Travelling Models

1. Definition

Travelling models are blueprints for urban development – such as 'waterfront revitalization', the 'eco-city', the 'creative city' or the 'smart city'– that come to be implemented globally or at least across different regions within a comparatively short period of time. Such blueprints are frequently, though not always, promoted by globally operating tech companies, consultancies or investors and are frequently publicized and diffused by means of suggestive narratives, attractive visualizations and promises of economic prosperity, sustainability and/or lifestyle benefits to consumers and residents.

2. Example

Richard Florida's account of the role of the so-called "creative class" in urban development – allegedly manifested in technological and social innovation, job creation and increased tax revenues – in his 2005 book *Cities and the Creative Class* within a few years led to a global flurry of cities developing strategies to attract such talents, frequently with the help of consulting projects rolled out by a handful of globally operating experts and consulting firms. In the wake of these projects, urban development in many cities openly promoted strategies designed to attract desirable segments of the population defined in terms of their potential role in the economic development of cities. Frequent side effects were an instrumentalization of art and artists as mere location factors in the generation of an attrac-

tively hip city image as well as gentrification-like processes in the wake of such urban development strategies.

3. Explanation

Recent decades have seen an unprecedented global diffusion of ideas, recipes and blueprints for urban development, many of which can be subsumed under a fairly limited number of labels such as smart, sustainable, creative, and socially inclusive urban development. Under the headings of policy mobility, policy diffusion or institutional transplant/transfer, this phenomenon has attracted an enormous amount of scholarly attention in various disciplines.[95] Despite different guiding questions and preoccupations, these various traditions share an interest in identifying factors that may enable or impede successful transfers. Research on contextual factors has long assumed that similar political or legal systems, common linguistic and cultural traditions and conventions, or other – broadly speaking – cultural similarities might make successful policy transfers more likely. However, there is strong empirical evidence against such assumptions.[96] Most policy mobility research has neglected the extent to which such blueprints for urban development frequently rely on storytelling, suggestive visualization, personification and other strategies of generating persuasiveness.[97]

We can further observe that many documents central to urban policy mobility, by being referred to as toolkits, manuals or blueprints in their titles, already announce their suitability for roll-out and virtually global implementation. Such packages, however, are rarely 'plug and play', but frequently need to be customised and adapted in consulting projects, for which freely available brochures, rankings, survey papers, etc. merely function as appetisers. For instance, consultancy firm Copenhagenize Design Co. publishes a freely accessible index of bicycle-friendly cities and then sells manuals and consulting projects on how to 'copenhagenize' a city, i.e. how to become as bicycle-friendly as the long-term number one city in such rankings, Copenhagen.[98] The use of travelling models

to copenhagenise contemporary cities has received a fair amount of criticism, most poignantly by Darran Anderson in *Imaginary Cities*:

> We can Copenhagenise our future cities, make them as green and smart as we can, but provided we are still embedded in systems that reward cronyism, exploitation and short-term profiteering, that require poverty and degradation, it will be mere camouflage. Dystopias will have cycle lanes and host World Cups. What may save us is, in Orwell's words, a dedication to 'common decency', and the perpetual knowledge that it need not be like this.[99]

4. Applications

Several globally prevalent patterns of urban development function as traveling models. One prominent example of a pervasive recent travelling model is that of the ubiqitous smart city (see fig. 17). Promoted largely by global tech companies such as IBM, Cisco, Google, Samsung or Siemens, such developments – whether in Korea, China, the U.S., Canada or different European countries – are frequently marketed with utopian promises of residential comfort, liveability, safety and sustainability, often intersecting with eco-city concepts.[100]

All in all, we can observe a fairly limited set of globally prevalent urban development models, the vast majority of which fall under the headings of the green or sustainable city, the smart city, the competitive/prosperous/growing city and, more recently, and with less corporate backing, the inclusive city. These few recipes frequently overlap or appear in combination. As merely one example, the Asian Development Bank in 2012 announced "Green Cities", "Inclusive Cities" and "Competitive Cities" as the "three major themes of [its work] in the urban sector over the coming years".[101] The combinations are frequently promoted with little reflection on their potentially conflicting nature. For instance, the greening of neighborhoods frequently comes at the expense of social inclusiveness, a phenomenon that has come to be known as environmental gentrification.

Fig. 17: The model of the smart city has become one of the most pervasive travelling concepts on contemporary urban development. Seen here is the 'Smart City Nansha' in Guangzhou, China.

Source : https ://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File :Smart_City_Nansha.jpg

Related entries: Model, Scripts

Further Reading

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