
The Cultural Economy of Cities*

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Introduction

Cities have always played a privileged role as centers of cultural and economic activity. From their earliest origins, cities have exhibited a conspicuous capacity both to generate culture in the form of art, ideas, styles and attitudes, and to induce high levels of economic innovation and growth, though not always or necessarily simultaneously. As we enter the twenty-first century, a very marked convergence between the spheres of cultural and economic development seems to be occurring. This is also one of the distinguishing characteristics of contemporary urbanization processes in general, as Molotch (1996) has suggested in a path-breaking paper on aesthetics, commerce and the city.

These preliminary propositions are based on the notion that capitalism itself is moving into a phase in which the cultural forms and meanings of its outputs become critical if not dominating elements of productive strategy, and in which the realm of human culture as a whole is increasingly subject to commodification, i.e. supplied through profit-making institutions in decentralized markets. In other words, an ever-widening range of economic activity is concerned with producing and marketing goods and services that are infused in one way or another with broadly aesthetic or semiotic attributes (Baudrillard, 1968; Lash and Urry, 1994; Molotch, 1996). There are, to be sure, vast expanses of urban culture that remain external to (and even in opposition to) this nexus of relationships, though rarely are they immune from at least some partial form of absorption into the general system of commodity production.¹

Such goods and services (let us henceforth designate them *cultural products*) are extremely heterogeneous in their substance, appearance and sectoral origins. In some cases they emanate from traditional manufacturing sectors engaged in the transformation of physical inputs into final outputs (e.g. clothing, furniture or jewelry); in other cases, they are more properly thought of as services in the sense that they involve some personalized transaction or the production and transmission of information (e.g. tourist services, live theater or advertising); and in yet other cases, they may be thought of as a hybrid form (such as music recording, book publishing or film production). Whatever the physico-economic constitution of such products, the sectors that make them are all engaged in the creation of marketable outputs whose competitive qualities depend on the

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1 Consider, for example, the ways in which certain aspects of black consciousness, feminism, punk culture or gay lifestyles have been absorbed into the design specifications of consumer goods. Rap music and gangsta fashions represent another manifestation of the same process, and are strongly in evidence in much of the cultural economy of contemporary Los Angeles.

fact that they function at least in part as personal ornaments, modes of social display, aestheticized objects, forms of entertainment and distraction, or sources of information and self-awareness, i.e. as artifacts whose psychic gratification to the consumer is high relative to utilitarian purpose.

As a result of the growth of disposable consumer income and the expansion of discretionary time in modern society, the consumption of cultural products of all kinds is evidently expanding at an accelerating pace, and the sectors engaged in making them constitute some of the most dynamic economic frontiers of capitalism today. The discussion that follows will argue that the specifically geographic impacts of this evolving situation are proving to be complex and wide-ranging. They are especially evident in the emergence of a number of giant cities representing the flagships of a new global capitalist cultural economy (Knox, 1995).

Place, culture, economy

Place and culture

Place and culture are persistently intertwined with one another, for place as it is understood here is always a locus of dense human interrelationships (out of which culture in part grows), and culture is a phenomenon that tends to have intensely place-specific characteristics thereby helping to differentiate places from one another. The point is sharply underlined by the work of cultural critics, urbanists and historians like Clark (1984), Davis (1990), Dimaggio (1982), Schorske (1980) and Zukin (1991; 1995) among many others.

As we enter the twenty-first century, however, a deepening tension is evident between culture as something that is narrowly place-bound, and culture as a pattern of non-place globalized occurrences and experiences (Appadurai, 1990; Morley and Robins, 1995; Peet, 1982; 1986; Webber, 1964). Thus, on the one hand, and even in a world where the ease and rapidity of communication have become watchwords, place is still uncontestedly a repository of distinctive cultures. On the other hand, certain privileged places represent points from which cultural artifacts and images are broadcast across the world and this same process has deeply erosive or at least transformative effects on many other local cultures.² The geography of culture, like the geography of economic activity, is stretched across a tense force field of local and global linkages (Featherstone, 1995; Robertson, 1992), with production occurring predominantly in localized clusters, while final outputs are channeled into ever more spatially extended networks of consumption. Accordingly, if some local/regional cultures are under serious threat at the present time, others are finding widening and receptive audiences. In fact some places, and nowhere more so than in the heartlands of modern world capitalism — places like New York, Los Angeles, London, Paris and Tokyo, to mention only a few of the most obvious examples — continue to be unique and highly creative generators of culture, and above all, to function as the bulwarks of a new cultural economy of capitalism. Whatever the political consequences of this predicament-laden situation may be, it does not so much herald a trend to absolute cultural uniformity across the world as it does an alternative and subtle kind of regional cultural differentiation articulated with an expanding structure of national and international cultural niches (adolescents, environmentalists, art collectors, nuclear physicists and so on).

One of the reasons — though not the only reason — for this claim about the reassertion of place as a privileged locus of culture is the continued and intensifying

2 See Carney (1993) and Kong (1995) for comments on the specific case of music as a phenomenon that is extremely localized in many instances and yet spatially diffused in others. Menger (1983) provides much information on the overwhelming dominance of Paris as a center of French musical culture.

importance of massive urban communities characterized by many different specialized social functions and dense internal relationships. Each of these communities represents a node of location-specific interactions and emergent effects (cf. Entrikin, 1991) in which the stimulus to cultural experimentation and renewal tends to be high. Large urban communities in modern capitalism are also typically the sites of leading-edge economic activity in the form of substantial agglomerations of industrial and business activity. In this context, many complex interactions between the cultural and the economic are set in motion. Local cultures help to shape the nature of intra-urban economic activity; concomitantly, economic activity becomes a dynamic element of the culture-generating and innovative capacities of given places. This comment applies, of course, to forms of economic activity that are concerned with non-cultural as well as cultural products (Salais and Storper, 1993; Thrift, 1994). However, in cultural-products industries the connection has special significance because of the intensity of the recursive relations between the cultural attributes of place and the logic of the local production system. To take just one specific example, the film industry of Los Angeles — or more narrowly of Hollywood — draws on a complex web of local cultural assets that play a crucial role in imparting to the products of the industry their distinctive look and feel (Molotch, 1996; Storper and Christopherson, 1987); and the same products in turn create images (real or imagined) of Los Angeles/Hollywood that then are assimilated back into the city's fund of cultural assets where they become available as inputs to new rounds of production. One consequence of these intricate relationships is that the reputation and authenticity of cultural products (qualities that often provide decisive competitive advantages in trade) are sometimes irrevocably tied to particular places. Think of Danish furniture, Florentine leather goods, Parisian *haute couture*, Thai silks, Champagne wines, London theatre or, again, Hollywood films.

In these senses, then, place, culture and economy are highly symbiotic with one another, and in modern capitalism this symbiosis is re-emerging in powerful new forms as expressed in the cultural economies of certain key cities. The more the specific cultural identities and economic order of these cities condense out on the landscape the more they come to enjoy monopoly powers of place (expressed in place-specific process and product configurations) that enhance their competitive advantages and provide their cultural-products industries with an edge in wider national and international markets. As Molotch (1996: 229) has written:

The positive connection of product image to place yields a kind of monopoly rent that adheres to places, their insignia, and the brand names that may attach to them. Their industries grow as a result, and the local economic base takes shape. Favorable images create entry barriers for products from competing places.

It should be clear already from these preliminary remarks that the present paper seeks to go beyond — though not to abandon entirely — the notion of the cultural economy of cities as either (a) the commercialization of historical heritage, or (b) large-scale public investment in artifacts of collective cultural consumption in the interests of urban renovation (Bassett, 1993; Bianchini, 1993; Frith, 1991; Kearns and Philo, 1993; Landry and Bianchini, 1995; Moulinier, 1996; Wynne, 1992). What is of primary concern here is an exploration of the intertwined effects of capitalist production processes and the ever-increasing cultural content of outputs, and the ways in which these effects make themselves felt in the growth and development of particular places.

Fordist and postfordist places

Notwithstanding these emphatic remarks about the importance of place as a crucible of cultural and economic interactions, they require serious qualification depending on what moment in the historical geography of capitalism we have in mind.

In particular, in the era when fordist mass production held sway in the cities of the US manufacturing belt, a very different set of relationships between place, culture and economy prevailed from those that seem to be observable today in so-called postfordist cities (Dear, 1995; Scott, 1995a). This is not to say that large fordist industrial cities were not at this moment in time stamped by distinctive cultures (the cases of Chicago, Detroit and Pittsburgh provide obvious and persuasive evidence to the contrary), or that their economies were bereft of cultural-products industries. However, the production apparatus of fordist industry was focused above all on reaping the advantages of economies of scale through the standardization of products and the cultivation of mass markets. As a result, the cultural content of much of the consumer output of fordist industry tended to become subservient to the more functional design imperatives imposed by the need for manufacturing efficiency and competitive cost-cutting (Sack, 1992). Production for specialized niche markets was relatively restricted, and even elite consumption at this time was much influenced by the functionalist, minimalist aesthetic of modernism (cf. Banham, 1960; Giedion, 1948). In the 1930s, the Hollywood film industry itself had ambitions — only in part ever realized — to turn out films on the same technological and economic principles as automobiles in Detroit (Storper and Christopherson, 1987). Frankfurt School critics among others were deeply troubled by the 'eternal sameness' of mass society and its alleged incompatibility with serious cultural values (Adorno, 1991; Horkheimer and Adorno, 1971); and even as late as the 1970s, cultural geographers like Relph (1976) were lamenting the 'placelessness' that they tracked down to prevailing forms of large-scale urbanization and industrial development. What few of the prevailing critics of mass society envisioned — though whether or not they would have applauded it is altogether another matter — was the major restructuring of capitalist social and economic relations that began some time in the early 1970s and the emergence of increasingly differentiated and fragmented consumer cultures. This restructuring was manifest above all in a strong shift away from fordist forms of production and by the remarkable proliferation of new flexible industries. The reasons underlying this historical change and the precise modalities of its occurrence are the subject of much debate at the present moment (see, for example, Boyer and Durand, 1993; Leborgne and Lipietz, 1992; Jessop, 1992) and need not concern us here. What is of interest is its expression in a new kind of cultural economy and its potent urban consequences.

We are in short currently observing the rise of a distinctly postfordist cultural economy in the advanced capitalist societies (Crane, 1992; Lash and Urry, 1994). This remark does not signify that mass production has no place in today's cultural economy, but it does reaffirm the idea that a vast extension is taking place in an assortment of craft, fashion and cultural-products industries throughout the advanced capitalist economies, along with a great surge in niche markets for design- and information-intensive outputs (Scott, 1994; 1996a). A provocative but revealing manner of designating this trend might be to label it as a postmodern expression of changing consumer tastes and demands involving a general aestheticization and semioticization of marketable products (cf. Albertson, 1988; Baudrillard, 1968; Harvey, 1989; Soja, 1989; 1996). Not that these products — for the most part — possess what Benjamin (1973) alluded to as auratic quality. They range over the gamut from, say, masterpieces of cinematic art or designer jewelry, to, say, tawdry tourist souvenirs or throwaway shopping bags, with the vast majority representing goods and services that trade on the basis of short- or medium-term fashion, information and entertainment value, and on their merits as social markers (Ryan, 1992).

On the supply side, these characteristics of cultural products encourage firms to engage in highly competitive marketing strategies based on insistent differentiation of outputs. On the demand side, and as a corollary, consumption is apt to be unstable and unpredictable if not outright faddish (Crewe and Forster, 1993; Hirsch, 1972; Peterson and Berger, 1975). The net effect is that the technology and organization of production tend strongly to flexible specialization, meaning that firms concentrate on making small

and specialized batches of output for tightly-defined and constantly changing market segments (Piore and Sabel, 1984; Shapiro *et al.*, 1992; Storper and Christopherson, 1987). In locational terms, firms subject to this sort of productive-*cum*-competitive regime typically converge together into transactions-intensive agglomerations. Examples can be found in (a) traditional centers of craft production that have experienced a renaissance in the postfordist era (as in the cases of the Third Italy and other areas in western Europe); or (b) resort centers like Las Vegas, Rio de Janeiro or the cities of the French Riviera; or (c) most importantly for present purposes, those large metropolitan areas mentioned earlier that are rapidly becoming the master hubs of cultural production in a postfordist global economic order.

The cultural economy of cities

Not only are there many different centers of cultural production in the modern world, but each also tends to be quite idiosyncratic in its character as a place. This idiosyncrasy resides in part in the (necessary) uniqueness of the history of any given place, and it resides in part in the very functioning of the local cultural economy which in numerous instances, through round after round of production, becomes ever more specialized and place-specific. As capitalism globalizes, moreover, the geographical specificity of the cultural economy of cities becomes, if anything, yet more pronounced because (in the light of the observation of Adam Smith (1776; 1970: 121) that 'the division of labor is limited by the extent of the market') globalization enhances the possibilities of vertical disintegration, productive agglomeration and specialization (Scott, 1988). Our task now is to assess the empirical meaning and theoretical logic of these phenomena.

Sectoral structures of employment

We begin with a scrutiny of some simple statistical measures of employment in the cultural economies of US cities. Unfortunately, we are severely hampered in this task by the deficiencies of official sources of data and above all by the limitations imposed by the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). The main problem in this regard is that the categories of the standard classification are rarely fully informative from the very specific point of view of the present inquiry. Many sectors, even at the four-digit level of definition, are made up of collections of establishments whose outputs are quite disparate in terms of their cultural attributes. For example, SIC 232 (men's and boys' furnishings) includes establishments that make high-fashion items such as ties and fancy shirts as well as establishments that produce cheap standardized outputs such as work clothes. Furthermore, the standard classification frequently provides no explicit information whatever about certain noteworthy segments of the cultural economy (such as recording studios, multimedia industries or tourist services). The data for different SIC categories that we now consider, therefore, have a purely symptomatic and indicative value and should be taken as pointing to no more than some gross tendencies subject to correction by more careful empirical research.

With these reservations in mind, we now examine employment patterns in selected sectors of the cultural economy of US cities for the year 1992, as shown in Table 1. The table identifies a series of SIC categories selected after scrutiny of the lists of their constituent sub-sectors as reported in the official US *Standard Industrial Classification Manual*; these categories seem to provide a reasonable compromise between descriptive parsimony on the one hand and detailed characterization of the cultural economy on the other. The statistical information given for each category is broken down into two groups: (a) aggregate employment in cultural-products industries for all 40 metropolitan areas (CMSAs and MSAs) in the United States that had populations of one million or more in

Table 1 *Employment in selected cultural-products industries in US metropolitan areas (CMSAs and MSAs) with populations of more than one million, 1992*

| SIC | Industry | Employment in metropolitan areas ('000) | Employment in United States ('000s) | Metropolitan areas as a per- centage of US |
|-------|--|---|---|--|
| 225 | Knitting mills | 51.0 | 194.0 | 26.3 |
| 231 | Men's and boys' suits and coats | 16.3 | 43.8 | 37.2 |
| 232 | Men's and boys' furnishings | 46.5 | 263.5 | 17.6 |
| 233 | Women's and misses' outerwear | 187.6 | 303.9 | 61.7 |
| 234 | Women's and misses' undergarments | 12.2 | 53.6 | 22.8 |
| 235 | Hats, caps, and millinery | 6.5 | 18.8 | 34.3 |
| 236 | Girl's and children's outerwear | 14.9 | 53.7 | 27.7 |
| 237 | Fur goods | 0.6 | 1.0 | 60.0 |
| 238 | Miscellaneous apparel and accessories | 13.4 | 35.7 | 37.4 |
| 2511 | Wood household furniture | 28.6 | 121.1 | 23.6 |
| 2512 | Upholstered furniture | 18.6 | 79.2 | 23.5 |
| 2514 | Metal household furniture | 8.9 | 25.8 | 34.3 |
| 271 | Newspapers | 190.6 | 417.0 | 45.7 |
| 272 | Periodicals | 85.2 | 116.2 | 73.3 |
| 2731 | Book publishing | 53.2 | 79.6 | 66.9 |
| 277 | Greeting cards | 11.4 | 22.8 | 49.9 |
| 314 | Footwear, except rubber | 5.7 | 49.0 | 11.6 |
| 316 | Luggage | 5.1 | 9.7 | 52.1 |
| 317 | Handbags and personal leather goods | 4.8 | 11.2 | 42.9 |
| 391 | Jewelry, silverware and plated ware | 29.2 | 46.0 | 63.5 |
| 393 | Musical instruments | 3.2 | 12.0 | 26.3 |
| 394 | Toys and sporting goods | 31.8 | 96.0 | 33.1 |
| 396 | Costume jewelry and notions | 16.7 | 28.0 | 59.6 |
| 483 | Radio and television broadcasting | 102.8 | 221.8 | 46.4 |
| 484 | Cable and other pay TV services | 58.4 | 129.0 | 45.3 |
| 731 | Advertising | 146.8 | 195.8 | 75.0 |
| 781/2 | Motion picture production/distribution | 241.2 | 249.2 | 96.8 |
| 792 | Producers, orchestras, entertainers | 58.5 | 69.0 | 84.8 |
| 8712 | Architectural services | 93.7 | 121.7 | 77.0 |
| | Totals | 1,543.2 | 3,068.0 | |

Sources: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; (a) *Census of manufactures*, 1992; (b) *Census of transportation, communications, and utilities*, 1992; (c) *Census of service industries*, 1992.

1990; and (b) aggregate employment in cultural-products industries for the US as a whole.

Three main points now need to be made. First, the cultural economy is represented by an extremely wide variety of both manufacturing and service activities. Second, with total employment exceeding three million, the sheer magnitude of the cultural economy of the United States is surprisingly great (even admitting the makeshift definition of the cultural economy as given in Table 1); and examination of the record suggests that it has been growing rapidly of late (see Scott, 1996a). Third, a very significant proportion of employment in the country's cultural economy is concentrated in large metropolitan areas, and the proportion seems to increase as the cultural content of final products increases. Hence, only 11.6% of total employment in SIC 314 (footwear, except rubber) — a sector that comprises many standardized producers — is found in large metropolitan areas, in contrast to 96.8% of employment in SIC 781/2 (motion picture production and distribution).³ At the

3 By way of comparison, 53.2% of the country's total population is concentrated in the 40 designated metropolitan areas.

same time, employment in these sectors is unevenly distributed over the 40 metropolitan areas, and is for the most part concentrated in one or another of two main metropolitan areas, namely New York and Los Angeles. Exceptions to this observation are the furniture industry and the costume jewelry industry whose principal foci, respectively, are the Greensboro–Winston Salem–High Point MSA, and the Providence–Fall River–Warwick MSA. A few sectors identified in Table 1 tend to avoid major metropolitan areas, though they still have a proclivity to agglomeration. The clearest example of this phenomenon is the musical instruments industry whose main center in the country is Elkhart, Indiana.

Intra-urban cultural synergies and semiotic fields

It was averred above that postfordist places and their cultural economies are inclined to exhibit well-developed individual identities, as a consequence of the play of history, agglomeration and locational specialization. This same feature is also doubtless rooted in the fact that cultural-products industries compete increasingly on crowded global markets, and that success in this competition is aided where the monopoly powers of place are mobilized to the maximum in implicit and explicit branding of products. It is fostered too by the positive spillover effects that almost always tie different cultural sectors within a single city together into an evolving community with its characteristic styles, sensibilities and themes. The latter synergistic relation is due not only to the circumstance that these sectors typically transact intensively with one another and participate in shared labor markets, but also from their exploitation of design cultures and images drawn from the local urban context, representing a generalized externality or competitive advantage for all (Molotch, 1996). This interpenetration of the cultural and the economic in given places is in fact exactly what Marshall (1920) had in mind when he referred to the beneficial effects of ‘atmosphere’ on the workings of nineteenth-century industrial districts. In the present context, atmosphere refers more than anything else to a conglomeration of cultural synergies and semiotic fields rooted in the life, work and institutional infrastructures of particular cities.

The significance and potency of these relationships can be exemplified in many different ways. The traditional craft industries in the towns of the Third Italy represent one dramatic illustration. Since the early 1970s, industrial employment in these towns has grown by leaps and bounds, and the cultural products of the region have successfully attacked international markets where they ramify thanks to their superior quality and style based on a legacy of skilled craftsmanship dedicated to serving a traditionally discerning clientele (Becattini, 1987; Pyke *et al.*, 1990; Scott, 1988). Woollen textiles from Prato, knitwear from Carpi, ceramics from Sassuolo, high-fashion shoes from Porto Sant’Elpidio, furniture from Pesaro, lace from Como and leather goods from Florence are just a few of the products that have driven much of the remarkable recent economic growth of the Third Italy. Another set of examples might be adduced by reference to different sorts of tourist resorts, each with a complex of interlocking production and service functions, and each luring consumers on the basis of some unique collective asset (physical or cultural) that is then made accessible and continually re-imagined as the local production system does its work of commercialization (Urry, 1990; 1995). In addition, a number of major metropolitan regions (New York, London, Tokyo, etc.) possess multiple clusters of cultural-products industries such as book and magazine publishing, art and design endeavors of all varieties, theatrical and musical productions, radio and television broadcasting, and advertising, together with craft industries like clothing and jewelry, that thrive on the urbane climate of the great international metropolis.

Of all the individual cases of vibrant localized cultural-economic systems that might be cited in evidence of the theoretical notions laid out in this paper, two of the most compelling are represented by the contrasting cases of Los Angeles and Paris, both of which project strong and sharp-edged cultural images, and both of which have effective global reach in terms of their ability to connect with consumers. In the former case, the

cultural economy is for the most part focused on products that cater to demotic, informal, post-bourgeois tastes, and it exploits an abundant multi-faceted imagery drawn from a mixture of natural local color (sunshine, surf, palm trees) and a relaxed texture of social life combined with purely fictional associations that are themselves the residues of previous rounds of cultural production (Molotch, 1996; Scott, 1996a; Soja and Scott, 1996). The cultural economy of Paris, by contrast, is very much more focused on the production of luxury articles for a more select clientele. It draws on a long tradition of superior craftsmanship and artistry, extending from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries through the *Belle Epoque* to the present day (Bourdieu, 1977; Castarède, 1992; Claval, 1993; Salais and Storper, 1993) and, unlike the case of Los Angeles, the concessions that it occasionally makes to everyday commercial values tend to be signs of failure rather than success.

Some of the details of the cultural economies of the two cities are revealed in Tables 2 and 3, though it is difficult to make direct comparisons between them due to the peculiarities of the official industrial classifications used in the United States and France. In both cities, employment in cultural-products industries is high, and spread out over a wide range of sectors such as clothing, furniture, printing and publishing, film production and so on. Production activities in these sectors are typically concentrated in specialized industrial districts within each metropolitan area as marked above all by dense agglomerations of vertically disintegrated firms together with adjacent local labor markets.

Table 2 provides information on selected cultural-products industries in Los Angeles County (see also Molotch, 1996). Here, a somewhat less refined sectoral disaggregation

Table 2 *Employment in selected cultural-products industries, Los Angeles County, 1993*

| SIC | Industry | Employment | Establishments | Average Employment per Establishment |
|------|--|------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 22 | Textile mill products | 10,720 | 286 | 37.5 |
| 23 | Apparel and other textile products | 94,423 | 3,949 | 23.9 |
| 25 | Furniture and fixtures | 24,732 | 792 | 31.2 |
| 27 | Printing and publishing | 53,463 | 2,573 | 20.8 |
| 31 | Leather and leather products | 3,371 | 96 | 35.1 |
| 391 | Jewelry, silverware and plated ware | 2,648 | 221 | 12.0 |
| 393 | Musical instruments | 600 | 27 | 22.2 |
| 394 | Toys and sporting goods | 3,023 | 121 | 25.0 |
| 396 | Costume jewelry and notions | 2,305 | 51 | 45.2 |
| 483 | Radio and television broadcasting | 9,193 | 170 | 54.1 |
| 484 | Cable and other pay TV services | 5,343 | 102 | 52.4 |
| 731 | Advertising | 11,872 | 878 | 13.5 |
| 781 | Motion picture production and services | 155,900 | 4,357 | 35.8 |
| 782 | Motion picture distribution and services | 20,006 | 410 | 48.8 |
| 792 | Producers, orchestras, entertainers | 17,103 | 2,860 | 6.0 |
| 8712 | Architectural services | 5,599 | 705 | 7.9 |
| | Totals | 420,301 | 17,598 | |

Source: Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; *County business patterns*, 1993.

Table 3 *Employment in selected cultural-products industries, Ile-de France, 1994*

| NAF* | Industry | Employment | Establishments | Average Employment per Establishment |
|-------|--|------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 17 | Textile industry | 7,300 | 752 | 9.7 |
| 18 | Apparel and fur industry | 33,481 | 4,018 | 8.3 |
| 19 | Leather and shoe industry | 4,638 | 466 | 10.0 |
| 22 | Printing and publishing | 62,193 | 6,168 | 10.1 |
| 26.2A | Ceramic articles for domestic and ornamental use | 822 | 46 | 17.9 |
| 36 | Furniture and miscellaneous industries | 21,525 | 2,354 | 9.1 |
| 74.2A | Architectural activities | 8,199 | 2,247 | 3.6 |
| 74.4B | Advertising | 32,008 | 3,517 | 9.1 |
| 92 | Entertainment, cultural and sporting activities | 75,251 | 7,286 | 10.3 |
| | Totals | 245,417 | 26,854 | |

* Nomenclature d'Activités Française.

Source: *L'emploi salarié en 1994, Ile-de France, départements*, Groupement des ASSEDIC de la région Parisienne, Paris.

has been adopted than in Table 1, given the narrow geographic focus of the data presented and the relatively greater homogeneity of the industries designated. The 16 cultural-products sectors mentioned in the table employed a total of 420,301 workers in 17,598 establishments in 1993. The average size of these establishments is typically somewhere between 20 and 30 workers. In the cultural economy of Los Angeles, the dominant sector by far is motion-picture production and services with 155,900 employees in 1993. This is followed by apparel and other textile products with 94,423 employees (now considerably larger even than the New York apparel industry which had just 51,420 employees in the same year) whose main outputs consist of casual fashions and sportswear recognizable by the colorful, relaxed style known as the 'California Look.' A number of other sectors not indicated in Table 2 are also of considerable local importance. Among these are theme parks and tourist services, interior decoration and design, music recording and multimedia production, all of which are expanding rapidly (Scott, 1995b; 1996a). Los Angeles is now also a world center of automobile design with over a score of major studios. And in the domain of architecture, a recognizable school of Los Angeles architects is successfully exporting a distinctive 'hetero-architectural' postmodernism across the world (Jencks, 1993). The success of the cultural-products industries of Los Angeles has been so outstanding of late years that they now surpass by far the high-technology industrial complex in terms of total employment, and Los Angeles seems set to enter the twenty-first century more as an international center of cultural rather than high-technology production.

The cultural economy of Paris is equally diverse in its sectoral composition and equally distinctive in the design and texture of its products. As indicated by Table 3, total employment in the cultural-products industries in the region of Ile-de-France was 245,417 in 1994. This was distributed over 26,854 establishments, so that average establishment size is considerably smaller than in the case of the Los Angeles cultural-products industry — a reflection, probably, of the more artisanal structure of cultural production in Paris. The largest employment category is a rather disparate

entertainment, cultural and sporting activities sector, which includes the film industry with a total of 8441 employees. Thus, the film industry of Paris is far smaller than that of Los Angeles but it enjoys a very special niche in national and international markets for all that (even though 57.3% of all French film-goers went to see Hollywood films in 1990 (Farchy, 1992)). Employment is also high in the apparel and fur industry, printing and publishing, furniture and miscellaneous industries (including 5831 workers in the jewelry and costume jewelry sectors), and advertising. In these and other sectors not explicitly mentioned in Table 3, the cultural economy of Paris is still in a modest way characterized by the multiplicity of small traditional trades for which it was celebrated in the nineteenth century, though many of these have suffered greatly in recent decades as a consequence of competition from the Far East. In 1860, the trades engaged in making so-called *articles de Paris* (household ornaments, trimmings, buttons, artificial flowers, umbrellas, dolls, toys, musical instruments, wigs, fans, gloves, canes, etc.) employed almost 26,000 workers in over 5000 establishments. These articles comprised all the minor daily accoutrements of decoration, play and show, and at the top end of the market they represented items of considerable luxury (Fierro, 1996; Gaillard, 1977).⁴ The whole of the city's cultural economy today, of course, is underpinned by a uniquely dramatic urban and architectural patrimony, much augmented by the many spectacular building projects of a succession of French governments over the 1970s and 1980s, from the *Centre Pompidou* to the *Grande Arche de la Défense*. This patrimony in its turn attracts enormous numbers of tourists (and cultural consumers) to Paris every year.

If the cultural products of Los Angeles share a set of characteristics that can for the most part be variously described as casual, colorful, occasionally fantastic, and accessible to mass sensibilities, those of Paris by contrast — or at least those that are most distinctively Parisian — appeal to more discriminating consumers who put a premium on traditional craftsmanship, refinement and luxury. At the same time, the cultural economies of Los Angeles and Paris face pressing internal problems, not the least of which is the propensity in both cases for many sectors (such as clothing and furniture) to breed sweatshop forms of production relying on cheap, unskilled, immigrant labor, with the result that the quality of final output is often dubious and the reputation of local producers as a whole becomes compromised (Montagné-Villette, 1990; Scott and Rigby, 1996). Problems like this pose difficult questions about the kinds of local policies and modes of collective action needed to sustain cultural production in modern cities.

A variety of spontaneous responses to the current dilemmas of the cultural economies of Los Angeles and Paris can be observed in the guise of local institutions seeking to provide some measure of overall order and strategic choice, though their scope of action is strictly limited as things currently stand. Among such institutions are the guilds and the academies that supply a range of services to the entertainment industries of Los Angeles, or the *Fédération Française du Prêt à Porter Féminin* (which hosts the twice yearly International Salon for the women's wear industry) in Paris. In France, too, many sectors (above all the film industry) benefit from significant governmental support through a series of forceful employment and cultural policies. As suggested in the next section, however, new and more robust approaches to the policy problem seem to be in order, and all the more so in view of the strong interdependencies and spillover effects that are always at least latent in localized cultural production complexes.

4 Consider the following passage from Balzac's *La Cousine Bette*: 'In arranging her salon she had put on display those delightful trinkets that are produced in Paris, and that no other city in the world can match ... enamelled keepsakes decorated with pearls, bowls filled with charming rings, masterpieces of Saxony and Sèvres porcelain mounted with exquisite taste by Florent and Chanor, not to mention statuettes and albums, all those ornaments worth mad sums of money ordered from the craftsman's shop in the first flame of passion or in its last reconciliation'.

Production and distribution

Production relations

The concept of a cultural economy (like the concept of high-technology industry) is incoherent in some respects, for it refers to a diverse collection of sectors displaying many different kinds of technologies, transactional arrangements, employment profiles, products and so on. What provides special meaning to the concept in the present context is that the outputs of cultural-products industries are almost always susceptible — actually or potentially — to a sort of convergence on place-specific product design contours and cultural content. They are subject, in other words, to the influence of peculiar imageries and sensibilities rooted in place and appropriatable by individual firms as competitive advantages. There are, too, some prominent points of correspondence among important segments of these industries in so far as they participate in general structures of flexible specialization and vertically-disintegrated production processes. In fact, the cultural-products industries as a whole can be roughly epitomized in terms of five main technological-organizational elements:

- (1) The technologies and labor processes utilized in cultural-products industries usually involve considerable amounts of human handiwork (as in the clothing industry), often and to an increasing degree complemented by advanced flexible computer technologies (as in the multimedia industry).
- (2) Production is almost always organized in dense networks of small- and medium-sized establishments that are strongly dependent on one another for specialized inputs and services. However, it is not uncommon to find large and relatively integrated firms also participating in these same networks, as, for example, in the case of the major Hollywood film studios or the leading New York publishers (cf. Maltby, 1981; Cosner *et al.*, 1982; see also Driver and Gillespie, 1993).
- (3) These networks form multifaceted industrial complexes which in aggregate tend to exert huge demands on local labor markets and to require an enormous variety of worker skills/attributes. The employment relation in the cultural-products industries is typically intermittent, leading to frequently recurrent job-search and recruitment activities (cf. Menger, 1991; 1994). In this regard, risks for both workers and employers are reduced as the size of the local production complex increases.
- (4) As a result of these different features, complexes of cultural-products industries are invariably replete with external economies, many of which can only be effectively appropriated via locational agglomeration (Becattini, 1987; Scott, 1988). Agglomeration gives rise to yet further external economies through a system of emergent effects, and in the cultural-products industries these concern above all the mutual learning and cultural synergies made possible by the presence of many interrelated firms and industries in one place. In particular, cultural creativity is not just an effect of the lonely ruminations of the individual, but more importantly is an outgrowth of multiple stimuli situated at the points of interaction between many different agents (cf. Jacobs, 1969; Powell *et al.*, 1996; Russo, 1985). This in turn suggests the hypothesis that innovation, all else being equal, is likely to be a geometric function of the size of the relevant reference group.
- (5) Agglomeration also facilitates the emergence of different kinds of institutional infrastructures that can ease the functioning of the local economy by providing critical overhead services, facilitating flows of information, promoting trust and cooperation among interlinked producers, ensuring that effective strategic planning is accomplished, and so on (cf. Crewe, 1996; Lorenz, 1992).

These five main points underline once again the collective character of localized cultural-economic systems and their special interest as image-producing complexes. As

we have seen, such systems represent considerably more than the simple sum of their parts, for they are invariably shot through with multiple traded and untraded interdependencies. For the same reason, firms caught up in these systems often face a common competitive fate irrespective of their individual competencies and capacities. This composite order of things means that appropriately attuned local economic development policies are not only in order but also imperative. If we take a cue from the above five points, such policies need in particular to address such agglomeration-specific tasks as the provision of technological research services, the training of labor, the social governance of interindustrial networks, and institution-building generally in the interests of coordinated and synergistic regional development (Scott, 1996a).

Distribution relations and multinationalization

While the cultural economies of many cities today consist of dense, complex and locationally-convergent groups of producers, they are also typically embedded in far-flung global networks of transactions (Amin and Thrift, 1992; Scott, 1996b). Their success, then, depends not only upon their ability to tap deeply into local sources of value-adding externalities and innovative energy, but also to project their outputs onto national and international markets and to ensure that they can negotiate their way through a variety of cultural barriers in different parts of the world. This process of distribution is not infrequently undertaken by specialized phalanxes of firms that straddle the critical interface between any given agglomeration and global markets.

These distributors are the interlocal equivalent of the intra-local agents, contractors, 'impannatore', dealers, representatives, jobbers and others that are almost always to be found within individual agglomerations. All of these peculiar types of firm represent a response to the existence of chronic information gaps providing specialized trading opportunities. The essential feature of interlocal distributors is their technological and organizational capacity to funnel information and outputs from many different producers in one geographic context to many different consumers in others, and because this feature is apt to be marked by internal economies of scale, they are sometimes anomalously large in size when compared to the average size of the producers that they serve. Oftentimes, they are also engaged in different aspects of production or financing. This is the way the major Hollywood film studios operate though even here actual film production is being increasingly relegated to clusters of smaller production companies and their subcontractors (Christopherson and Storper, 1986; Storper, 1993). Other illustrative cases of the same phenomenon are Benetton, IKEA, and the large American radio and television networks.

The intricate tissue of the cultural economy of cities is further complicated by the fact that multinational corporations, and in particular large media conglomerates, are now making determined moves into different cultural-products sectors. These corporations continuously scavenge the world for production sites, synergistic takeover and merger opportunities, and market outlets (Aksoy and Robins, 1992; Barnett and Cavanagh, 1994; Flichy, 1991; Garnham, 1987; 1990; MacDonald, 1990; Morley and Robins, 1995; Robins, 1995). As they make ever more insistent incursions into different cultural-products agglomerations they bring about many significant changes by speeding up flows of information, by helping to streamline the financing and commercialization of new products, and by intensifying competition. But they are also a critical ingredient of success for they are essential mediating organizations, distributing products world-wide and pumping money back into localized agglomerations. Time-Warner, Turner Broadcasting, Viacom and Walt Disney (each of which is a member of the Fortune 500 group of companies) are typical examples of this phenomenon. So are European firms like Bertelsman, Philips, and Thorn-EMI, and Japanese firms like Matsushita and Sony, all of which are firmly implanted in US cultural-products agglomerations.

Many of these corporations are also engaged in developing electronic platforms for the dissemination and consumption of cultural products on a global basis. Numerous analysts and commentators have suggested that the appearance of these new distribution technologies (especially when they are harnessed to the sales strategies of multinational media corporations) will have the effect of severely eroding existing levels of cultural-geographic diversity. It was argued earlier in the present paper that this does not seem to be occurring in quite the way that some critics have suggested, and other reasons why its advent will surely be delayed may be adduced. Thus, granted that we are likely to see the further emergence (but also the additional fragmentation and specialization) of world-wide non-place cultural communities with very specific kinds of tastes and preferences, it nevertheless seems improbable that processes of commercial cultural production will also shift in the direction of locational entropy. On the contrary, the production of goods and services for sale on world-wide cultural markets is still almost certainly going to have a strong propensity to be associated with particular places if the arguments deployed above have any validity. Even with the prospective development of fully globalized electronic media spaces, geographically differentiated cultural production nodes are liable to be the rule rather than the exception (Storper and Scott, 1995). Indeed, by contributing to the extension of markets and thus to the deepening of the social division of labor, the emergence of global media spaces is likely to be associated with heightened forms of local economic development and corresponding re-differentiation of the cultural specificities of place.

Conclusion

In this brief essay some preliminary lines of enquiry into the question of the cultural economy of cities have been laid out. An effort has been made to show how the cultural geography of place and the economic geography of production are intertwined within this question, and how an important set of insights about the logic of contemporary urbanization processes and the qualitative attributes of urban life and work emerge as a result. The analysis, too, provides some new particulars about the interdependent geographies of local and global development. Above all, the argument describes how in contemporary capitalism, the culture-generating capabilities of cities are being harnessed to productive purposes, creating new kinds of localized competitive advantages with major employment and income-enhancing effects.

At the same time, every output of the cultural economy represents a text of greater or lesser complexity to be read (Ryan, 1992), and few aspects of contemporary social experience remain untouched by this relation between the cultural product and the consumer. Since culture is also always about identity and power, the pervasive influence of the cultural economy raises serious political questions. A familiar expression of what is at stake here is the invasion and dilution of traditional cultures in one place or in one segment of society by commodified cultures produced in other places/segments. Another expression — perhaps even more important than the former — involves the enervation and social recuperation that flow from certain types of popular commercial culture. Neither of these predicaments, however, is unconditional. Alongside the grim analyses of the Frankfurt School about the leveling and stupefying effects of capitalist culture we must set not only the resilient and creative reception that it encounters in many sorts of traditional cultures, but also the enlightening and progressive cultural forces constantly unleashed by capitalism (Garnham, 1987), e.g. from the novel and the newspaper in the eighteenth century, to such twentieth century cultural phenomena as Bauhaus design, the films of Hollywood directors like Frank Capra, John Ford, Howard Hawks and Billy Wilder, and alternative forms of music from jazz to rock and roll. As argued above, there are also strong potentialities for heightened forms of cultural differentiation from place to

place as the cultural economy of cities moves into high gear, for if capitalism dissolves away certain sites of cultural expression, it actively recreates other sites elsewhere.

Despite these final optimistic remarks, an active cultural politics is essential if many of the more regressive tendencies in capitalist cultural production today are to be circumvented. Because the issues are also, and increasingly, bound up with the economic destiny of places, we may expect the corresponding political frictions to be particularly complex and intense.

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