

Key drivers for the economic and social efficacy of cultural activities: the case of Turin

Abstract

Cultural activities potentially contribute significantly to renewal processes in communities afflicted by socio-economical underdevelopment or decline. Empirical observation, however, reveals that such initiatives often do not live up to initial expectations. The paper maintains that to exploit cultural initiatives to their full potential, they need to be integrated in broader city plans, where individual initiatives contribute to an overall explicit cultural policy and, more importantly, the latter is worked out jointly with socio-economical and town planning policies. Empirically, the paper draws on the case of Turin, a city which has been able to move from the worrying social and economic decline triggered by the Fiat crisis, to a renaissance phase, largely based on the enhancement of its cultural assets within a strategic city plan where, for example, the 2006 Winter Olympics were part of a broader image building strategy as well as an opportunity to create important new cultural spaces.