Moving Images - Static Spaces: Architectures, Art, Media, Film, Digital Art and Design

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Sex cards in Tel Aviv: Mobile Images and Sexy Atmospheres

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• Presentation Method. I would like to:
  i.  present via skype (with a written paper)
      or
  ii. submit a written paper only (and not attend/present)

• Abstract (300 words):
The paper deals with urban sexual atmospheres and the city's affective landscape under neoliberalism. It asks how recreational sexuality, as sociologists term the current interweaving of sexual and market relations, is created in space, through the ephemeral mood work of disparate passersby. Using textual and social semiotic methods, I analyze the mobile physical presence of business card sized advertisement for prostitution – "sex cards" - in Tel Aviv.

In recent years municipal policies has been attempting to brand Tel Aviv a gay-friendly, creative and sexy city. Part of these processes involved the spatial rearrangement of sex work by adhering to harsh retributive means in tackling prostitution-related trots and offences, as well as cleaning-up street-walking and zoning sex-industries into designated areas. Commercial sex has moved indoors, wedging into cities' centres, residential areas and even the suburbs. In this respect, the cards are a local
manifestation of an overarching and well-documented global urban trend. Many Western cities undergo various "urban regeneration" projects, attempting to appeal to creative-class gentrifiers.

My aim in this paper is to consider some of the ways in which elements that belong with the world of prostitution may become a 'quality' or an experience that animates the urbanscape and contributes to its appeal. If the cards represent prostitution, dirty fantasies and less-than glamorous urban scenes and places, then how does this render the urban atmosphere sexy and creative? I argue that although the cards belong to the illicit, abject sections of the sex industry and the urban underworld, they nevertheless constantly make visible recreational sexuality, by placing it within middle class neighborhoods. In this way the cards facilitate a general emotional and imaginative labour and help create a sexually charged and exciting urban atmosphere. In this respect, the cards are conducive to the workings of neoliberal, emotional capitalism.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Dana Kaplan is a cultural sociologist specializing in sexuality and middle class life in Israel. She is interested in the manifold ways in which recreational sexuality is embedded in and reproduces neoliberal capitalism, and how middle class subjects utilize sex and sexuality as a form of embodied capital. Dana received her PhD in sociology from the Hebrew University and was a visiting scholar at the NYU Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality and a postdoctoral researcher in the Sociology Department (Centre for Culture and the Creative Industries) at City University of London. Currently she is a teaching faculty at the Open University and the research coordinator of the School of Hebrew at Middlebury College, Vermont. Dana is the chairperson (and founding member) of the Culture and Consumption community at the Israeli Sociological Society. Her current research focuses on Beauty standards in Israel and on Sexy Urban Atmospheres.