
This research critically examines ‘creative city’ development strategies that aim to transform postindustrial cities into sites that reflect the lifestyles and consumption patterns of the creative class. Using the Michigan Cool Cities Initiative as a representative case study, this thesis investigates the question, “why has Michigan adopted a ‘creative city’ strategy and what have been the consequences of implementing the Cool Cities Initiative for two of its cities?”

Findings from in-depth interviews with key informants and site visits to Detroit and Grand Rapids revealed that the grant program was successful at assimilating Richard Florida’s ‘creativity script’ into the local planning regime. Recommendations propose that future urban economic development policies have better spatial targeting, seek a more comprehensive approach that addresses intra-urban inequities and employ traditional regulatory tools within the control of the public sector.