Systems Thinking in Tourism: Out-learning the competotors.

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Systems Thinking is an approach to complex problems which not only involves taking a holistic view of system interactions, but also involves establishing processes which build shared vision and learning and enable communities to position themselves to address key decisions about their future.

Tourism, as an industry, is probably less researched and more volatile than most other industries. It is subject to the vagaries of fashion, climatic extremes, short-term business thinking and opportunitistic development. There are also clear examples where system archetype such as "Tragedy of the Commons" and "Fixes that fail" could apply.

How can a group of researchers develop a framework which helps a community identify the real costs and benefits of tourism activity ?. Initially, the reaction of the tourism industry was cool and one of disinterest, but over the duration of the project, it has evolved into an exciting collaborative project- one that clearly demonstrates the power of a Systems Thinking approach.

The paper reflects on the process and attempts to identify the critical events that led to its current status. Applying Systems Thinking to a research project is a continual process and involves a range of consultation, communication, research philosophy, methodological and business decisions. The paper reflects on the last two years of this project to identify the critical events and actions that resulted in the dramatic change in industry reaction to the building of a "Tourism Futures Simulator"