Places of Privileged Consumption Practices: Spatial Capital, the Dot-Com Habitus, and San Francisco's Internet Boom

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Drawing from interviews and fieldwork with former dot-com workers in San Francisco, this article examines how their spatialized consumption practices formed exclusionary places of privilege during the city's millennial boom of internet companies. I focus especially on the personalized deployment of uneven social power in situations where space is at stake. After considering how this group differed from a history of other urban newcomers, I develop a framework for addressing their spatial effects as gentrification involving privileged consumption practices that surpass residential encroachments. I argue there is an exertion of *spatial capital* that represents the misrecognition of territorial claims, enabling this cohort to literally take place. I show this through several consumption practices that convert to and from economic, cultural, and social capital. A concluding discussion reflects on the usefulness of this case and framework for reinvigorating key urban-sociological analytics while confronting influential but unsociological characterizations of contemporary city life.

INTRODUCTION

The years around the turn of the twenty-first century were heady times in San Francisco. By the late 1990s, an unequivocal surge in businesses driven by information technology heralded the arrival of a "new economy," which pervaded millennial discourses and arguably took the city as its *de facto* capital.[1] Wealth and population both spiked in San Francisco as billions of investment dollars flowed into the small seven-by-seven-mile space of the city, accompanied by thousands of white-collar migrants eager to take up high-paying "smart jobs." An air of unbridled optimism came with the unfamiliar but ostensibly bountiful business potential of the internet. Among "dot-com" companies, both major establishments expanded and new start-ups emerged at a brisk pace. Simultaneously, noticeable alterations emerged in the urban landscape. Not only chic bars and eclectic boutiques, postindustrial apartments, and sleek office spaces appeared, but also circulating among these was a particular type of new urban resident: young, moneyed, hip, professional. This new city user, a "dot-commer" in most common parlance, became a dominant figure in the urban scene during a fleeting but consequential millennial moment.

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In this study of consumption practices among the dot-com cohort during its peak of successfulness, I show there was a certain set of practical dispositions, or *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 95), evident in how this new cohort used city spaces, exerted privilege, and shaped place in ways unlike earlier eras in the region, even moments of significant social change. Specifically, I argue that this group offers insight into a more general exclusionary tool deployed by privileged city users—what I call *spatial capital*—that yields particular kinds of places through the dot-com habitus, yet holds promise for analyses of other cities with new or nascent privileged populations.

In the late 1990s, the conspicuousness of dot-commers came from the combination of their age, income, and markedly privileged style, as well as the simultaneous reach and specificity—that is, multiple dispersed nodes—of their spatialized consumption practices, making them an especially noteworthy albeit ephemeral presence in the city.[2] Yet throughout the twentieth century, San Francisco had its share of new kinds of residents—coming from both within the United States and overseas, with all levels of wealth—that marked the city with their particular traits (Castells, 1983, part 3; Godfrey, 1988; Starr, 1996, chapters 4, 10, 13; Walker, 1998; Starr, 2002). Unlike two earlier cohorts of predominantly white, domestic newcomers, dot-commers combined privilege with free-ranging territorial claims to the city. As a first counterexample, the hippies flocking to Haight-Ashbury in the 1960s had relatively meager economic means and an interest in alternative lifestyles that cohered around a particular low-rent, previously deteriorated neighborhood, but the 1967 Summer of Love brought overcrowding and violence that completely undermined their fragile claims on territory (Perry, 1984; Godfrey, 1988, chapter 6). Second, gay men and lesbians moved to San Francisco in large numbers during the 1970s as the Castro converted from a working-class environment into a microcosmic—if not economically or ethnically representative—homosexual social territory. Early gay newcomers were largely white and commanded high incomes, but faced intense discrimination on the basis of sexuality. They thus sought to create a cluster of physical permanence for social and political solidarity, as well as a base for homeownership and commercial proprietorship, with lasting and largely unquestioned claims of legitimate presence, at least in that bounded area (Castells, 1983, chapter 14; Armstrong, 2002; de Jim, 2006).

In contrast, dot-commers faced no such limited social privileges of low incomes or cultural marginalization, enacting a much more geographically free-ranging engagement with the city. Yet neither did they match the infamous if incohesive categorization of yuppies from the 1980s (Savells, 1986; Lyons, 1989; Short, 1989), as they emerged instead from a more embattled cohort once called "Generation X" (e. g., Howe and Strauss, 1993). The dot-commers largely embraced an "ethic" not so much of condescension or outright superiority in their exercise of privilege but a combination of individuality and community (Castells, 2001; Himanen, 2001; Florida, 2002; Florida, 2005), signifying perhaps the perversion of an earlier progressivism in San Francisco (e.g., de Leon, 1992), newly bent on breakneck business development. The fact that this group was tied to the internet boom is thus important, but not the sole factor in understanding how they affected the city. I show how the specificities of that internet-pervaded, or *new economy,* moment operated recursively with a set of privileged dispositions and practices among *dot-commers* as *new city users* to yield particular place formations.[3]

I assemble an approach centered on *spatial capital* to analyze how dot-commers were able literally to take place. What this means is the capacity to stake exclusionary claims,

perceived by others as socially legitimate, on urban space that could reasonably be open to others who were not participating in the new economy. The effect of expending spatial capital is thus a formation of place, in this case especially through practices of privileged consumption (e.g., expensive residence, high-end arts patronage, large nonpublic celebrations, usage of elite eating and drinking establishments), that involves practices converting among spatial and other forms of capital within a population that generally enjoyed significant stores of all its types, as elaborated below. The contribution of this theoretical angle to existing frameworks of urban studies in more straightforwardly materialist veins—with their foci especially on gentrification and broader restructuring (e.g., Zukin, 1982; Logan and Molotch, 1987; Harvey, 1989; Massey, 1994; Smith, 1996)—is to bring critical attention to the more amorphous and yet unequivocally territorializing deployment of power that works in conjunction with phenomena of, for example, broader urban redevelopment programs in the sociological reshaping of cities. This is, therefore, an approach with some clearly Marxian roots but strongly post-Marxian aims of understanding how space is remade in the quotidian practices of groups with particular resources at hand, mobilized in ways—and at scales—that complement but go beyond the findings of existing literature by urbanist scholars.

Sociological and related research on the internet boom and its participants has focused on novel aspects of workers (Sennett, 2000; Florida, 2002; Smith, 2002), their work (Ross, 2003; Indergaard, 2004; Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin, 2005; Jarvis and Pratt, 2006), and the particularities of their broader cultural milieux (Florida, 2003; Lloyd, 2004; Pratt, 2004; Neff, 2005; Laguerre, 2006). Much of this scholarship is particularly concerned with urban spaces where the "new economy" was or has been most prevalent, extending two themes from earlier work on more general socioeconomic shifts within North Atlantic cities: gentrification (e.g., Zukin, 1982; Smith, 1996) and new types of postindustrial employment that reshape the city (e.g., Castells, 1989; Harvey, 1989; Featherstone, 1991; Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991; Sassen, 1991; Lash and Urry, 1994; Castells, 2000a). As elaborated below, this article builds on that work but looks to a distinct analytic dimension: how privileged participants in the new economy constitute novel kinds of places, not only via residential encroachment or cultural hegemonies (e.g., Solnit and Schwartzenberg, 2000), but through their deployment of spatial capital in practices of consumption that open up multiple arenas for the expansion of other forms of capital, the accumulation of which contributes to imputing place with the character of a dot-com habitus.

This article derives from an ethnographic and interview-based project pursued from 1999 to 2002, prompted by the stark everyday changes I was witnessing as a resident of the San Francisco area. I began with broad sociological questions about the dot-commers with whom I interacted after-hours: Why was their use of the city—their consumption practices in general—so different from other groups? Why did they exert privilege in these remarkably spatialized ways? Yet the boom did not last forever. In fact, the bust of the technology bubble in San Francisco was nearly as spectacular as the boom. In the wake of euphoria, it is possible to gain a comparative lens on these boomtime places and practices, a retrospective insight into how these actors made innovative if often problematic use of urban space.

In crafting my argument, I first assemble a framework for thinking about different forms of capital in the conflictive creation of urban places. Second, I consider the lessons of existing literature on urban transformation and San Francisco history, including how

this study can advance or expand several of those contributions. Third, there is a brief outline of research methodology. Fourth, I offer a lengthy exposition of empirical findings from fieldwork and interviews with former dot-com workers, focusing on three of their broad consumption practices that evidence the use of spatial capital and the literal taking of place. These practices are empirically interwoven yet can be analytically distinguished in their connections to economic, cultural, and social capital: respectively, the demonstration of new money, the conversion of character, and the location of networking. I conclude by briefly reflecting on how findings about the dot-com cohort and its effects on urban space enable us to expand our theorizations of gentrification as well as to challenge certain popular currents in thinking about the new economy and city life.

SPACE AT STAKE

This article contributes to the existing sociological literature on space and place by developing the notion of *spatial capital*, which draws on elements from both Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) and Bourdieu (1984; 1986; with Wacquant, 1992). This, in turn, furthers a conflictive conceptualization of capital forms *contra* recently influential depictions of strikingly serene or sanguine capital accumulation in the city, for example, Putnam's (1993; 2000) celebration of social capital and Florida's (2002, 2003, 2005) exaltation of the creative class. Furthermore, in this particular case it also counters unsociological views of cities in the new economy, forwarded especially by William Mitchell (1996; 2000; 2005).

Lefebvre (1991) argues that the production of *space* is a multidimensional process involving the conflicting agendas that imbue the broad expanse of physical space with particular social meanings and shape it, in turn, to advantage certain practices and ideologies; he outlines three interactive forms of space. *Conceptualized space* is the realm created by planners, politicians, and others with the power to envision and define spaces: "This is the dominant space in any society (or mode of production)," largely organized by "a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs" (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 38–39).[4] In turn, *lived space* is much less a particular space in any conventional sense, but more a way of living space: it comprises how "the imagination seeks to change and appropriate . . . physical space, making symbolic use of its objects" and operating through "more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). We thus have conceptualizations, which attempt to codify space and make it explicitly legible, juxtaposed with plural actions upon or reactions to it, which rely on instinctual strategic, imaginative practices. I suggest that Lefebvre's third category, *perceived space*, emerges from the above interaction and prefigures another round of similar actions, but can change significantly in the process (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Perceived space is thus everything we experience around us merely via perception—that is, without critical reflection or deeper thought—but that we have, in practice, contributed to creating.

Within this view of space, we can understand *place*, at a minimum, as a particular location that has both a physical and symbolic existence (Gieryn, 2000, pp. 464–465). Logan and Molotch (1987, pp. 43–44) assert that places derive both content and meaning from their position in a web of social, political, and economic relations, which then allows for their construction by practical activities that occur in and through it. Not every practice is

a place-making practice, but within the vastness of space, we can see the emergence of certain kinds of places arising from the intense overlapping of practices. Massey (1994, p. 5) argues that such a perspective "challenges any possibility of claims to internal histories or to timeless identities," thus granting no undue fixity or permanence to place. Sociologists must therefore seek out what powers and dynamics influence the contestedness of place. Furthermore, it is important to consider how those contests involve groups with differentiated access to forms of capital used in staking claims on urban space through everyday practices and, thereby, fashioning particular kinds of places.

Bourdieu (1979, p. 95) understands practices as structured through the *habitus*—an ensemble of lifetime experiences that prefigures dispositions and acts as a basis for generating strategies to engage with different environments and circumstances, and to make use of diverse resources as capital.[5] Distinct *forms of capital* are "what is efficacious in a given field, both as a weapon and as a stake of struggle" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 98). Bourdieu (1986) argues that the most basic forms of capital, other than the traditional economic understanding, are cultural, social, and symbolic. Cultural capital, in one instance, might be someone's level of education, or their knowledge of certain languages or customs attached to prestige. Social capital could be the networks of people someone knows who could help him or her in attaining some advancement, such as a new job or relationship. Symbolic capital can be any of the other three forms when it is accorded special meaning larger than itself by those exchanging the capital—a social infusion Bourdieu (1990, p. 118) calls "misrecognition." This often takes the form of granting favors or acceding a *de facto* right to a certain party wielding symbolic capital. Because each form of capital represents congealed social power, any can be converted into another, but all have some basis in economic capital. The ability to formulate and use a combination of these effectively depends on the faculties endowed in a specific group's habitus.

The coming together of capital and habitus also depends on the dynamics of a particular social field, or "a configuration of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 97), where differentials of power are key in shaping constant struggles among groups, which constitute and delimit the field itself. Moreover, "[t]hose who dominate a given field are in a position to make it function to their advantage but they must always contend with the resistance, the claims, the contention, 'political' or otherwise, of the dominated" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 102). All of this occurs within the territory Bourdieu (1989) calls "social space," which is composed of multiple, often imbricated or nested, fields of action. And while social space is generally deterritorialized for Bourdieu, quite at odds with Lefebvre, there is no reason why certain fields could not have material space at stake (e. g., Bourdieu, 1970; 1989, p. 16; 2000, pp. 134–135).

Many fields exist in the city where stakes indeed revolve around material space—for example, the everyday use of public parks, streets, and sidewalks, to name a few. In these instances, we can imagine how the struggle over spatial domination could be connected to the use of economic, cultural, or social capital, or all three. In a field where space is contested, symbolic capital would thus be intimately connected to spatial power. *Spatial capital*, then, is a form of symbolic capital in a field where material space is at stake. It derives from other forms of capital deployed through a particular habitus as a practice—which, in this kind of field, is homologous with Lefebvre's "lived space"—enabling a particular claim on material space, or Lefebvre's "perceived space"—that is misrecognized

as legitimate. Importantly, with regard to the Lefebvrean framework, this is only able to occur in a context where his notion of the "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996, chapter 14; Purcell, 2002; Mitchell, 2003) is not fulfilled—that is, where unequal social relations define access to city space and control over it, where influence over the fate of urban space is determined not by inhabitance but differences in social power. Such conditions, of course, characterize San Francisco and every other major U.S. city.

Spatial capital is therefore the ability to commodify space, the power to take—and make—place in the most literal sense. Of course, it is an unequally distributed, widely coveted kind of social power. As a symbolic form of capital fungible with other types, spatial capital could be the basis for the accumulation of more social capital, or enable access to sites for production leading to greater economic capital, or also the creation of a locus for the inculcation of valuable cultural capital. Bourdieu (1984, chapter 2) is clear in his assertion that different groups achieve more powerful positions in a field through the accumulation of particular combinations of contextually efficacious capital, but also via the total volume of *whatever* forms of capital. When space is at stake, economic capital is thus an important key to obtaining the symbolic power of spatial capital, but it is not the only resource for accessing it. An overall attainment of multiple forms of capital— in other words, *privilege*—is thus key to the ability to deploy spatial (or other versions of symbolic) capital in practice. Methodologically, connections between different forms of capital and spatial capital must be traced out in the practices of particular groups. In this article, the particularly illuminating case of dot-commers acting on the urban space of millennial San Francisco allows us to see close connections with economic, cultural, and social capital.

There are many instances in social life, however, where space is not at stake, or at least it is not much in question. The power to take place is the ability not only to win negotiations over the control of space, but also the capacity to shape the moments, sites, and terms of that jockeying—to determine when access is questionable or not. Spatial capital thus enables more than entry to a site;[6] it empowers the making of definitions about its usage and reformulation. This sort of framework renders a rather distinct portrait from the friendly associational life of postwar America described by Putnam (2000) and the feel-good individuality of open-minded creativity outlined by Florida (2002; 2005) in their takes on what constitutes city life, and particularly the *right* kind of city. It also keeps a society-space dialectic in place even in a context where advanced technology is hypothesized by Mitchell (2000) as undermining space. I use this alternative approach because it allows for a treatment of practice in space—and the creation of place in the city—that accounts for conflict but also a wide gamut of types of social power. It connects with existing work on gentrification, consumption, and San Francisco in particular, in several important ways.

GENTRIFICATION AND SAN FRANCISCO TRANSFORMATIONS

What does it mean to think about the space of the city as a field of struggle? Castells (1983) argues in *The City and the Grassroots* that urban space is an historical locus of conflict where social striving and spatial shaping by distinct groups gives the city form and meaning. Although his focus falls on collective consumption and more organized social movements, Castells's broad formulation resonates with my above framework about

groups with differential access to capital; furthermore, his assertion that the physicality of the city—its streets, buildings, and open spaces—is the scene of key power struggles is conducive to an understanding of the city itself as a field of social positionings. As Castells (2002a, b) himself and other urbanists (e.g., Ward and McCann, 2006; Miller, 2006) contend, it is possible to extend this framework into contemporary analysis with new theoretical inflections. I thus analyze not social movements but a cohort of privileged city users—the dot-commers at their apogee—and the particular practices through which they made claims on millennial San Francisco to shape emergent forms of place. Such is not the only way to study the character of place (e.g., Molotch, Freudenberg, and Paulsen, 2000; Paulsen, 2004; Borer, 2006), nor does it preclude combination with other key perspectives, but I argue that it is particularly useful for grappling with the microlevel practices through which larger political-economic clashes play out in everyday life on the ground.[7] Although neither this general empirical focus nor the specific use of Bourdieu and Lefebvre as analytic lenses is entirely new (e.g., Harvey, 1989, pp. 213–225; Gregory, 1994, pp. 395–416; Gotham and Brumley, 2002), I use them to novel ends in connection with the existing research literature. Among the extensive literature on recent urban change in San Francisco or related to the internet boom in other U.S. cities, this article offers a unique angle that goes beyond the identification of privileged lifestyles in urban space to analyzing the practice of making privilege spatialized.

RESEARCH ON URBAN SOCIOSPATIAL CHANGE AND CONSUMPTION

Scholarship on *gentrification*—the process of residential or commercial use of an urban area shifting towards higher economic classes—dates from the 1960s when British sociologists took up the term to connote new impositions of the "gentry" in urban territory (Glass, 1964). By the 1980s, there was a sizeable literature with much consensus on the phenomenon's existence (e.g., Zukin, 1982; Smith and Williams, 1986), but ontological deadlock regarding its dynamics and trajectory (e.g., Schwirian, 1983, pp. 96–97; Zukin, 1987, pp. 140–142). Yet despite this "stalemate," Bourdieu's notions of habitus, practice, and intergroup distinction were already formative in research about schisms between the gentrifiers and the gentrified, and suggested the importance of consumption practices as at least one major vector of gentrification (Zukin, 1987, p. 131). Later studies by Sharon Zukin (1991, 1995) and Neil Smith (1996) demonstrated that intertwined cultural and economic underpinnings propelled gentrification at several scales: the individual, the neighborhood, the city, and the nation—and more recently, the globe (Smith, 2002; Atkinson and Bridge, 2005). It is crucial to underscore that although gentrification entails many different actors, the especially powerful interests of private real estate developers and progrowth governments cannot be discounted (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Slater, 2006).

Although it is impossible to completely disentangle these most commanding elements from individual gentrifying residents themselves, urban scholars have demonstrated the importance of researching gentrifiers as both individuals and groups. While Zukin (1982) had earlier delineated the important role of economically impoverished but culturally sophisticated *bohemians* in the initial move toward living in deindustrialized New York City lofts, Smith (1996, chapter 4) focused most pointedly on the category of highly paid *yuppies*, or young urban professionals, whom he saw as colonists in the spaces of working

class and homeless New Yorkers that contributed to the socially unjust—and culturally vapid—homogenization of the Lower East Side to exclusive consumption districts (see also Abu-Lughod, 1994; Mele, 2000). My empirical focus on the spatialized practices of San Francisco dot-commers brings the analysis back to more microlevel processes conducted and experienced by individuals. There is still conflict, but my analytic shift recovers a quotidian emphasis. The value in such research is certainly not to upend the sophisticated and far-reaching work that captures the current dynamics of gentrification across the United States, which involves cutting-edge data on housing and employment markets (e.g., Hackworth, 2007, chapter 7), but to offer an account of how gentrifiers enact spatialized social changes through the weight of their personal practices.

This requires that we think about urban change through a lens of consumption that flexibilizes Castells's (1983) notion of collective consumption to examine the influence of stratified consumption practices on the shaping of the city. Rather than considering consumption as the only way to study the city (e.g., Castells, 1977; Saunders, 1981), I seek to analytically emplace potentially deterritorialized consumption practices, which also suggests understanding gentrification through the less settled, but no less consequential, lens of that consumption instead of residence strictly.

In line with a burgeoning sociological literature on consumption, but especially its urban aspects, I define *consumption practices* as the purchase and use of goods, services, and entertainment (McCracken, 1990; Featherstone, 1991; Miles and Paddison, 1998), indeed what is often seen as "fun," "leisure," and "culture" (Wynne and O'Connor, 1998). Although it can be difficult to untangle consumption from production, particularly in certain urban milieux (e.g., Sherman, 2007), by analytically accenting how a broadly privileged group makes use of city space and various emplaced commodities, we can sharpen the focus to the specific style in which dot-com workers used the city, and the social repertoire that buttressed consumption practices to that end. This research design finds support in work positing the emergence of more discerning, reflexive practices of consumption that are especially sensitive to place (Lash and Urry, 1994, chapters 3–4). Moreover, Zukin and Smith Maguire (2004, pp. 192–194), in their recent review of the sociology of consumption, argue it is crucial to understand practices and sites of consumption in terms of their connections with the biographies of social groups and their relative sociological positioning. By spatially situating and socially dissecting the particular consumption practices of the San Francisco internet boom, this study illuminates their entanglements with diverse forms of capital in brief but ethnographic detail, contextualizing their dynamics in relation to other city users.

SAN FRANCISCO AND THE DOT-COM HABITUS

Rebecca Solnit and Susan Schwartzenberg (2000) provide an account of "the siege of San Francisco" in the millennial moment, a simultaneously artistic and activist tale of gentrification in the city's poorest and most ethnically diverse neighborhoods, which they situate within a longer history of displacement in San Francisco. In line with the detailed political and economic analyses in the work by Chester Hartman (2002) and earlier analyses (Castells, 1983, chapters 12–15; Mollenkopf, 1983; Godfrey, 1988; de Leon, 1992), they show San Francisco as an especially heterogeneous, densely populated city, the territory

of which has been the site for numerous struggles over development, including the removal and arrival of numerous rounds of inhabitants.

However, Solnit and Schwartzenberg's (2000) important contribution about the regressive effects of the dot-com boom portrays as human almost exclusively those suffering from gentrification. During that apex of dot-com dominance, such a focus was politically expedient. But it remains sociologically crucial to understand precisely the very human if far less pitiable story of those leading gentrification processes—the dot-commers themselves.

We have a strong sense of the dot-com habitus from Ross's (2003) ethnographic exposé *No-Collar*, several documentaries—among them *startup.com* (Hegedus & Noujaim, 2001) and *American Dream 2.0* (Straub, Thompson, & Woloschuk, 2004)—as well as tell-all accounts such as Kuo's (2003) *dot.bomb*. From these sources and my own interview data, we know that it was a defining element of the new-economy lifestyle that work blurred into play. Dot-commers absorbed all kinds of digital accoutrements into their daily ensemble, went rockclimbing inside their offices, sealed major business deals while partying like rockstars at edgy art galleries, and were not infrequently worth over one million dollars— on paper—at the age of 25 or even younger.[8] And this was no meager group: the number of workers participating in the new economy in San Francisco over the last decade is not easy to measure, but business reports estimate the city's workforce grew by 12 percent to roughly 600,000 from 1996 to 2001, with average household income increasing over 15 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars to $68,600; while many of those jobs were in the highest growth sector of construction, the next largest contributor to job growth in the period was internet companies, large and small (Emert, 2001; McCormick, 2001).

Indergaard (2004) and Lloyd (2006) examine other major cities where the new economy made important marks specifically through spatialized practices of both production and consumption. This article, clearly minor in scope, takes several of their findings as foundational while differing in focus in a few key qualitative respects. Indergaard (2004) is comprehensive in mapping out the inevitable, dependent connection between the creativity of the new economy and the supports of traditional finance capital (see also Zook [2005, chapter 7]). His study of "alternative media" firms in New York City is indispensable in demonstrating how a specific breed of creative entrepreneurs asserted their belief in making broad innovations in the conduct of business and used the unique nexus of resources in that city to propel their agenda. Furthermore, despite the eventual absorption of many firms into the "dinosaur" models that preceded the new economy, Indergaard importantly shows how the boom moment fueled a much larger-scale remaking and reimaging of the city. Lloyd (2006) turns to a particular Chicago neighborhood to show the significance of "neo-bohemian" environments in fueling both the creative "cutting edge" as well as more mainstream culture industries in postindustrial cities. He illustrates the physical rootedness of this symbiosis and its role in the cultivation of a particularly aesthetic cultural capital in his research neighborhood, but Lloyd also takes care to point out the unequal and sometimes parasitic dynamics of this relationship, which contributes to gentrification and self-exploitation.

I build upon these findings by attending to additional angles of research. My project follows the practices of the dot-com cohort to the multiple places where they manifest, thus augmenting Lloyd's (2004; 2006) examination of the coalescence of multiple key practices in one particular place. Furthermore, complementing Indergaard's (2004)

insights on entire firms in the new economy and its linkage to the bedrock of finance, I concentrate on a cohort of workers primarily beyond their sites of employment and trace connections to diverse forms of capital, but specifically in how they use urban space.

METHODS

For this project, I interviewed 32 residents of San Francisco in 2002 who had been employed in the dot-com sector, comprising those companies that emerged in the mid-1990s at the earliest, and which typically were much smaller than more established high-technology powerhouses such as Hewlett Packard and Oracle. All of these interviewees had lost their jobs during either layoffs or the complete shutdown of operations at their companies. All had become reemployed in some field, including several who returned to the dot-com sector in its leaner and more cautious version after mid-2001. By concentrating only on those formerly employed in the new economy and then ousted from it, I gained a comparative insight on the practices of dot-commers and their uses of spatial capital both at its peak and afterward. Due to space constraints, only responses about boom-era San Francisco appear in this article, as the intention is to highlight those practices that represented the most highflying moments of privileged consumption. Indeed, these did diminish with the new economy itself, as I found in my analysis of data about the postboom era, but the particularity of the boom is exactly what makes it a useful period for analyzing new kinds of claims staked on urban space.

I selected these interviewees through initial ethnographic exposure and snowball sampling. Furthermore, I complemented this technique by intentionally pursuing members of certain sociological categories (specifically gender, race or ethnicity, and sexual orientation) to cast an inclusive net in my research. For example, exactly half of my interviewees were women, despite the overrepresentation of men in the new economy.

The interviews delved into recent personal histories in San Francisco, usually involving at least 90 minutes of conversation. The format for these interviews followed a schedule focused especially on questions of everyday consumption, but with a semistructured design to allow interviewees to add detail or continue on streams of thought whenever appropriate or helpful for the research endeavor. (Interviews also included a cognitive-mapping exercise detailed in the following section.)[9] I transcribed all audio-recorded interviews and then scrutinized them for repeating patterns in word choice, topics, geographic references, impressions, and moods. The result of these common trends is the group of accounts detailed in this article. In order to maintain the integrity of particular narratives, I have focused on this smaller set of specific cases that either demonstrate or directly reference the range of responses received and situations observed ethnographically.

The larger ethnographic research extended from 1999 to 2002 when I was able to participate marginally as a friend or acquaintance of those directly involved in the frenzy that gripped the city with the rise of the new economy, but as a participant with far fewer economic resources than those working in the dot-coms flush with venture capital cash.

In the following section, I offer several illustrations of practices that involve specifically sited consumption and the creation of place. I use substantial portions of interview quotes and paraphrases as a basis for analysis of how dot-commers made spatial capital from economic, cultural, and social resources, and vice versa, during the boom.

SPATIALIZATIONS OF ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN PRACTICE

At the height of the new economy in San Francisco, indicated unanimously by interviewees as the summer of 1999 and into early spring of 2000, there were a number of common consumption practices carried out by the young dot-com professionals this article examines. What is striking about them is how they are all specifically spatialized. Yet so are many aspects of daily life, for any population. It is therefore the link between spatialization and privilege that stands out, the misrecognition of other forms of capital as legitimate claims on space. Among new city users, whose novelty allows for more starkly visible effects, several consumption practices made such effective claims through spatial capital and thus took place via a particular, privileged habitus. I enumerate three kinds of practices, all of which are interrelated, but can be illustrated distinctly as (1) the demonstration of new money, connected especially to economic capital, (2) the conversion of character, linked most directly to cultural capital, and (3) the location of networking, related very closely with social capital. With the aid of interviewees' comments and my own ethnographic observations, I describe each of these in significant detail below, granting close attention to the sites in which these occurred and the crafting of places that emerged therein (see Figure 1 for map with locations of all San Francisco neighborhoods mentioned).

THE DEMONSTRATION OF NEW MONEY: ECONOMIC CAPITAL

Interviewees without fail vividly described how the boom in San Francisco sparked a major influx of money to the area, much of which went into the pockets of highly paid workers

FIG. 1. Satellite map with San Francisco neighborhoods.

Source: http://earth.google.com, with neighborhood locations added by author, according to City of San Francisco maps.

at dot-com start-ups. These people were often quite young (early 20s to early 30s) and professionally inexperienced relative to the amount of income they were earning. Several interviewees expressed how these dramatically augmented earnings took shape in everyday life through shifting material possibilities and symbolic entitlements in how dot-commers used the city.

Tima Saed, a woman in her late twenties who began in mid 1999 at a well funded San Francisco start-up after originally working in film production in Manhattan, recounted the giddy newness of the experience.

> Tima: There was a lot of pressure and, like, temptation to "oh, let's go dancing," or "let's go get drinks"... I think I was immediately swept into, you know, not just with the people I worked with, but people I met who were similar ages working in similar companies, a whole life that I'd never experienced before, which was just, like, dinner parties, party parties, cocktail parties, and just people living in outrageously beautiful places. I mean, money was just everywhere and it was accessible.... So there was pressure to just drop lots of money when you went out for dinner, to get [expensive] clothes, to get your hair done at the right places, I mean, it was just, it was intense.... It was something I had never been a part of, even in my life in New York, which is a very happening city, you know. I lived sort of at my means and stuff. But here, suddenly I was making money, the people I was meeting were making money; they were living in ways that normally somebody in your mid-to-late 20s to early 30s doesn't live, you know... There was a buzz, there was an energy, and there were expectations that you would have those things, that you should have those things.

Tima went on to describe what had seemed like requisite experiences in dining and shopping, located in particular sites: especially the newly fashionable neighborhood of Hayes Valley and traditionally elite Pacific Heights. This denoted the new money floating around millennial San Francisco, due to generous injections of venture capital into new economy enterprises, and the extravagant consumption it fueled.

> Tima: It was the illusion, the sense, that of course you were gonna go...to parties where everybody was gonna be just like you...like, making lots of money and making more money. There would be the couple people who had "made it," and everybody'd talk about them.
> Author: [*Interrupts*] What defines 'making it'?
> Tima: Money. It was money.
> Author: But everyone had money, so it was just, like, people who have even more money?
> Tima: Yeah. Everybody lived as though they had money, you know? Everybody was making more money than their parents probably made [*laughs*] for the most part. You know, living in very nice apartments.... I was paying $1100 in rent [per month, at 2000–2001 values] for one bedroom in a three-bedroom [apartment in a middle-cost neighborhood], and I felt like I was paying nothing, like I should be paying [*laughs*] a lot more.

Tima was "swept into" the *zeitgeist* of new money in the city: the apartments, the dinners, the parties, the clothes, the various other accoutrements befitting nascent social demands. These were practices that became spatialized particularly in SoMa (for South of Market Street), the Mission, and Hayes Valley—a trend other writers corroborate (e.g., Solnit and Schwartzenberg, 2000), but residential sites extended into more distant and nonelite (the Sunset, Western Addition, Potrero Hill) as well as long-wealthy (Pacific Heights, the Marina) neighborhoods. She went on to explain how her world, like that of all peers she could remember, was significantly bounded along the geographic lines of those first three sites, although she lived in the Sunset.

Another interviewee, Akhil Sindh, who relocated from New England after finishing at an Ivy League university and founded a now-defunct dot-com start-up in 1999, described a similar phenomenon. His entire social world—and that of all his friends, who also worked in the new economy—was limited to just the Hayes Valley-Mission-SoMa triad, which he repeatedly termed "the neighborhood" (see Figure 1 for satellite map of San Francisco with official positioning of neighborhoods), despite that these are neither contiguous nor homogeneous sites in San Francisco, neither now nor historically.

One research exercise within the interviews revealed how this physically unconnected but socially interwoven geography of sites for dot-commer spending was such a strong part of how they imagined the city. I asked interviewees to draw on a blank page, to the best of their ability, a rough map of San Francisco with all the neighborhoods they could label, as well as to indicate frequent transit corridors and particular locations of home, work, and leisure activities. This sort of cognitive mapping does not aim to test cartographic skills but to uncover what sites respondents find significant or memorable, and how they relate those to each other; further questioning on the basis of respondent-produced maps can also point to what particular linkages these represent, with what meanings they hold for respondents (Gieryn, 2000, pp. 472–473); similar to the introduction of respondent-generated photographs to the interview context (see Clark-Ibáñez, 2004), these materials open up new avenues for exploring relationships as understood by interviewees separate from pre-prepared questionnaires.

No single interviewee drew all the neighborhoods that appear on common city maps, let alone in geographically accurate locations; but, again, such is not the goal. Most intriguingly, some two-thirds of respondents repeated the same set of neighborhoods— Hayes Valley, SoMa, and the Mission—usually with one or more of the following additional sites: their own residential neighborhood, if not among those three; downtown or the Financial District as a common place of either predot-com employment or general commerce and transportation nexus; the Castro, among gay and lesbian interviewees or those with several homosexual friends; the Haight-Ashbury, for both residences and entertainment venues; and, to a lesser extent, North Beach and Chinatown as popular tourist destinations. The extensive southern neighborhoods of San Francisco (e.g., Excelsior, Visitacion Valley, Ingleside) appeared in no maps; nor did any areas west of Twin Peaks or the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park (e.g., St. Francis Woods, Park Merced, Seacliff, Presidio), except for the vast Sunset and Richmond districts (see Figure 2, for example of interview-based cognitive map).

Although not all interviewees positioned Hayes Valley, SoMa, and the Mission as nearly adjacent, more often than not this trio followed a similar line of description: the first as a hub for fashion and food, the second as the site of work but also many bars and cafés, and
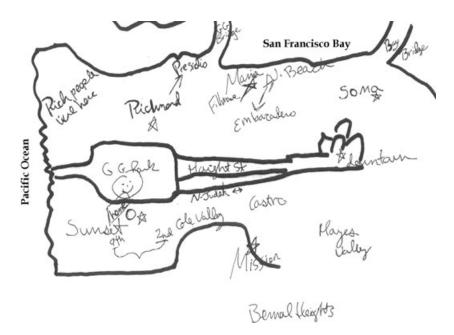
FIG. 2. Cognitive map of san francisco neighborhoods drawn by respondent during interview.

Source: Map was retraced in dark ink by author using a light table, from original drawn by interviewee with pencil and ruled notebook paper without reference to an existing map. Names for bodies of water were added later by author as points of reference. Original sketched in the presence of author.

Note: Neighborhood names indicate all those that interviewee could recall. Stars indicate sites of frequent usage. Arrows indicate paths of transportation. "GG Park" is Golden Gate Park, with smile indicating site of recreational activity. "N-Judah" is a line in the local light-rail train system. This example is similar to many others, except that it includes more than the common number of noted neighborhoods, and is more cartographically accurate (with the exception of Embarcadero, SoMa, Hayes Valley, and Mission positionings; see Figure 1 for the location of these sites on a satellite map). "Embarcadero" is the waterfront area along the Financial District, and "Fillmore" is a reference to Pacific Heights but specifically its commercial corridor, not the poor, predominantly African American area of the Western Addition sometimes called "the Fillmore."

the third especially for nightlife but residence and employment as well. The importance of this finding is that dot-commers, irrespective of the rest of their knowledge of San Franciscan geography, illustrated the creation of noncontiguous but socially meaningful territories to which they laid claim as having particular recognizability as part of the city's social field, and utility in social practice as a single dot-com space.

In Figure 2, we can see one dot-commer's depiction of the city as a cognitive map. Hers was one of the most cartographically complete and accurate, although clearly the city is extremely condensed, and the three neighborhoods mentioned repeatedly by interviewees—Hayes Valley, the Mission, and SoMa—are entirely out of place (e.g., contrast with Figure 1). Strikingly, these three sites figure prominently for her in a kind of orbit around the stark landmark of downtown San Francisco. The symbolic if not always practical importance of these particular neighborhoods is even more pronounced in this map because the respondent did *not* frequent Hayes Valley, yet recognized it as a dot-com-era hub—as compared to other sites that were neither sites of personal work, residence, or recreation, which appear only out of knowledge of her gay male and lesbian friends' social venues (i.e., Castro and Bernal Heights) or merely as the nameless designation "Rich people live here," which corresponds with the Seacliff neighborhood. This is key

because it shows the imputation of a new economic geography on the city, with recognizable sites mostly being those of more expensive residential and commercial corridors geared toward "newer" rather than "old money," also known as "rich people." Such a contrast emerges most sharply with the unnamable and emphatically other-seeming Seacliff.

Unlike the characteristics attributed in dot-commers' cognitive maps and the discussions they prompted, the Mission has historically been a center of working-class populations: Irish, German, Mexican, and later, Central American immigrant communities and their descendants in San Francisco (Hooper, 2006). Until the mid 1990s, this area was considered dangerous by many San Franciscans who did not live there; it was generally an area with cheaper rent where poorer immigrants, but also artists with low incomes, could afford to live (Castells, 1983, chapter 13; Godfrey, 1988, chapter 5). As a rule, other groups tended to avoid the area. Quick changes began to happen, however, as the new economy started heating up. With the exception of some gay male interviewees who spent more time in the Castro neighborhood instead, all other participants in this project described how they would frequent the Mission as a center of consumption—its bars and restaurants in particular—as the technology boom emerged.

One of the most audacious demonstrations of new money in the Mission during the years of research was the peculiar practice of parking by many dot-commers. As a vivid example of changing territories inscribed with the features of differential levels of capital, it was entertaining if bizarre to watch the sudden rise of a new pattern of illegal parking in 1999: evening patrons in the Mission began leaving their luxury cars and sports-utility vehicles in the wide median of Valencia Street, near the growing cluster of restaurants and nightspots around its intersection with 16th Street—cited by all interviewees as a key site for nocturnal new economy pleasure-seekers and networkers alike (see Figure 3 for map of the Mission areas discussed). Street parking in the immediate blocks is scarce, as there is a high density of residences in the area that lack off-street parking. However, parking one block away on Mission Street, especially at night, is often abundant, but it requires sharing space with predominantly Latino and African American minorities, as well as groups well outside the new economy—poor people, gang members, prostitutes, strung-out drug addicts, and the homeless who frequent the sidewalks of that street. Rather than park there, enough dot-commers opted for the Valencia median to fill the length of two blocks from bumper to bumper, every night of the week, despite its blatant illegality and the quite visible location of a large police station one block south on Valencia Street.

Every night, officers would come ticket each car with fines of at least $50 while, just one traffic lane away, new economy revelers sipped unorthodox martinis and made new connections with other internet workers in the overflowing bars of the district. Interviewees corroborated my ethnographic assumption about the parking practice and its repeated monetary ramifications, which seemed to make no dent in the practice over a year: the parking tickets were but a minor inconvenience for easy parking close to sought-after evening venues, amounting in many cases to little more than an expensive valet. Only the contraction of the new economy could curb, as it were, dot-com parking in the area.[10]

The invention of a multinodal sort of "neighborhood" with key consumption attractions and the resort to extravagantly expensive measures to make use of them show a clear connection between the more traditional form of economic capital and the sort of spatial capital I have outlined. Only a discerning dot-com habitus could deem such sites as tightly

FIG. 3. Map of select area of the Mission neighborhood.

Source: http://maps.google.com.

connected and especially worthy of frequenting, or these particular practices as sensible. But it is also spatial capital, through its misrecognition, that preemptively defuses conflict between differently endowed city users. This is not at all to suggest that forms of spatial colonization during the boom were entirely pacific, as shown to the contrary in examples below. However, it is true that dot-commers, who could easily afford to shirk legality and pay off parking tickets, were able to stake a claim on the Mission's space, in this case, while many neighbors could not. Although radical antidot-com activism did exist, it was simply infeasible for nearby Latino residents, for instance, to stake counterclaims through equally unabashed but noneconomic means—such as vandalism or violence—literally in the shadow of the Mission police station. This demonstration of new money was thus one way in which dot-commers could make relatively unchallenged claims in exerting spatial capital. As such they could transform places in "the neighborhood" by patronizing bars, boutiques, restaurants, and enacting forms of street life that fit their tastes and sensibilities, as if they held some proprietorship over the territory. Through the conversion of character, discussed below, they also became the loci of critical networking in the new economy.

THE CONVERSION OF CHARACTER: CULTURAL CAPITAL

Akhil was one of the more adamant in asserting the existence of his own "neighborhood" on the broad area of the city that stretched from SoMa to the Mission to Hayes Valley. However, he actually lived on the cusp of the Lower Haight and Hayes Valley, directly across the street from a block of public housing projects, and near others, that figured in his everyday spatial routines only as sites to circumnavigate. Those aside, he felt a definite sense of membership in "the neighborhood," and daily his spatial capital allowed him to move across these spaces alongside his friends and coworkers with a sense not only of belonging but ownership, as this triad of sites became a valued place for him. And yet, claims of spatial capital can clash within an urban field, even among actors in the same group, when jockeying for position in the same sites. For example, Akhil noted a stark conversion of character as new waves of participants in the new economy began to enter these areas at the height of the boom. When I asked him about the character of the places where he and his peers would meet to socialize either after work or on weekends, an instance of unwelcome encroachment immediately sprang to mind "in the neighborhood."

> Akhil: Yeah, that's an interesting question. The perfect example is Place Pigalle [on Hayes Street at Octavia], which I consider my neighborhood bar. It's the place I would go at, you know, two o'clock on a Sunday afternoon to have a beer and read the paper by myself for years [since 1998], and then you know probably late 2000 or early 2001, all of the sudden, you went there on a Monday night and it was packed. And I had no idea where any of these people came from. They were all . . . super hip, like, you know, colored hair, leather jackets, you know, light-colored like 'clubbing' sunglasses inside a dark bar, stupid shit like that, and you know, we stopped going there because it just wasn't our place anymore.

He reported that this change endured for about 12 months, so Akhil and his friends temporarily went to a variety of other sites instead, but still within the bounds of "the neighborhood." By early 2002, however, it had reverted back to the state he had originally known, with a calm crowd, and enough open seats to relax on weekends, so he and his friends—or the minority that remained in San Francisco after losing their dot-com jobs—returned to Place Pigalle.

Like Hayes Valley, the area of Potrero Hill had long been traditionally less valued, purportedly due to proximity to deteriorating public housing projects, as well as its relative isolation from other neighborhoods. But there too, major changes to neighborhood character occurred. As in the description of conversion reported by Akhil above, Mike Feldman—himself a participant in the new economy but a resident in Potrero Hill for approximately three years prior to starting work at a dot-com in SoMa—noted how the feel of his neighborhood began to change drastically.

> Author: Were there any of . . . these bars that were sort of local hangouts for a long time and they just, not really but almost, overnight changed their character . . .
> Mike: [*Interrupts*] Oh yeah! . . . Places that just became packed overnight? There's one right here [*points to the next block, at 18th and Missouri Streets*]. It's changed names. The Lilo Lounge is what it used to be called. It was like a tiki bar—it's

attached to a really good Thai restaurant—and it was, like, out of control 'cause, this neighborhood, for the most part, I mean, people come here, but it's mostly people who live here. Like five years ago [in 1997], when my wife and I moved here . . . most of the people who went to these restaurants either lived here or were coming to see people who lived here. And then the Lilo Lounge was really kind of, like, people would say, "Oh, Potrero Hill? That's where the Lilo Lounge is."
Author: So they knew of Potrero Hill because of the Lilo Lounge?
Mike: Yeah, and so the place was just packed! And they had, like, the tiki bar thing going on.
Author: Is it still packed [now in late 2002]?
Mike: It still does OK, does well. . . . Maybe about six months ago [in early 2002] they changed ownership or managers [along with the name and theme of the bar]. For me it's nicer 'cause you can actually, like, go there and it's an enjoyable time instead of being, like, packed in. But, um, they're not doing anywhere near the type of business they used to do.

The case described by Mike represents a peripheral case of character conversion, as Potrero Hill was often off the map for many dot-commers due to its distance from key areas of the city, lack of contiguous attractions, and relative inaccessibility—factors mentioned by several interviewees in explaining why they seldom ventured to this particular area of the city. Nonetheless, a new kind of place—buzzing with barhopping, big-spending youth clad in the latest fashion fads—was created through emergent practices of consumption by recently arrived dot-commers, and many new live-work spaces were constructed there due to lower property costs.

But the core of the new economy in San Francisco was, without a doubt, in SoMa, including Southpark, a former Filipino neighborhood (Godfrey, 1988, pp. 105–108). This quiet tree-lined green surrounded by low-rise buildings became the center of the dot-com universe, at least in terms of work, according to all my interviewees. Calila Richardson, who worked at a medium-sized start-up in the area, conveyed quite succinctly how even this apparently tranquil area was the product of an ongoing transformation, and a conflictive one. While describing her daily routine to me, she pointed out how, when she left work to walk to the gym, she felt especially uneasy in the neighborhood, crossing paths with characters she considered unruly, disheveled, and dangerous, whom she further assumed to be homeless people, prostitutes, and drug addicts. These diagnoses revealed the correct kind of place she had in mind, judgments about the appropriate ways to act, dress, and speak—all elements of character that represent embodied cultural capital. Calila brought her own conversion of character to the area, and assured me in no uncertain terms that she was ready to fight for her claim: "It was sketchy, but OK, because I always had my field hockey stick with me." Though such commentary was not commonplace in my interviews, descriptions of aggressive and potentially violent defenses of space in the area were not rare. Yet most typically the powerful status of the new economy in SoMa was made abundantly clear through its dominating presence, and its misrecognition of legitimacy that tended to undermine very real potential conflicts. At lunch, after work, and during coffee breaks—basically throughout most of the day—Southpark was swarmed by dot-commers working in the vicinity, supported by a growing assortment of cafés, restaurants, and bars surrounding the park.

Dan Black, who had completed his undergraduate studies immediately prior to working in the area for one year, described the scene as "just like the quad [in college]." More elaborately, but in keeping with responses from most interviewees, Calila gave her insider's perspective on the practice of lunching in Southpark, and the type of people who comprised both her company and the bulk of participants in creating this new kind of place.

> Author: Were you going out during lunch or after work with everybody?
> Calila: Oh, lunch all the time. As a group, always with a group. Always as groups.
> Author: Like maybe how big?
> Calila: Really at least 5 people, I never knew. And everybody's young and everybody's cool and, you know, so everyone wants to hang out together.
> Author: How is everyone "cool"?
> Calila: I don't know. Well, there's a thing that the HR (human resources) guy . . . wanted to hire certain people. Like, and that was the thing, that they were looking for people that really just fit in; except the programmers, who had their own little cave [*laughs*]. But, I mean, it was personalities that really meshed. People really got along and everybody was, it just seemed like everybody was there to have a good time. . . . Maybe it was just coincidence that everybody there just seemed to be like the same type of person, and I think that maybe it was the top, like, group of guys that were all buddies, you know, so they were all alike.

From a similar standpoint, Tima compared the feeling in SoMa during the boom and after when I asked her about typical habits during the workday but outside the office.

> Tima: Everything was really new. It was, like, you know, I was new to the city, people were new to the companies, so I mean, to say something was a habit is, like, not, probably not quite accurate [*laughs*]. But there was a constant sense, initially, of energy and, I mean, there were a lot of women my age in the company and we all became really good friends . . . There was, like, "OK, let's all go out to get food, or go out for drinks or something," and certainly there were *the* cafes in the neighborhood . . . I mean, I wasn't even deep in SoMa and I can see where I am now [working for a non-profit near Southpark] all the places that have closed. But, you know, you'd go to any of the cafes [during the boom] and they were just thronged, you know?

Part of the reason Southpark was so "thronged" was because of the concentration of dot-com business going on there, but also because of its very close proximity to the "brick-and-mortar" or "old school" firms in finance, advertising, legal services, consulting, and real estate based in the Financial District that were at some point necessary for certain aspects of new economy business. Other essential facilities were the Moscone Convention Center on Harrison Street, and the number of new boutique hotels and restaurants that emerged in SoMa, largely supported by a customer base of new economy workers. The conversion of character in these new places, or newly popular places in the case of the Moscone Center, made them the site of much networking and deal making that underpinned the new economy, but it was not only SoMa where this occurred. That area was considered

by most interviewees to fall within the sphere of work. As for play, the Mission, again, was the unequivocal hotbed with plenty of character conversion afoot in ways sharply underpinned by resources of cultural capital. One example gives a stark but not abnormal illustration.

On a brilliant late-summer Saturday afternoon in 2000, I attended an ostensibly small gathering of a "wine club" in Mission-Dolores Park organized by three dot-commers in their mid-twenties (see Figure 3 for map of the Mission areas discussed). The two-block green space rises to a knoll that borders the Mission and Castro neighborhoods, marks a sharp class shift, and affords a spectacular view of San Francisco and much of the Bay Area beyond. Although parks are not uncommon in the city, they are rare for the Mission, hence this verdant oasis represents one of the few sites for families in the area to bring their children to play outdoors, away from concrete. There is a playground and picnic area near the corner of the park with the best vistas, which is often filled after school and on weekends with boisterous local children when the weather is pleasant. That site was precisely where the wine club perched itself. In no way a formal club, this amorphous social event asked only that guests bring a bottle of wine for all to sample. The mid afternoon crowd swelled to over 50 attendees and even more wine bottles. Conversations revolved around gossip about both dot-coms and dating, along with much flirtation and joking that became more pronounced as dusk arrived and ever more bottles emptied. No children were part of the gathering, which literally crowded out families from other picnic tables and part of the playground. Police, as a faint but common presence in the park, patrolled the area. At least three times, different officers came to talk with one of the organizers. The median age was around 25, so the issue was not underage drinking but the much more flagrant infraction of public alcohol consumption, and the even more serious offense of such activity within a children's play area. Yet each time, after a brief chat and a suggestion to keep the gathering a little more quiet, the officers left without further incident. Only at nightfall did a policeman ask us to take the party indoors, and even then with much politesse.

Quite probably, inebriated homeless people could not have achieved such a feat as did these drunk but well-heeled recent alumni of prestigious universities. At work was cultural capital, employed by a dot-com habitus of entitlement, that enabled an untroubled, cogent negotiation with police officers that rendered a nearly free-ranging if completely illicit use of the park. This was an unequivocal disbursement of spatial capital with significant misrecognition that converted the character of the park from a place for Latino families of lesser means to bring their children for recreation, to a place where young, intoxicated internet workers could look for love and perhaps a new job. Networking, after all, was what many of these consumption practices also entailed.

THE LOCATION OF NETWORKING: SOCIAL CAPITAL

Another mark on the city came with the creation of new kinds of places wherein dot-commers could conduct the business of the new economy. These were not offices, at least not for many, but rather bars and cafés. As a more clandestine movement, at first, the new economy relied heavily on networking in order to get work done, and there needed to be a site for all of this to take place. These were spaces where dot-commers convened, converted the character of place by consuming in new ways, and thereby made the new

economy happen. These were often local bars that underwent rapid transformation, becoming *de facto* boardrooms or gentlemen's clubs, although for the much younger—but still male—common folk with high-flying internet aspirations.

Ricardo Álvarez, the cofounder of a start-up that provided services to larger internet companies, described how a bar in his area of the Mission suddenly changed, and the high-stakes business that went on there. He starts off by describing how he became acquainted with his cofounders.

Ricardo: One of the guys was one of the guys I knew from the bar we hung out at, you know? At the time [late 1998 and early 1999], I was hanging out at this bar, right? And the only thing that anybody talked about ever, I mean, it wasn't chicks, it wasn't anything, it was just business opportunities and who's starting what, who's doing what. It was like a fucking frenzy, man. You know, you ever see, like, piranhas just, like, go after a piece of meat? You'd walk in on a Friday night happy hour to this bar and there'd be, like, fifty guys. . . . Just a bunch of straight guys talking business after work [*laughs*].
Author: And what area of town was it in?
Ricardo: Here in the Mission. That was also when the whole gentrification thing started. 'Cause, uh, this bar . . . in the course of two years it went from an old-man Mexican drinking bar to fifty guys, majority, you know, White, talking about business plans, and VC funding, and Angel Investment, and backend databases . . .
Author: But it had been one with mostly Mexican customers?
Ricardo: It had been one. So kind of a sleazy bar before and, you know, somebody saw, a smart guy saw what was going on, saw that there was definitely a change coming, capitalized on it, and literally just painted it a different color, called it a different name . . .
Author: So it did go through some change?
Ricardo: Not really, just changed the beers, changed the name, and painted it. I think he got new, uh, barstools [*laughs*]. Anyway, so one of the guys, you know, we would just go in after work and start talking business and that would last until ten, eleven, twelve o'clock at night from happy hour, and everyone's just networking and trying to find out who can do what for whom. And there was a lot of favors being spread around. People were saying, "Oh, I need some marketing. Could you write a pitch letter?" Or, I would say, "I need some backend database work. Could you help us out there?" So there was a lot of people working with each other.
Author: And these were people who just knew each other from this one place?
Ricardo: From the bar. . . . So, you know, you would just go from table to table, and somebody'd say like, "so-and-so needs, um, you know, marketing collateral, could you help him out?" I'd say, "oh yeah?" So you walk over there; you say, "Listen, what d'ya need?" They're like, "I'm developing this hit piece. I'm developing whatever." You know, I'd say, "Well, OK, on Monday I'll e-mail you some stuff that I've done. If it's something that you're interested in, let me know." And all this stuff was barter. I mean, it wasn't, at that point, no one was really talking about, "I'll charge you so-and-so and I'll charge you," because it hadn't actually gotten to that. The money hadn't hit yet. That was the thing. . . . But that's kind of what we were doing at the time. It was just kind of like a barter: you need this, I need that.

Ricardo described himself, as well as this style of doing business, as "guerrilla entrepreneur." When I mentioned this label to later interviews, all acknowledged it with a smile: it was the sort of white-collar worker, especially dot-com founders, who did business all the time and in unconventional venues—from cocktail parties to inner city driving ranges to shoestring-budget offices converted from abandoned storefronts—always on the lookout for a profitable new move or the threat of competition.

Back in SoMa, guerrilla entrepreneurship thrived among the extensive networking afoot in various neighborhood venues. Some of it occurred on the lawn at Southpark during lunch, but there were also several more organized events where networking was the explicit goal. These took the form of launch parties—when websites went "live" (became available for public business online for the first time)—or more general events for making contacts. I asked Max Oro, who worked for several different start-ups in the late 1990s and into 2000, to describe the location and chronology of this kind of networking in strategic places within San Francisco.

> Author: How frequently would you guess these were happening?
> Max: Almost every night. Yeah. I mean, it started off, like, usually it was, like, a Thursday, Friday, Wednesday, and then also I remember seeing launch parties on Tuesdays and even Mondays and even a couple on Sundays, just because spaces were booked so much. And, I mean, parties would happen everywhere in the city, I mean, out in the Marina District, out in North Beach. I liked the ones in North Beach because I could just walk, you know, like stumbling distance from home. A lot of them would really be in, like, the SoMa and Mission areas . . . . It was all at its height in 1999. San Francisco was just so alive that year . . . . There seemed to be so many, I mean, not just high-tech conventions, but it seemed like [the] Moscone [Convention Center in SoMa] was just packed all the time. . . . That's when, like, a lot of bars and new restaurants were being built. And everybody was just, like, really, you know, like, everybody and their brother was in a start-up at the time, it seemed. 'Oh yeah there's this one start-up and they're doing this and I'm doing that.' . . . Part of it, too, was that you felt like you had to be at each one. At least that's how a few of us felt like. . . . It was like, 'What does this company do? Let me check out their website. Oh man, they're gonna be really big. Alright, I'm gonna go and see if I can talk to these people. Oh, they got funding from who? And who's their PR (public relations) firm?' You know, I mean, the ones that got the really good PR firms and VC firms, you definitely wanted to go to those parties, and maybe you might be able to rub elbows with, you know, some VC, so definitely it was, like, you know, strategic in that sense too. But also it's, like, OK, you wanna find out what's their business model, and also find out who their partners are too, like who they're working with, or who they're in bed with.

I then asked Max to explain how this seemingly unstoppable whirlwind of hobnobbing finally tapered off, and with what effects on both the places themselves and the actual practice of networking.

> Author: So then, when the market started to go sour, did these parties slowly start to taper off, or was it a pretty sharp change?
> Max: Uh, it started slowly, slowly, I think, at first. And then there was like different things too, I mean, you could definitely tell, like, the top-shelf liquor was starting

to disappear. Then it was moving more towards no liquor. The food wasn't as good. You know, I'd been feasting a lot at these parties. And that would be my dinner too. . . . [D]efinitely you could start telling, like, um, some of the quality of the parties were a little bit different. They weren't as elaborate. Instead of having *Cirque du Soleil*, you know, there wasn't as many ice sculptures after that, you know, that kind of thing. . . . Even when the market crashed [for the first time, in April 2000], there were still quite a bit of parties going on, but you could tell, definitely tell it wasn't, OK, you know, instead of, like, you know, seven, eight different parties in one night, OK, there's two or three. Yeah, and they were starting to get a little more exclusive.
Author: Seven or eight? [*sounding surprised and impressed*]
Max: Yeah, well, OK, now this is the other thing about partying in San Francisco. Because, especially around Moscone, there's all those places around, you can hit them all. You know, you spend, like, ten, fifteen minutes here and there, and just do party-hopping. And a lot of times it's just to make an appearance, like, . . . just see what's going on, get their business card, just so I could, you know, meet them.
Author: So do these things still happen? Do you still go to some of them?
Max: Now [in late 2002]? They have networking events now, but it's, um, sometimes, they won't have any food there, or just cheese and crackers, you know, like Costco. . . . And now some networking events now charge, whereas before they'd just try to get as many people as possible.

The imperative of physically rooted networking, which led to a rather vigorous party lifestyle, as described by Max, was a quintessential facet of place-making practices employed by new economy workers in San Francisco. It was a matter of who you knew, and who you might meet, that contributed to the potential success of projects, knowledge about the next networking event, and gave information about what space to stake out, literally, in order to advance with business. This constant proliferation of personal connections, and the back-and-forth conversion between social contacts and propitious coordinates, was pivotal in the internet boom, a nonstop translation between social and spatial capital.

While this represented a large swath of the dot-com population, it did not encompass everyone. A handful of interviewees talked about being outside this circuit of events, but they saw themselves as a small minority in the larger set of dot-com workers. As Akhil shared with me, even when the pink-slip parties started—which celebrated the ending of job uncertainty by making unemployment finally certain—there were raging examples of how the dot-com crowd had made a practice of partying in San Francisco, both for work and play, usually at the same time.

Akhil: Everyone just lived it up. In fact, a friend of a friend of mine was at a party . . . their company had gone under like six months prior . . . he was at this cocktail party for some start-up's opening or closing or whatever it was, and one of the investors who invested in his now-defunct start-up happened to be at the party, and so this guy is obviously trashed, and he goes up to the VC (venture capitalist) guy and he's like, "I just wanna thank you for paying my ridiculous salary and letting all of my friends party on your money." . . . That's what we did. And, you know, the guy was totally shocked and just didn't know what to say. But that was like, that's what

happened. Everybody just funded a huge party in San Francisco for two years, and then "Alright, sweet: party's over!"

The production of certain kinds of places through an ongoing party changed the spaces of San Francisco. This party represented the nexus of demonstrations of new money, the conversion of character, and the location of networking, all outlined here as consumption practices that converted distinct forms of capital into the ultimate symbolic resource in the city—spatial capital, the power to take place.

CONCLUSION: PRIVILEGE, HABITUS, AND PLACE

Even if for a fleeting time, with a minority of dot-commers remaining in San Francisco after the boom or switching to far less lucrative careers (e.g., Hua, 2002; Lynem, 2002; Martin, 2002), the exertion of privilege in these everyday practices of consumption made for a social map of the city with partial, tenuous revisions in terms of who could lead place-making with greater legitimacy and preempt challenges to their presence. Solnit and Schwartzenberg demonstrate that the encroachment of the new economy's spatial priorities created lasting and often brutal changes in wide swaths of San Francisco, but many places touched by dot-com consumption did not necessarily undergo a thorough-going renovation. These exhibited an almost spectral gentrification, with the participants in the new economy imposing their claims on space either with fickle, complicated schedules during the dot-com apogee, or with ephemeral misrecognition that quickly waned along with the status attached to the new economy. The dot-commers are important thus not only because of the way they took San Francisco by storm for a few wild years, but because of the nature of this cohort's novel practices and privileged, far-ranging claims on urban space. To address this case, my framework of spatial capital revitalizes key theories of urban struggle—granting a new valence to grapple with a range of gentrification manifestations, as well as the beginnings of a vocabulary to contravene influential but rather unsociological depictions of contemporary city life.

These accounts of dot-com workers are evidence of a gentrification that includes but goes well beyond residential encroachments. Certainly gentrification scholars have already noted gentrifying dynamics that exceed straightforward questions of turnover in residence (e.g., Hackworth and Smith, 2001), and as Tom Slater (2006) rightly points out, it is key to keep a material, radical focus on research that takes the residential question as central to understanding gentrification as a problematic urban process. Nonetheless, as this article shows, it is also important to examine the numerous vectors through which struggles over city space can occur in a gentrifying context. Furthermore, while research has been extensive on the creation of privileged places for consumption, mostly via larger-scale organized efforts of commodification (e.g., Zukin, 1991; Sorkin, 1992; Urry, 1995; Hannigan, 1998; Gottdiener, 2001), this article has instead sought a complementary angle: to study the creation of places through the acts of privileged consumption and the social claims its practices can make. My aim is to offer an understanding of how gentrification can occur through a countless number of personalized, spatialized practices that enact social power with visible effects on the city. These practices are perhaps all the more startling because they operate so quickly in their appropriations, reshufflings, and often demise, especially compared with physically demanding and bureaucratically hampered

processes of megaproject redevelopment or even smaller-scale housing construction. By no means am I implying that consumption practices have no root in economic inequalities, or that the exertion of spatialized privilege is completely detached from the larger plans of developers or trends in real estate, as was clearly not the case in San Francisco (Walker, 2004). Rather, with the idea of spatial capital, I am tracing out the symbolic manifestations of social power that bring gentrifying potential to the level of individual bodies and their practices of engaging with the city.

This is a vision of the city in some ways reminiscent of Castells's *City and the Grassroots*, but it also goes both back to the ideas in Lefebvre's *Production of Space* that Castells only half-heartedly adopted and forward to the underpinnings of Bourdieu's *Distinction* and *Logic of Practice* that Castells would never fully address. Thinking about spatial capital as the capability to take place, in a field where the right to the city does not obtain, means taking seriously the uneven access of urban residents to social power and the ability of some to transform their resources, through wide-ranging practices of consumption, into mistaken legitimacies of presence over others. Put another way, this is the imposition of a particularized lived space, with dispositions of entitlement and the knack for evoking its own recognition, to usurp fractions of both conceptualized and perceived space through maneuvers that demonstrate territorial flexibility but also precise discernment in how and when to spatialize. From such a perspective, the city is indeed a site of struggle, as Castells so clearly demonstrated. But it is one in which privileged consumption practices rather than collective consumption—or socialized service provision—as well as strategically spatialized movement rather than organized social movements, are key vectors of change in urban form and meaning. Privilege is so important here because it implies a combination of several forms of capital—economic, cultural, and social—that other particularistic cohorts of newcomers to San Francisco, as opposed to the general process of broad and ongoing in-migration, have not tended to have at their disposal. This article shows how one group used that cumulative privilege to its advantage in making spatialized claims that were an integral part of the new economy. Such findings reaffirm some existing work about the place-boundedness of the new economy (e.g., Neff, 2005), but they also go a step further to show how dot-commers actually interacted with the places they were incipiently creating.

Castells is also, of course, one of the major sociologists of the new economy. In his most recent reappraisals of urban sociology he ponders specifically whether the fast-changing conditions of the new economy signal the partial outmoding of certain aspects of his earlier urban theories (Castells, 2002a, b; 2006). I suggest that, with inventive recalibration, theorizing the city as a field of struggles in the new economy, and after, continues to be a worthwhile endeavor. The works by Putnam (2000) and Florida (2002; 2003; 2005), with their pollyannaish vision of alternative kinds of capital accumulation that underpin all-encompassing city prosperity today, represent some of the best-selling substitutes for thinking through the thicket of unequal experiences, discordant meanings, and conflicting dreams that compose the city from an urban-sociological perspective. Conversely, the technological-determinist view from Mitchell (1996; 2000; 2004; 2005) in particular advocates that we simply set aside society and its complications in the study of urban aspects of the new economy to focus, rather, on the "e-topia" of our "city of bits," which—despite setbacks such as the dot-com bust—only brings out the best in urban dwellers as enhanced "cyborgs." But fortunately, urban sociology is an ever-evolving subfield, and with studies such as this one and others (e.g., Lloyd, 2006) that seek to reassemble existing

frameworks to confront new conditions, it is possible to speak back to such urban carica-tures with analytic force.

Along with a strong grasp of larger political-economic relations, in the case of the dot-commers a nuanced understanding of microlevel, spatialized practices, and their inter-play with social inequalities enables us to see how the city is always enmeshed in some form of quite formative struggle, its spaces the site for innumerable dramas that change the shape of urban social relations. The framework presented here is thus useful pre-cisely for its applicability across a range of situations beyond the internet boom in San Francisco—wherever space is at stake, and the arrival of groups with significant privilege introduces new tensions over legitimate presence, surely there are creative reinventions of capital occurring in an effort to take place.

Acknowledgments

Notes

[1] San Francisco was not only an informal capital of the dot-com moment but one of the densest locational nodes in the dynamic geography of the internet industry (Zook, 2005, chapter 1).

[2] In much less than a decade, dot-commers had moved in and out by the thousands, with many of the trends they helped set in motion only beginning to come to fruition years after their near-disappearance (e.g., major expansions in office, convention, and apartment space; see Tannenbaum [2007]).

[3] For the purposes of this article, I employ the term *new economy* as shorthand for businesses that emerged since the mid 1990s with heavy reliance on the production of knowledge based in the expansion of internet capability and the extensive use of information technologies in their work, including all enterprises under the *dot-com* umbrella. "New economy" was a term used with much enthusiasm at the turn of the millennium, often with overreaching definitions that sought to capture "knowledge capitalism," an "informational, global, networked economy" replete with "new rules" that separated it from traditional forms of business (Burton-Jones, 2001; Castells, 2000b; Kelly, 1999). Researchers at the U.S. National Bureau for Economic Research provide a more measured definition (Gordon, 2000, p. 2), of which mine is a simplified paraphrase. My usage is meant to be historically specific rather than indicative of a truly novel phenomenon or lasting innovation. Similarly, I use *dot-commer*, *internet worker*, and *participants in the new economy* (as well as, in the context of this article only, *new city users*) as interchangeable references to the people who worked in professional positions at companies in San Francisco that rose with the internet boom. My use of *new city user* derives from a broad category in European urban sociology (Martinotti, 1993, pp. 160–166; Sassen, 2000, p. 152), but in this article the new city users I discuss are specifically the dot-commers. Official positions in this category could range from managers to content writers to publicists to financial officers. But, in fact, many people's jobs in these companies combined several different positions, thus rendering official hierarchies merely semantic at times. My distinction, however,

is meant to separate out as "dot-commers" those who held privileged positions deemed as "professional" rather than the many other workers integral to the new economy but considered apart from it, such as janitorial and security staff. Thus, this is not meant as a tight technical definition but a sociological categorization for people engaged daily in a particular work milieu, with access to the resources these tended to both attract and afford.

[4] Lefebvre's writing in *The Production of Space* is notoriously resistant to order and straightforward enumeration. Edward Soja (1996), for example, argues that this is likely a rhetorical strategy for relaying how the linear sequences of language are incapable of conveying the multilayered simultaneity of spatial production. While Lefebvre's (1991, p 33) three elements in the production of space are often understood as *spatial practices*, *representations of space*, and *representational spaces*, he also refers to these, respectively, as *perceived*, *conceived* (or conceptualized), and *lived spaces* (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 40). I elect the latter terms as a more expressive, less confusing vocabulary for interpreting Lefebvre's text.

[5] Social actors maintain a guiding practical sense that is mediated through their habitus according to dynamic social conditions (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 97), but habitus is only observable in the deployment of different *forms of capital* and in the context of a particular *field*.

[6] David Grazian (2003) touches on a similar phenomenon in his discussion of exclusionary admittance to nightclubs based on "nocturnal capital," but his is a particularized version of cultural capital in which there is a cultivation of personal images of scene-specific savvy rather than broader privilege.

[7] In a sense, this represents a return to some earlier aspects of spatialized social behavior (Baldassare, 1978), but via political-economically minded lenses in sociology on how space is used and shapes social relations.

[8] Although there was frequent discussion of ubiquitous dot-com millionaires (e.g., *San Francisco Business Times*, 1999; *20/20*, 2000), exact numbers on the size of their ranks are not available. It is clear, however, that no small number of dot-com workers and investors saw themselves, if only briefly, as millionaires before the boom waned (*BBC News*, 2000; Lessard and Baldwin, 2003). The caveat about being millionaires "on paper" is important because many such dot-com workers never reached a point where their wealth was actually a stock of liquid assets. They were *paper millionaires*, which meant they held stock certificates that held a high value "on paper" but could not be converted into cash due to numerous restrictions that often were in place until those stocks lost such significant worth in the collapse of the dot-com boom to become a fraction of their former paper value. Two investment-oriented websites (www.bnet.com and www.investopedia.com) host dictionaries with definitions of "paper millionaire" that make specific reference to the prevalence of fleetingly wealthy stockholders during the dot-com boom.

[9] All interviews were conducted by the author, in 2001–2002, within the city of San Francisco. The exception was one conducted in nearby Oakland with an interviewee who had recently moved there from San Francisco.

[10] This parking practice continues, but to a much lesser degree than at the dot-com peak, with more erratic, less dense occupation of median space on Valencia Street. In effect, there is a more timid assertion of the right to reshape place.

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