that project the mystified personae of these workers to the wider world. The reputational capital that is socially-constructed in this manner contributes to the commercial success of cultural producers and enhances the competitive advantages of the places in which agglomerations of these producers are found. Spatial concentrations of stars and celebrities, together with the echelons of ambitious lesser mortals endlessly mounting the ladder toward stardom, are thus an important element of the labor market dynamics of an increasingly large number of metropolitan areas around the world. These concentrations are associated with pyramid-like labor markets, in which the superstars dominate, but in which second- and third-tier celebrities also perform subsidiary functions such as television extras, catalogue models, and sports commentators. All of this place-bound social and economic activity augments the competitive advantages of the cities where it is most intensely developed, for it makes significant contributions to local stocks of agglomeration economies, and confers critical symbolic value on the urban landscape. It becomes, in a word, an integral component of the “creative field” of the city (Scott, 2010)

At the outset, the manner in which high-level cultural workers are inserted into the production system is typically dependent on layers of intermediaries who perform crucial functions in bridging information gaps in local labor markets. These functions are in fact important elements of the local system of agglomeration economies. The relevant intermediaries comprise agents, casting directors, talent managers, lawyers, and so on, and their role is not only to help match specific supplies of talent on the one side with producers’ demands for talent on the other, but also to ensure smooth and advantageous contractual outcomes for their clients. Other important figures in managing the economic interests of high-level cultural workers are the public relations firms and impresarios who organize television

appearances, press conferences, and tours, and who help to maintain a spatially extended base of fans. A high incidence of all such intermediaries is typically evident in the global media and entertainment capitals of New York, Los Angeles and London. In New York City, employees working in public relations firms and media and talent agencies collectively earn more than one billion dollars annually, and in Los Angeles, the corresponding figure is almost \$550 million. The media as a whole generate \$8.5 billion in payroll in these two cities combined (Ravid & Currid-Halkett, 2012). Thus, while celebrities function as hyper-individualized personalities, they also depend on a wider support system that in turn generates significant employment and income. The relationships outlined here are symbiotic, for the system that supports the stars is also intrinsic to the economic well-being of the intermediaries and the wider cultural economy. The stars themselves may come and go while the star system is maintained and embedded in particular places.

Equally, the cultural economy of the city – together with its stars, celebrities, and glamour queens – is almost always the fountainhead of a sort of urban mythology that accumulates layer by layer over time and that exerts powerful place-branding effects. Hollywood, in the wider urban context of Los Angeles, is certainly the most dramatic instance anywhere of this phenomenon, with its century-long connection to the film industry and its rich tradition of folklore (both real and imagined) about the cast of characters who have moved across its stage (Braudy, 2011). These associations are in a sense geographically synthesized in the celebrated Hollywood sign, towering above Hollywood itself, projecting an aura and mythology, and – when it stands in as background to tourist snapshots – “illuminating our sense of our prestige” (Braudy 2011, 7). In actual fact, Hollywood, the place, is in many respects a rather dreary workaday world. The glamorous individuals of the film industry rarely reside in Hollywood itself but inhabit secluded estates in the hills of Mulholland Drive and upscale neighborhoods in Bel Air, Brentwood and Malibu, where only the massive gates and towering shrubbery provide an indication that celebrities might live there. Despite discrepancies between its status as symbol and place, Hollywood is the site of multiple mythologies, as revealed in diverse accounts ranging from the hagiographies written about its prime movers to the lurid stories of sexual depravity, drugs, suicide and Babylonian excess as described most vividly by Anger (1965). The Swinging London of the 1960s provides another illustration of the same phenomenon; and then again, London in the 1990s acquires further cachet in the context of the Cool Britannia wave (Van Ham, 2001). The television programs *Seinfeld*, *Friends* and most particularly *Sex and the City* helped shift the global perception of New York from gritty and dangerous to a hedonistic consumption mecca with occasional undertones of family friendliness. Virtually any place that attains to a threshold of mass cultural production and attendant symbolic capital is susceptible to some sort of mythologization as the media pick up on the personalities and star events that fascinate so many individuals across the world. Even the otherwise unpromising case of Liverpool with its connections to the Beatles illustrates this idea. Indeed, urban policy makers frequently seek to raise the profile of their

city by promoting its celebrity connections, just as they seek out publicity and revenue by sponsoring sports events, song competitions, art fairs, cultural festivals, and large-scale iconic architectural developments (Andersson & Niedomysl, 2010; Sklair, 2010; Stevenson, 2012).

The deployment of architectural set pieces that themselves have star-like qualities is an especially prominent element of the new urbanism of the 21st century. Ventures like the Disney Music Hall in Los Angeles, the Swiss Re Office Building in London, the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, or the theatricalized redevelopment of Times Square in New York, all perform an important function (among others) as symbolic assets that heighten the glamorous mystique of the city. In this manner, the very landscape of the large metropolis is pressed into service as an element of the local cultural economy and as a trump card in the public relations campaigns that are now so commonly pursued by global cities on the basis of iconic buildings such as museums, arts galleries, and concert halls signed by “star-architects” (McNeill, 2009; Plaza, 2006). More to the point, the cultural attributes of cities, including all those manifestations of celebrity and glamour that partially constitute their reputations, are increasingly being dragooned into service as essential elements of city marketing and promotional efforts that act as both hard and soft branding devices (Evans, 2003). Even in cases where celebrities are locally in short supply, monumental structures, such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, provide a sort of substitute shimmer, for glamour can be packaged and commodified in many different forms. City branding efforts are all the more intense in view of the mounting levels of inter-city competition for tourists, skilled immigrants, and inward investments. Cities that offer a great diversity of social and cultural attractions illuminated by the auratic light of celebrity and glamour are obviously well-positioned as contestants in this global race.

With the rise of the new economy, then, many urban areas, and, above all, large metropolitan areas are coming to see their economic futures as being intimately bound up with the diverse forms of fascination, charisma, and enchantment that haunt so much of the apparatus of contemporary cultural production (cf. Molotch, 1996; Schmid, Dietrich, & Urry, 2011; Zukin, 1998). This vision is not simply confined to dramatized urban landscapes but entails, as well, new paradigmatic approaches to urban regeneration based on the specific dynamic properties of the cultural economy, and above all its complex relationships to “creativity”. If anything, the latter connection has become something of an obsession with urban policy makers over the last decade or so as the hunt for policy formulas to build the “creative city” has gathered momentum. A corollary of these remarks is that the actual geography of celebrity and glamour is almost certainly set on a course for vastly increased variety and hybridity as diverse segments of the cultural economy take root at different locations all over the world and as policymakers seek to underpin this process (Scott, 2011). As this geographic spread of hubs of cultural production occurs, the resulting agglomerations – like Bollywood or Nollywood (Nigeria’s film capital) – do not become simply second-tier imitations of their North American or European counterparts, but also start to play a definite role on the world stage, aided by distinctive local

manifestations of celebrity and glamour (Ravid & Currid-Halkett, 2012). Even temporary cultural events like Art Basel Miami, the Sundance Film Festival, and the Cannes Film Festival, bask in an atmosphere of star-studded celebrity and glamour whose afterglow continues to draw in visitors well after the events themselves.

One final remark needs to be made about these peculiar conjunctions of culture, economy, and geography and their reflections in glamour and celebrity. The point is that while globalization and neoliberalism have everywhere stoked the fires of economic competition, the net result is far from anything like the text-book version of *laissez-faire*. On the contrary, given that so many of the products of the cultural economy are deeply marked by idiosyncratic features reflecting the specificities of their producers and places of origin (specificities that are made explicit in formal and informal branding devices, including star performers and product advocates), competition today is becoming ever more monopolistic in the chamberlinian sense, i.e. based on non-reproducible product qualities tied to individual firms, cities, and, of course, celebrities (Scott, 2000).

Concluding comments

The peculiar social and spatial forms of celebrity and glamour discussed in this paper emerge in the first instance from the ever-expanding segment of the modern economy devoted to the production of cultural goods and services. This process of emergence is modulated by the dynamics of cultural labor markets with their profoundly asymmetrical hierarchies, each capped at its upper end by formal and informal star systems playing on personality cults and on rapidly shifting fashion trends. Equally, celebrity and glamour are intertwined with consumers’ tastes and impulses in regard to entertainment and distraction, especially in so far as they respond to subliminal desires and fantasies within selected fractions of the market. These cultish obsessions with particular people (Marilyn Monroe, Angelina Jolie, George Clooney) and the places with which they are associated are in part expressions of the popular taste-driven aspects of cultural production. These different expressions of contemporary life come together with notable intensity in those major metropolitan areas (above all, New York, Los Angeles, and London) that function increasingly as the flagships of the new global cognitive-cultural order and the mediatized backdrop necessary to the transmission of celebrity across a world stage. Even so, cities at lower levels in the urban hierarchy also participate in various ways in these same expressions of economy, culture, and geography, as exemplified by exclusive tourist centers, select watering-holes, and specialized gambling and entertainment hubs like Reno, Las Vegas, or Macao. One of the critical marks of success in all cases is the materialization of desire in the guise of an urban spectacle comprising figures in a landscape where the more sober realities of life are held – temporarily – in suspension. All of this is further fueled by the technological advances of the 21st century that have made possible new forms of news reportage (blogs, gossip sites, and social media) that allow us to participate in the lives of the stars, almost in real time, as though we were actually there.

Our argument has acknowledged the long history of celebrity and glamour, but has nonetheless made the claim that these phenomena are assuming greatly expanded social and geographical significance and are marked by distinctive functional shifts as the new cognitive-cultural economy continues its upward ascent. Celebrity and glamour have always been the appanage of individuals of high social caste or wealth as well as of those with extraordinary accomplishments that raise them to unusual levels of renown in society. These connections are still in significant ways operative today. However, in addition to traditional patrician and meritocratic pathways to celebrity and glamour, we are now in an era in which a new or at least a greatly enlarged demotic pathway has acquired enormous economic and social resonance. This demotic pathway relies less on extraordinary talent and accomplishments or wealth in the individuals who tread its course than it does on the power of sheer publicity via the organs of mass communication. This progression also implies successful negotiation of a narrow passageway through two difficult and in some ways contradictory challenges. One involves transforming aspirants to stardom into images that become iconic and exceptional; the other is to ensure that consumers perceive something of their own personae and infatuations in the same images, which means, in part, that aspiring stars, must (like Kafka's Josephine again) be in some sense "just like us". The modern cultural economy is an especially fertile machine for generating phenomena of this sort, for it breeds an ever growing profusion of emotively-charged images of individuals, more often than not of modest social origins, and it thrives precisely on the corresponding branding and marketing effects. The ephemeral fashion-driven qualities of this system of cultural and economic production ensure a built-in obsolescence that maintains a constant circulation of new images and personalities through the mass media. As we have shown, all of these complex lines of force come to a head in the large 21st century metropolis where they function critically as both economic and symbolic registers of the new cognitive-cultural capitalism.

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