

# Discussion Platform

**Kick-off of the second discussion on the discussion platform. You are invited to contribute on: [www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com)**

The second discussion: “*Official statistics in the future informational ecosystem, User orientation, profound knowledge and science for a future-oriented strategy*” centers around statements taken from an article by Walter Radermacher ‘Governing-by-the-numbers; Statistical’ Governance; Reflections on the future of official statistics in a digital and globalized society’, published in the December 2019 issue (Vol 36, number 4). You are invited to discuss the main or detailed statements.

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**The main statement for discussion is:**

**Data are given – Facts are produced**

In the long run trust in official statistics can only be maintained based on a continual striving for the best quality, with leadership based on profound knowledge of the business and with customer orientation as the supreme orientation. This implies that statistical products must meet the expectations of users in their design, production and communication.

Other subsidiary statements to be discussed are:

**On between a data gold-rush and the death of truth**

Official statistics will be under attack either by discussions on trust or by competition from statistics produced with lower quality. For official statisticians to be needed in the future, they have to be more than just data engineers. They must know the DNA of their business and use their capital (especially their know-how and internationally agreed methodological standards) to develop a market-oriented strategy. Official statistics has to be policy-relevant without being driven by politics.

**On Civil society’s role**

Civil society should be more closely involved in official statistics, be it through participation in indicator

design processes, through crowdsourcing of data or as a partner in communication.

The power of numbers will increase dynamically with new data sources and technologies, which calls for an informational governance at both national and international level. Official statistics can and must claim a decisive role in this governance. A global organisation of professional statisticians anchored in civil society should develop a suitable indicator to measure and monitor the independence and integrity of statistics in individual countries

**On closing the scientific gap**

There is a lack of scientific research, suitable textbooks and qualified training courses for official statistics. A scientifically founded, conceptual operationalisation of statistical processes, be it in data collection, national accounts or the generation of indicators, requires more than the knowledge of specific statistical methods or data sciences. Rather, aspects from other fields, such as sociology, historical, or legal disciplines have to be taken on board. There are many different strands of science contributing to research on processes of quantification and the impact of quantification within social contexts.

**You are invited to contribute to this discussion on: [www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com)**

**The first discussion was kicked off in September and is still open for contributions**

The first discussion opened in September: ‘Can unofficial statistics help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Global Indicator Framework and how can Official Statistics play a role in this process?’ centers around statements taken from an article by MacFeeley and Nastav ‘You say you want a (data) revolution’ ‘A proposal to use unofficial statistics for the SDG Global Indicator Framework’, published in the September issue (Vol 35, number 3).

You were invited to discuss on the main or detailed statement(s). The main statement to react on was ‘*Official Statistics should consider switching from a purely*

*production or manufacturing based model to a mixed business model: one combining the manufacture of official statistics with the franchising of production under license.' First discussion: 'Can un-official statistics help to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Global Indicator Framework and how can Official Statistics play a role in this process'*

**The SJAOS discussion platform and website ([www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com))**

**Some background on the SJAOS discussion platform.** On the 22th of August 2019 the Statistical Journal of the International Association for Official Statistics (SJAOS) launched the new on-line platform for discussion on topics of significant relevance for official statistics ([www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com)) as part of the new SJAOS website. The discussion platform invited you to contribute to important discussions at a time of your own choosing.

The ISI World Statistics Conference, the IAOS conference and Journals like the *Statistical Journal of the IAOS*, are the traditional platforms where views on new developments and important issues in Official Statistics are exchanged. However, conferences occur only a few times per year, journal issues are released maybe four times per year and typically only reach specific interest groups. This new on-line discussion platform of the SJAOS will be an opportunity for anyone working or interested in official statistics, to contribute to topical discussions, at your own convenience.

Every three months there will be a new discussion item. With each issue of the SJAOS, a new discussion topic will be launched via a leading article. Statements from this article will then invite you to post your opinion and arguments. Each discussion will run for a year and be closed with a concluding commentary by the article author(s). When fully up and running (after four journal issues), there will be four different discussions topics open for your contribution at any one time.

The discussion platform can be found on a prominent place on the new SJAOS website ([www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com)). Contributions have to be in English, have to be clear and concise, specifically addressing one of the statements and should not exceed 25 lines. When considered useful, references to a longer text (article, paper) can be added as an attachment. Contributors are required to register on the discussion platform. Anonymous contributions will not be accepted.

The SJAOS discussion platform editor (James Whitworth) will moderate the discussions and the quality of the contributions (but of course not on the positions taken), can take decisions on the integrity of the arguments and is available for support when needed. ON the website you will also find an interesting interview – prepared by our interview editor Nancy Torrieri – with James Whitworth.