

Special issue

Focus on urban, regional and local issues

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Current Trends and Future Prospects in Urban and Regional Statistics

Within the International Statistical Institute (ISI) the International Association of Official Statistics (IAOS) maintains and develops its flagship journal SJAOS, the Statistical Journal of the IAOS. SJAOS is attractive to SCORUS, the Standing Committee of Urban and Regional Statistics and Research, which is part of the IAOS. *The papers in this issue of the SJAOS* focus on current trends and future prospects in urban and regional statistics. Current trends in city and regional statistics feature attributes of open, comparative, compatible, spatial, and collaborative networks as mode of working. In particular, this issue will highlight the role of open data, making the volume both timely and relevant. Many of the papers originate from presentations given at the 59th World Statistical Congress of the International Statistical Institute held in August 2013 in Hong Kong. However, the authors have further developed and up-dated their papers.

The aim of this special issue of the SJAOS is to feature research and studies on the development of statistics at the city and regional level. Areas covered by the special issue include: how statistical methodologies, frameworks and other related matters are being developed to address the evolving work on urban and regional open data; developing a framework for location-enabled statistical information; recent advances in spatial analyses based on merging geocoded urban and regional statistics; progress on comparative city statistics and indicators; and on-going developments in web-based reporting and knowledge sharing. There are eight papers altogether, five full papers and

three short communications. Attention is paid to the geographical coverage of the submissions. The papers are of practical nature and show how recent developments in urban and regional statistics and research are providing powerful tools to help address many of the challenges facing such areas. As well as addressing challenges the papers also deal with how cities and regions can seize the foreseeable opportunities offered by these developments.

Katja Vilkama and Marja Tammilehto-Luode (Finland) presents a case study on the use of official statistics in monitoring change in educational level on the national, regional and city levels in Finland. The paper draws on the high-quality population registers that enable compiling a wide range of regional- and neighbourhood-level time series on various socio-economic indicators. Mika Gissler (Finland) gives examples on how to improve health statistics in the context of measuring quality of life in cities and urban regions.

Martin Brady and Gemma Van Halderen (Australia) present progress achieved on a statistical spatial framework to inform regional statistics. Their paper draws upon development work at an international level that focused on integration of statistical and geospatial information and led by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Their observation is that National Statistical Offices identify that there is significant growth in the demand for geospatially enabled statistics.

Patricia McCarney (Canada) describes the ISO37120 standard, the development of the first international standard on city indicators. The Ontology for ISO 37120 is also presented and discussed. The Global City Indicators Facility (GCIF) was established in 2008 by

Professor McCarney at the University of Toronto in partnership with the World Bank which selected 9 pilot cities.

Lieselotte Bicknese and Manilde van der Oord (The Netherlands) share their experiences of working with open statistics in Amsterdam. They bring about benefits and challenges based on monitoring the impacts of open data and undertaking citizens' surveys. They also present their views on future prospects.

Ari Jaakola and his co-authors (Finland) share open data experiences from the Helsinki Metropolitan Area by presenting the achievements and challenges as well as future prospects of the open data service Helsinki Region Infoshare. Despite the short history of open data there is evidence that open data contribute to open government and transparency, citizens engagement, better informed decisions, innovative applications, better services, new businesses and jobs.

Most German cities have their own statistical bureau. Klaus Trutzel (Germany) gives examples on how municipal statistics serves as a third pillar of official statistics though operated independently of the legally

regulated official statistics of the state. Municipal statistical offices cooperate under the umbrella of KOSIS (Kommunales Statistisches Informationssystem). A project entitled KOSIS Association Urban Audit of the European Union produces official European statistics. This project and its organisation are described as a successful example of cooperation across the federal levels.

The paper of Arno Schiffert and Thomas Willmann (Germany) focuses on a municipal network of knowledge and technology collecting and presenting information on the quality of life and planning for the future of the generation aged 50 and over in 13 European cities. This very topic covers a major aspect of demographic change.

The editors would like to thank the contributing authors for their profound and insightful reviews and encouraging examples of developments made available to the statistical community. The experiences analysed and communicated in the articles will help pave the way towards future progress.