

Abstract:

This thesis is concerned with the question how art and culture can be used in the process of regional revitalization, and how this potential is being realized in Japan. The way that regional revitalization is currently understood in Japan promotes bottom-up approach, utilizing of local knowledge, and community participation. In the first part of the thesis, I analyze this regional development approach using the theories of neo-endogenous development. In the following chapters I analyze how arts and culture are used in various strategies of neo-endogenous development, namely in promotion of cultural tourism, place branding, and support of local participation, while applying the theoretical knowledge to examples in Japan. Since regional revitalization is not a straight-forward process, I also give attention to the many challenges of this approach. In the last chapter, I use a case study of a region in Niigata prefecture to illustrate one of the ways, in which arts and culture can play a vital role in revitalization of a region.

Keywords:

Japan, regional revitalization, regional development, shrinking regions, neo-endogenous regional development, art and culture