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Aesthetical, ethical and psychological dimensions of creativity – Implications for destination development and tourism entrepreneurship

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Findings from neuro-science show that experiencing beauty activates brain-neurons producing especially pleasing sensations, thereby creating new connections between different brain areas – a basic-prerequisite for creative processes (Vartanian et al., 2013; Baggio & Moretti, 2018). Following Plato, aesthetics (aisthetikos) is the study of beauty and taste exploring the essence of objects-of-thought, thus, comprising also approximations of unrealizable ideals. Aesthetics plays a central role in search for objective beauty, like proportions (da Vinci), harmonic-rhythmic organization (J. S. Bach), and mathematical symmetry (Einstein). Philosophers, like Immanuel Kant, further theorized the notion of human beauty originated by the subject, thus, focusing on moral values. As humans are assumed to be free to decide to be subject to pure rationality or to the laws of nature (affecting human needs), the classic writer Schiller (1793) describes this moral dimension of beauty as ‘ethical act of freedom’. By referring to Brodbeck’s (2012) philosophical framework on creativity, we discuss the role creativity plays for destinations to become innovative and attractive places. After commenting on the changing notion of creativity throughout history of thinking, we provide tentative answers to the posed research question: “Which are the aesthetical, ethical and psychological origins of creativity?” By doing so, we present the elements of a framework for destination development and tourism entrepreneurship that incorporates the idea that creativity represents the core activity within the boundaries of socio-economic networks. Accordingly, economies are interpreted as social systems, where agents (individuals, organizations) interact and communicate, e.g. about prices, cost, technology, preferences, etc., thereby constantly creating unpredictable ‘reality’, which, in turn, stabilizes through social resonance and reproduces itself habitually as reflexive network structure (Brodbeck, 2002). Indeed, a post-mechanistic economic theory puts creativity in the center, where human action is all about the creation of diversity (goods, linkages, ideas, etc.), surplus and selection (Fuchs & Baggio, 2017). Especially the selection criterion is guided by aesthetical, ethical and psychological factors, rather than rational-calculus (Brodbeck, 2001). On the base of these theoretical considerations, we conceptualize destinations as complex adaptive systems in which path-dependent innovation processes are characterized by the interdependence and interaction of heterogeneous agents able to learn and react creatively with subjective and procedural rationality (Antonelli 2009, Hanauer & Beinhocker, 2016). Interestingly, like human brains, market economies defined as social networks, are capable to create meaning due to their open, variable and free network structure capable to constantly create new ‘links’. Thus, innovative places and attractive destinations are characterized as open, free and well inter-connected territories whose unique history and specific beauty shapes and fosters the creativity of tourism entrepreneurs capable to transform inherited location factors into assets with symbolic value and meaning (Feldman, 2014). We conclude by discussing the effects of topological characteristics of networks in destinations on creativity, the formation of social-capital and knowledge dissemination (Baggio, 2014).
References


