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# Evaluation of Tourism Sustainability in La Habana City

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## INTRODUCTION

In the field of sustainability, the specialized literature shows some concern regarding the integration among the global, regional and national levels of planning (Gunn 1977; Getz, 1986). In the tourism industry, the evaluation of sustainability, as well as the co-creation of added value, is of paramount importance to develop smarter and more resilient destinations (Gossling 2017). At a closer look, the term sustainability was originally well-grounded in a solid foundation capable to be articulated with development programs, deficiencies persist in putting it into practice due to the complexity of the interrelationships between its different dimensions. What seems to be equally important, these interactions are manifested in all phases of the destination management process resulting in the complexity of the diagnosis to optimize the relevant decision-making process (Torres, 2016; Um, 2010 Ramos and Caeiro, 2010; Pulido and Sánchez, 2009; Pérez and Nel-lo, 2009; Pérez et. Al, 2009; Blancas et al., 2009 Martínez, López, and Santos, 2007; Choi and Sirikaya, 2005).

Based on previous models and taking into account their shortcomings (Leiper, 1979; Miossec, 1997; Mill and Morrison, 2002; McKercher, 2004), Martín (2006) proposes a pentagonal model that defines three major dimensions of the tourism system: the exogenous subsystems (tourist environment), the endogenous subsystems (tourism) and the macro environment (general environment), which are related to each other in a process called tourism dynamics, which leads to responses or impacts. These responses or impacts that take place in tourism dynamics are still very difficult to analyze with the prevailing models, methods and tools to assess sustainability in a destination (Palomeque et al., 2018; Torres, 2016; Vera et al., 2013; Velasco, 2011; Ávila & Barrado, 2005).

The tourist destination should be considered an integral part of the tourist system, comprising endogenous and exogenous sub-systems. In this way, the conception of the tourist system alludes to a

much deeper integration of relationships and interests in different stakeholders which determine tourist behaviour (Pearce 2005; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007). One might speculate that some studies around destination deal only with the basic dimensions of relationships (structure, contents or configuration), not considering other elements such as the interrelationships that occur between the different processes that take place in it, supply and demand in a causal logic and its operation; thereby losing the explanatory potential they have for the management of tourist destinations.

In Cuba, the research related to the dynamics of the tourism system has studied its conceptualization (Martín, 2006), its development (Figueras, 2008) and specific aspects around its components to propose methodologies for diagnosis, evaluation and forecasting of future trends (Delgado, 2014; La Serna, 2014; Perelló, 2005), its economic and spatial performance, and the impacts at a social level (Vargas, 2013; Pérez, 2013; Pérez, 2011; Echarri, 2006). These approaches assume that the destination is a space whose management depends largely on the functions of the different actors who are present in it. Management by functions defines and establishes work areas by creating several specialized and hierarchical units that are responsible for different specific activities but that do not allow an integrated understanding of the destination, generating fragmentation problems that hinder the process of visualizing and managing the interactions that must exist between all parties (Coaguila 2017, Rojas 2014; Plasencia, 2013; Fraguela et al., 2012; Trishler, 1998; Taylor and Ford 1980). Based on these shortcomings that exist to assess the sustainability of a destination with all the interrelationships that occur in tourism dynamics, it is necessary to look at other areas of knowledge such as the process approach, which until today has been generally used to assess performance within the business. A process- approach allows to establish an objective basis for the development of research regarding this issue, since it recognizes the modelling of systems as a set of interrelated processes through cause-effect links that sustain the systemic vision of a tourist destination, facilitates the integration in the same instrument (the process map) and enables the analysis of a tourist destination through its different stages (planning, implementation, verification and control). Taking into account these considerations, the present research has its general objective to evaluate the sustainability of a tourist destination with a focus on processes. In the following lines we give the strengths of the process approach when applied to tourist destinations:

- The Model allows rapid integration of multiple stakeholders in different levels of the tourist system as well as the entire value chain of the tourist product.
- The process approach is situated as an efficient instrument that helps in the planning process as well as the decision-making process for policymakers.
- It gives a better focus on the interested group while homogenizing the stakeholders´ goals.
- It includes and potentiates the added value while cutting costs.
- Through an empowered community, the model reorganizes and optimizes the labour relations in tourist destinations.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

System theory has been used in different sciences to recognize complex processes where societies, territories and economies articulate parts that together make up a functional totality in reality from a methodological perspective.

In tourism processes, at least three vertices can be distinguished in a possible systemic articulation (Fernández et al, 1997; Martín, 2010):

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