



UNWTO Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO)

2018 Global INSTO Meeting

UNWTO Headquarters, Madrid, Spain, 22 - 23 October 2018

Main Takeaways

The *2018 Global INSTO Meeting* aimed at further supporting destinations in measuring tourism at the local level, focussing this year specifically on the use of spatial data for innovative and relevant support of local decision making. The following takeaways of the meeting summarize the continuously evolving commitment of INSTO destinations towards sustainable tourism development:

1. To manage tourism relevantly and ensure sustainable tourism development, the sector **needs timely and regular monitoring** at the destination level that enables stakeholders to strengthen evidence-based decision making processes.
2. Aware of the opportunities deriving from new digital solutions for sustainable tourism, more and more destinations are **complementing traditional data with non-traditional data sources**. This allows them to not only deepen insights into already existing monitoring issue areas but also to extend measurement efforts onto new topics, thus allowing for a more holistic monitoring approach needed when measuring sustainability.
3. It can be observed that in many destinations the planning of tourism continues to be often disconnected from regional and urban planning activities, indicating the persisting need to create stronger synergies and inter-sectoral collaboration between those areas of responsibility to better **integrate tourism planning into local planning structures**.
4. As technological advances are enabling all sectors to overcome traditional boundaries between them, there is a need for stakeholders in the tourism sector to advance knowledge about the requirements, complexity and processes that are needed to develop and make use of new data infrastructures. In consequence, **strengthening digital literacy** of all stakeholders is becoming a universal requisite for destination stakeholders that are working more and more in diverse and interdisciplinary teams.
5. One of the challenges that destination stakeholders' commonly encounter on their way towards digital transformation is the successful **translation of destination needs into data needs**, i.e. the context-based identification, definition and prioritization of relevant activities

for which suitable data is being identified and collected. Often, due to the vast variety and quantity of available information today, stakeholders are confronted with an overwhelming amount of information from which insights are generated without a clear understanding of the underlying information needs.

6. Unlike other sectors, the tourism sector continues to only slowly adapt and reap the benefits from geo-referenced data, indicating the need to further **mainstream the utilization of spatial data** for its planning and development. Although generally well established for territorial planning, in tourism – because of the growing amounts of data, additional sources and enhanced computing capacities – there are great opportunities that allow to gain new, more localized and timely insights which are important accelerators for sustainable development.
7. Remote Sensing presents one potential area of opportunities for tourism stakeholders to advance tourism monitoring at the local level based on spatial data. While **Earth Observation (EO) methods** and the data deriving from these techniques are global in their coverage, have high resolution and can have lower collection costs than survey data, its applicability, hence advantages and disadvantages in different tourism-related contexts, still need to be better explored and understood by the sector in order to identify concrete chances for monitoring tourism impacts.
8. In times where producing, consuming and exchanging information among all actors is becoming key for data-driven management and development in destinations, it can be observed that the existence of diverse data infrastructures within and across organizations presents an emergent challenge for many stakeholders, requiring strong efforts and **collaboration to increase interoperability along the data value chain**.
9. Using **visualization techniques** to translate and **transmit monitoring results** has proven to be a valuable technique to gain better insights and to strengthen interactions between different stakeholders in destinations. Especially for participatory processes, which are key for sustainable development, more visualizations and thus transparent communication approaches among all actors facilitate understanding of development stages and related issues.
10. With the continuous growth of tourism worldwide and the increasing pressure on destinations in terms of quantity and flows of travellers, the social pillar of sustainability, especially the importance of monitoring the **satisfaction of the host community**, has received more and more attention over the past few years. Opportunities deriving from new technological systems such as public participation geographic information system (PPGIS) can support stakeholders to strengthen community involvement and better monitor attitude changes over time.

11. Another increasingly common way to ensure this continuous interaction and communication with stakeholders in and outside of the destinations, as well as with travellers, is the **development of data dashboards** – data platforms that include and publicly provide relevant, continuously updated and extended information on the impacts of tourism. After a period of piloting, dashboards are more and more used to support decision makers in their daily and strategic efforts. Building on the first years of experience, efforts continue to better integrate information on social and environmental aspects in these management tools for a more holistic approach towards sustainability, making it relevant instruments for policy makers.
12. One of the key drivers behind the new platforms and tools that are being used for innovations in stakeholder relationship management systems is the growing amount of publicly available data. Commonly referred to as the '**democratization**' of data, this growing availability and accessibility of information (open data) presents also enormous opportunities for the monitoring of sustainable development, offering new and free sources for improved understanding of tourism impacts.
13. In order to support stakeholders to extend their monitoring efforts beyond the traditional focus areas, there is a clear need to make use of new technological solutions to **automate processes** for establishing and updating a reliable overview of tourism supply inventory in destinations as well as for ensuring regular information generation regarding basic indicators so that the status quo can be better understood, processes optimized and early-warning systems created.
14. Over the years, many indicators and issue areas, different monitoring approaches and certification schemes have been discussed by tourism stakeholders worldwide. Although depending on the specific destination context, indicators tend to vary in terms of definition and priority, **topics that have been at the center of the discussions** and continue to be of high importance for most stakeholders in 2018 include: a) monitoring tourism intensity and flows, b) community satisfaction, c) mobility, d) accessibility and e) resource use, among others.
15. While a vast variety of **environmental data** exists from many different sectors, knowledge on its availability, its source locations and the application of this information for destination development remains low in the tourism sector. While many destinations are starting efforts to increase evidence in this area, it is important to make use of already existing sources and to foster the required capacity-building and knowledge-sharing among stakeholder groups in- and outside of the sector.
16. Because tourism is a continuously evolving and highly interrelated system that is part of a wider national, regional and international framework, monitoring the impact of its activities in



destinations is key for reporting on a global level and fulfilling the sector's responsibility to contribute to objectives set by the global community, specifically the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). In order to strengthen these relationships and to jointly advance on and reap the benefits of technology and new data for better monitoring sustainable tourism development, there is a need to support to the implementation of the [The Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data](#), which was adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2017.