

Academic Weekly Digest

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management



The value of participatory approaches in policy evaluation

To support the design of a sustainability programme evaluation, PhD student [Jenny Suno Wu](#) supervised by [Dr Pete Barbrook-Johnson](#) and [Prof Xavier Font](#) conducted a study using a novel participatory mapping method with tourism policy stakeholders in Barcelona. Due to Covid-19, this was the first online workshop of its kind and was favourably received by the participants.

Using Participatory System Mapping (PSM) to understand a tourism policy system

Jenny Suno Wu, Dr Pete Barbrook-Johnson & Prof Xavier Font

Collective management is essential to achieve destination sustainability. Using complexity approaches like Participatory Systems Mapping (PSM) to create shared understanding is the first step to bring stakeholders together and steer the system towards a common goal. Our work is an example of partnership between academia and government, which sets the ground for mutual learning and real time intervention. Through mapping activities, shared understanding, group discussion and network analysis we identify important elements that can potentially accelerate (or hinder) the uptake of sustainability practices among tourism SMEs.



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A shared vision and collective action are paramount to the successful implementation of sustainable tourism policy

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We show how a complex systems approach, implemented via PSM, offers a holistic understanding of the contexts and interactions of tourism policy. In our case study, there is an emphasis on sharing evidence of best practice and promoting peer-to-peer learning. Stakeholders feel empowered not only because their voices are heard, but leave the workshop with a sense of collective responsibility and a clearer roadmap towards success.

PSM is a flexible method which we successfully adapted for online workshops, and can be ideal for remote, synchronous collaboration. In the paper we offer detailed guidance so that other researchers and consultants can take advantage of our learning.

Further Reading:

Suno Wu, J., Barbrook-Johnson, P., & Font, X. (2021). Participatory complexity in tourism policy: Understanding sustainability programmes with participatory systems mapping. *Annals of Tourism Research*.

Link: bit.ly/3GK6jAe