

Making Jerusalem "Cooler": Creative Scripts, Youth Flight, Diversity

Noga Keidar

Sociology Department, University of Toronto

noga.keidar@mail.utoronto.ca

Since the early 2000s, the Creative city approach has become one of the most popular urban models, which now reaches destinations further removed from traditional urban arenas in the global north where it originated (Kong, 2014; Evans, 2009). In order to understand how and why cities adopt this model, the policy-mobility literature articulates the extra-local forces that channel them and the role of local policy-actors who choose to adopt them (Peck, 2011; McCann et al., 2013; Featherstone and Venn, 2006). The latter are usually described as policy-actors who select models that legitimize existing practices and enhance economic growth (Peck, 2005; Zimmerman, 2008). Although insightful, the political-economic orientation of this analysis dismisses other local political projects that cities pursue and that these travelling-models might either reinforce or contradict. In this paper, I analyze the importation of Richard Florida's Creative Class approach to the contested city of Jerusalem and the implementation of the approach in the city's strategic plan "Jerusalem 2020". I argue that the drive to adopt the creative script cannot be explained only by political-economic forces, but should also be viewed through the local political-cultural project - the ambition to maintain Jerusalem as a city with a Zionist core.

Based on data collected during July 2015-January 2016, which includes 56 interviews with policy-actors, participant observations at urban events related to the policy, and dozens of documents, this analysis follows how policy-actors in Jerusalem interpreted and translated Florida's ideas. I demonstrate how policy-actors used particular parts of the Creative scripts that they found useful in light of both political-economic and political-cultural goals and dismissed what they considered as "irrelevant". In a case when a certain part of the script supplied a framework for both political-economic and political-cultural forces, the formula was adopted more smoothly. This occurred with the problem of youth-flight that was considered both a neo-liberal and a Zionist challenge. Florida's characterization of the CC as a mobile population allowed narrating the problem differently and supplied policy-tools that both sides found relevant. However, when a certain part of the script does not fit one of the local forces, the Creative script advocates have to do more translation work and the implementation across the board of urban institutions is more limited. This was the case with the principle of diversity that did not match the framework that economic-oriented actors had in mind for economic growth, but was useful for organizations that tried to redefine the urban experience that could be consumed only in Jerusalem.

Moreover, since the Creative script itself has emerged in a specific political context of American liberalism (O'Connor and Xin, 2006), applying it in a different political setting allows policy-actors to use it as a "resource" for different purposes (Healey, 2013). When analyzing how local policy-actors interpreted and translated the image of the CC as a footloose group and the principle of diversity, I demonstrate that the framework was attractive because policy-actors thought it would allow them to make Jerusalem 'cooler': to make urban scenes more attractive as well as to depoliticize a few of the urban malignant problems. Nevertheless, the Creative script was useful also in challenging deep-seated assumptions regarding the social-contract between the city and its residents. It suggested loosening the ideological demand from the Zionist sector and imagining a future when this group is not the sociological majority anymore.

Finally, I use the particular case of Jerusalem in order to extend the current model used to explain why cities adopt or reject certain ideas. I suggest examining both if and how different sets of local forces, the political-economic ones and the political-cultural ones, might overlap under the tenet of a certain urban-model.

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