Comments on the spatial perspective of the MST (CH 5)

Nico Heerschap, December 2022, Madrid
Comments on the spatial perspective of the MST (CH 5)

Different perspective then chapters 2-4

Main questions:

- Are sub-national indicators important enough to justify a separate chapter in the MST?
- What is meant with sub-national level?
- Are there differences in indicators between national and sub-national level?
- What are the possibilities of obtaining sufficient data at a sub-national level?
- What are the attention points for the further development of the MST?
Comments on the spatial perspective of the MST (CH 5)

Why are indicators important at a sub-national level?

1. The impact of tourism is mainly felt at the sub-national level (think of impacts on neighbourhoods, jobs and income, impacts on nature parks, attitudes of residents towards visitors, etc.)

2. Tourism policy, possibly in combination with national policy, is often made at subnational level (big request for data)

3. The characteristics and intensity of tourism can differ greatly between destinations, such as cities, country side, beaches, nature park. This leads to differences in development possibilities or limitations. But, also the need to compare sub-national destinations

4. Sometimes there is a need for real-time measures, concerning, for example, crowd and traffic management during for example events

5. In practice, often the initiative for new statistics are taken on a sub-national level. There is a substantial information need that is not met by national indicators or statistics

These reasons argue for much more attention to indicators on a sub-national level. This level seems equally if not more important than the national level. In the long run, this calls for a regionalization to the sub-national level of systems like the SNA, TSA, SEEA and also the MST. In fact, every new indicator should, if possible, have guidelines for a regional variant

Consistency between national and sub-national indicator-systems is key. That also accounts for definitions, classifications and concepts used. Not the compilation methods and data sources per se
What is meant with the subnational level?

Four possible criteria to demarcate geographic areas/levels:

1. **Political and administrative responsibility**, like the levels of a country, counties, regions and cities or even neighbourhoods (e.g., regional; see terms macro, meso and micro)

2. **Social, economic and environmental cohesion** (could be interregional)

3. **Specific tourism-related areas**, not necessarily contiguous (relates to 2): concentration of a) tourism supply or b) flows of visitors

4. The **availability of statistical data**, specific areas (e.g., nomenclature of territorial units, nuts-classification) (relates to 1)

Not a clear choice. Preference 1 with 4. Advantages: corresponds to political responsibility, availability of data, stable mapping (time series) and defining the boundaries of tourism-related areas is often a challenge. Policy makers often 2 and 3

The use of building blocks? Can go either way, without problems of confidentiality

Macro, meso and micro: too less differentiation? Also depends on the size of the country? Nuts-levels?
Are there differences in types of indicators between national and sub-national level?

In principal I would say no. Types of indicators on a national level are mostly also valid and often needed on a local level. Underlying definitions and principles of indicators and accounting systems should be independent of scale (common language)

However:

- The compilation method and data sources (need of auxiliary information) could be different because the lack of data and resources or difficulties to monitor (free movement of people, goods and services). Often, model based estimation methods are applied

- Context specific indicators on a local level

- There will be challenges to compile indicators on a local level, when it comes to delineating tourism activity and other concepts such as import/export, interregional transportation, types of visitor (daytrip and overnight stay), bundling of tourism packages and the presence of, for example, online platform services related to tourism

- The need for real-time measures (e.g., crowd and traffic management). Opposite to policy measures

- The need to look at indirect and induced effects

- Some indicators are only valid on a certain level (e.g., national and local government services)
Comments on the spatial perspective of the MST (CH 5)

Not the need for data on a local level, but the availability of data and resources on the local level is the problem:

- **High costs to produce** and availability of resources. The options at the local level are a trade-off of costs. Only destinations with a high intensity of tourism?

- The problem of **confidentiality**. Often **unreliable time series**, results can vary greatly from period to period. Therefore, results are often ‘smoothed’ by taking an average over 3 years or so

- Often specific **local data sets**, including more knowledge about the specific situation. Data sets from different geographical areas are mostly **not aligned** with each other

- **Big data as a solution?** Partly, also confidentiality issues, representativeness, availability and access, not collected for statistics, definitions etc.

- **On a national level**: need for standardization (**concepts and definitions**) and methodological guidance for statistics on a local level. Pooling of resources and knowledge (otherwise reinventing the wheel). Often the needed resources and knowledge are not available on a sub-national level

- Combining standardised statistics on a local level to a higher level. Prerequisite: local areas add up to the higher region and standard definitions, classification and concepts

- Challenge: consistency between the different levels. Therefore, the compilation of a regional TSA mainly ‘top down’

- **Integrating frame** for the different data sets. Some kind of geographic area in particular is suitable for this. E.g., GIS-systems with different data-layers based on different spatial scales as the integration variable (consistency over levels). Consistency in time-frames
Comments on the spatial perspective of the MST (CH 5)

Attentions points in the context of the MST:

- Recognize the valid need for more information on a local level. So, worthy of a separate chapter in the MST
- A common language (standard) for definitions and concepts ((inter)national standard) on all levels, possibly adapted to the specific situation
- Proper classification of spatial areas (consistent and nested; see on a European level ‘nuts’-related classification?)
- Compilation guidelines for the regionalization of systems such as SNA (already there), TSA and SEEA. For example, model based estimates (e.g., estimation of tourists or overnight stays by looking at the average capacity and occupation rates of accommodations; using labour statistics on a local level for the regionalization of the TSA)
- Pooling of resources and knowledge
- Increasing the availability of data at a local level. Big data and local data? Which data sources are available
- A GIS-system for the integration of different statistics (e.g., existing surveys, administrative and big data sources and local data). R-TIS: is the input about statistics or data sources?
- Impacts on neighborhoods could have more attention
- A set of core indicators for the sub-national level
Possible direction
Structure data-ecosystem
Ideal situation

And:
- Central governance (or decentral or a combination)
- Need for structural funding
- Need for new knowledge (data and content)
- Priorities have to be set (resources are not unlimited)