

## Beauty and its role in fostering economic growth and social development

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Beauty is described by notions such as attractiveness, loveliness, exquisiteness, and splendor, while human-beings experience beauty in response to visual and auditory stimuli as embedded in open systems that co-evolve with the environment in which they are immersed (Cook et al., 2014). Shared experiences of beauty are considered as exceptionally intense forms of communication, thereby connecting people to cohesive communities of appreciation, and making beauty also a social construct (Sartwell, 2014).

Creativity and innovation became a mantra for economic and regional development (Piergiorgio et al., 2012). By often unconsciously combining cognition, emotions, objects, thinking, and patterns of motion, creativity shows the ability to change the meaning and vision of reality (Brodbeck, 2011). As creativity is linked to the individual's ability to connect different elements, one should consider the drivers affecting the human mind in this process. Among these factors, the aesthetic experience plays a significant role (Holloway Cripps, 2013). From a neuroscience perspective, groups of neurons become activated that produce especially pleasing sensations and create new connections between different areas of the brain which are mainly responsible for creative processes (Vartanian et al., 2013).

The basis of a favorable environment for creativity is traced back to individual talent, a tolerant multicultural environment, and the necessary technological infrastructures (Florida, 2002). Godoe (2012) explicitly adds aesthetic factors, serendipity, and imagination. In the author's view the role of aesthetic factors, defined as "*the appeal and attraction associated with beauty*" (p. 378), is predominant. Similarly, the author states, "*The solution to the innovation problem is to find an admissible set of values (e.g., aesthetic factors and codes) of the command variable, compatible with constraints, which maximize the beauty [instead of Simon's 'utility function'] for the given variables of the environment*" (Godoe, 2012 p. 387).

The idea of beauty has also a more interesting and valuable connection. Etymologically, the Latin word *bellus* (beautiful) derives from *benulus*, an archaic diminutive form of *bonus* (good, well). This association leads us to consider the importance of *doing things well because that's how they should be done* (Martinelli et al., 2009). Connecting own work to dignity, identity, sense of people, structures and organizational systems is essential in preventing the shadow of a flat future as those who choose to do properly what they have to do are more relaxed, more satisfied, and more able to design successful strategies (Weick, 1995; Moretti, 2013). In order to pay back culture, innovation, and future to the world by 'doing things well' and 'doing good things', governance should, thus, consider more strongly aspects, such as the creative milieu, the creation of social capital, emphasizing socially relevant factors, like cooperation, cultural activities, solidarity and diversity, and the link to the territory (MacCallum et al., 2009). Especially the latter aspect is considered as crucial for regional tourism development (Richards, 2011).

After having discussed the concept of beauty and its relationship to creativity and humans' work, our goal is to elaborate theoretical and practical implications for regional tourism development and the empowerment of regional economies. For this purpose, we examine how the notion of creativity and work changed throughout history of economic thinking. Starting with ancient writings, creativity (*creatio*) is considered as the art of realizing ideas. While Plato locates ideas (*idéas*->archetypes) in transcendent spheres, the Aristotelian world view considers ideas as inherent building block of nature. Similarly, Aristotle distinguishes between the '*natural art*' of handling scarce goods devoted to households (*oikonomia*) and the '*perverted art*' of multiplying richness from pure trading (*chrematistics*). Aristotle concludes that the former art is supported by the practice of *creative* craftsmanship, while the latter art is reinforced by merchants acting as pure machines (i.e. buying at low and selling at high prices). The review closes with post-mechanistic approaches considering economies as complex adaptive and creative systems, thus, applying network analysis to study the topological network configurations encouraging the emergence of creative processes and social capital (Baggio, 2014a). As one of the praxeological consequences, we state the need to rethink tourism regions (and cities) in light of opportunities offered by modern technologies, such as the Internet. The open and interconnected territory shows the potential to become the socio-economic context able to give uniqueness, value, and competitive advantage to the way to work, fostering innovation, business creation, and development.

The equation that links *job well done - creativity - innovation - development – beautiful (attractive) region* seems to hold, provided we add to the equation the parameters involving the efficiency of physical infrastructures, the structure of social relations, and a system of effective network governance (Baggio, 2014b, Baggio & Moretti, 2016).

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