

ACADEMIC WEEKLY DIGEST

YOUR WEEKLY DIGEST OF KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS



WHAT HAPPENS TO KNOWLEDGE AFTER TOURISM FIRMS 'FAIL': IS THERE 'LIFE AFTER DEATH'?

There has been limited conceptualization in tourism of the knowledge consequences of firm failure despite overall high failure rates. This paper by [Prof Allan Williams](#) and [Dr Isabel Rodriguez](#), based on their [Leverhulme project](#), elaborates a three-stage conceptual model of the post-failure trajectories of knowledge. The model focusses on the distinctive combination of *tacit* and *codified* knowledge in context of impure public goods, their distribution within and beyond the firm, and their micro and macro determinants. Three main post-failure trajectories are identified: *cold storage/black hole of knowledge*, *knowledge recovery*, and *knowledge recombination*.



KNOWLEDGE DOES NOT ‘DIE’ AFTER INNOVATION, ENTERPRISE OR ENTREPRENEURIAL FAILURE

Prof Allan Williams & Dr Isabel Rodriguez

Tourism is characterised by high rates of entrepreneurial failure, significantly greater than in most other industries. However, there is little research on what happens to the knowledge of failed tourism firms. This paper addresses the research gap by developing a conceptual analysis to produce a model of the trajectories of knowledge after the commercial failure of tourism firms. Its originality lies in focussing on knowledge rather than on entrepreneurs per se, and in challenging the simplistic dichotomy of success versus failure. It addresses three main research questions: a) What are the main alternative post-failure trajectories of knowledge mobilities? b) How are these trajectories shaped by the nature and ownership of the constellation of knowledge in and around the firm? and c) What are the implications of these different knowledge trajectories for tourism innovation? We identify a number of long-term post-failure

knowledge trajectories mainly determined by whether and how knowledge is or is not reused in an innovation: (serial entrepreneur) knowledge recovery, (third party) knowledge recombination and, what we term, the knowledge ‘cold storage/black hole’. While this is a conceptual paper, it addresses a topic which can inform more applied research with policy and practice significance. The existing policy focus on success can be complemented by measures which seek to turn innovation failure into something positive: that is, adopting a more “intelligent failure” approach. Making the codification and storage of knowledge a condition of public funding could increase knowledge recombination or recovery and lead to longer term successful innovation rates, raising productivity and increasing real incomes.

This paper challenges the notion that the commercial failure of a firm constitutes a dichotomous point between knowledge success and failure. Instead it identifies and conceptualizes an alternative post-failure knowledge model.

Williams, A.M. & Rodríguez, I. (2024). Knowledge mobility after tourism entrepreneurial failure: Life after death? *Annals of Tourism Research*.

Link: bit.ly/4cZmJ93