

## Editorial

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### **1. Special themes in this issue ‘The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic’ and ‘Assessing Compliance with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics’**

The theme of the (virtual) United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) Meeting 2021 ‘Better Data, better lives’ summarizes in four words the since a few years ongoing data revolution in combination with why official statistics is so engaged: better lives for all, as reflected in the objectives from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s).

The progress in countries ability in measuring the indicators of the in 2016 launched SDG’s; the data revolution taking speed a few years earlier and the prioritization of climate change statistics were the main topics for official statistics in the second half of last decennium. Together with digitalization and globalization these issues dominated the official statistics agenda. The official statistics community was extremely engaged in stepping up its efforts to be in these domains on the forefront and in delivering high quality statistics: in many domains big steps forward were made involving international expert and working groups, preparing guidelines and standards, reserving and employing a variety of funding and resources, and rolling out outreach programs to less developed regions.

#### *1.1. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic*

Then came COVID-19! Official statistics appeared to be only partially ready to answer on all the questions that came up on numbers and rates, speed of the infectious disease, test-strategies, etc.. Other (non-official) data sources showed to contain more relevant information and many data providers in other domains than official statistics became active in a world that the official statisticians thought was theirs; informing policy and the wider public with relevant and timely statisti-

cal information. Epidemiologists on one hand and data providers and analysts from many other domains on the other, spread statistics (sometimes competing to official statistics) and were informing politicians, the larger public and . . . they were also listened to. As illustrated in the March issue of this Journal (Misuse of statistics)<sup>1</sup> sometimes also leading to misleading and fake news.

Due to the overwhelming attention on the characteristics of the pandemic the climate change problem became less visible and received less attention. The world wide pandemic also impacted heavily on statistics on globalization and the lock-downs; stimulation of home office work and travel restrictions caused beyond a world wide lowering of green house gas emissions, a kind of second digital revolution, especially on the level of peoples participation in society.

After some confusing and chaotic months, it was in the course of the second half of 2020 that official statistics showed to be able to regain its important role; methodologies were rapidly adapted to the new situation, new statistics developed and new networks and cooperation models created. Due to the necessity to have good tools for measuring the long term impact of the pandemic, the SDG’s show their relevance again as measurement framework. The worrying situation with lacking appropriate resources in many developing countries due to the need to set budget priorities painfully shows the urgent need for sufficient resources and funding to supporting these developing economies with preparing the so highly needed quality statistics. The experiences from the beginning of the pandemic on the chaotic communication also have made clear that themes like statistical literacy and communication of official statistics have to appear high on the official statistics agenda.

The content of the discussions held during the virtual UNSC 2021, and at a large number of webinars and

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<sup>1</sup> Statistical Journal of the IAOS, Vol 37/1, 2021.

conferences like the Annual Paris21 meeting, illustrate that the official statisticians are aware of the necessity to evaluate and re-orient their readiness to change, their methodologies, procedures and communication strategies. It is now time to act. Moreover, the initiatives of new administrations (for example in the USA and European Union) and the availability of seemingly unlimited funds create a momentum to change priorities and launch new policies that re-direct the economies and societies to become in a shorter time more resistant and durable. The official statistics are challenged to support these developments with new and timely statistics, but, at the same time fulfill the promises on the already longer existing challenges on new data sources and statistical ecosystems. The Statistical Journal of the IAOS is fully ready by publishing current and innovative manuscripts in fulfilling the role of supporting the official statistics community in achieving these challenges.

At the time of drafting this editorial, the COVID-19 pandemic is still between us. Due to the further spread, new mutations of the virus and slowly moving vaccine production and vaccination campaigns, the diversity in severity of the outbreak has been growing over the last couple of months. Some (mainly developed) countries have succeeded in getting some control over the outbreak due to a successful vaccination campaign as at the same time many others are still or again in lockdown situations and entering in an ever worse situation with peaking numbers of infections, hospitalizations and deceases. Nevertheless, the world-wide vaccination campaign starts to create some hope that the pandemic can be surrounded. This feeling comes with the realization that the impact of the pandemic and the strategy how to deal with such events urgently needs to be reviewed. It also invites for describing post-pandemic situations based on fore-casting and now-casting of the main indicators. In this issue there are five manuscripts on the impact of COVID for official statistics. The first two manuscripts in this section are already looking into these next steps. Also in many other articles in this issue these forward looking vision is visible.

I therefore also am pleased to invite authors to submit manuscripts that describe these current developments, from theoretical and empirical perspective and with emphasis not only on analytical results and their policy relevance but also on the quality of the data and the governance of the production processes. To support the exchange of experiences and knowledge, I repeat the invite to authors all over the globe to submit articles that statistically describe the differentiated effects of

the pandemic and the effect on producing and disseminating statistics.

For submission of manuscripts the following link brings you into the submission system: <https://www.iospress.nl/journal/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/?tab=submission-of-manuscripts>.

### *1.2. Assessing compliance with the UN fundamental principles of Official Statistics*

High quality Official statistics will be important for the next decades. New data sources, methodologies and an interplay with other sciences will be of main interest. The role of the UN Fundamental Principles for Official Statistics (UNFPOS) in warranting the high quality has been emphasized strongly in recent volumes of this journal. This emphasis was for an important part following on the discussions at the UNSC and events causing doubts on the quality of some statistics (national and international) due to non-compliance with these principles. The dimension of new data sources has been added to the UNFPOS as well as recognition that also other non-official statistics organizations can play a role in delivering the high quality for official statistics.

In 2020, the UNSC discussed methods to assess the compliance of statistical systems to the UNFPOS. One achievement was the development of a maturity model that both assesses compliance with the UNFPOS and identifies areas for continuous improvement. Compliance with the UNFPOS signals that official statistics are produced in a trusted apolitical way and that governments and citizens have available valuable and reliable information about their economic, social, environmental and demographic situations. In the era of 'fake news and alternative facts' compliance with the globally endorsed ethical, professional and scientific standards and guidelines that make up the UNFPOS builds confidence and trust in official statistics.

The eight discussion on the SJIAOS discussion platform ([www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com)) will also focus on the state and development of the UN Fundamental Principles of Official statistics. At the end of this editorial in paragraph 8 and at the end of this issue you will find more information on this discussion and how you can contribute.

## **2. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on official statistics**

The COVID-19 pandemic has an enormous impact worldwide on the capacities and priorities of the Na-

tional Statistical Systems. However, as in the developed countries and regions this impact can be balanced with new initiatives and dedicated improvements in the already existing systems, contrary is the situation in many developing countries where the development of such systems has experienced a serious drawback. This drawback concerns not only the production but also heavily the funding of statistics. In her contribution, 'Approaches in response to the need of enhanced data financing during COVID-19: The example of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics',<sup>2</sup> Ola Awad (Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics) comments on the necessity, structures and initiatives of financing for development data and statistics that are expected to last for several years after the pandemic has ended.

Evaluating the responses during the last year on the pandemic and looking into a future with similar events of a pandemic nature, Dennis Trewin and Nicholas Fisher (Australia) argue that there is a critical need to start the process of learning from this pandemic to improve the quantitative information and related advice provided to policy makers. In 'A proposal to enhance national capability to manage epidemics: The critical importance of expert statistical input including official statistics' they show how Australia's health and economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic reveals some important inadequacies in the data, statistical analysis and interpretation used to guide its preparations and actions. Though Australia in general is regarded as having managed the pandemic rather well, they argue that a critical analysis of the shortcomings is seriously needed as a kind of Statistical pandemic action plan. The contribution captures the essential quantitative components of such an approach for each of the four basic phases, from initial detection to post-pandemic. It also outlines the critical steps in each stage to enable policy makers to deal more efficiently and effectively with future such events, thus enhancing both the social and the economic welfare of its people. This article should figure as an example of an evaluation strategy many if not all statistical systems in the world should reflect on.

In 'Conducting population and housing censuses during the pandemic: An Overview', Srdjan Mrkic (United Nations Statistics Division, New York) reports on the progress in the implementation of the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme in 2020

and 2021 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This contribution can be seen as complementing the contribution in the March 2021 issue<sup>3</sup> where Jairo Castano (FAO) updated us on the state of progress with the world Agricultural Census 2020. Srdjan Mrkic describes the impact on census-taking in terms of adapting data collection instruments and techniques to the new pandemic reality; comparability with the previous census; and the long-term impact on census-taking after the 2020 round. The article also functions as a useful description – after a year- of the many plans that were formulated in the Special issue of the Journal<sup>4</sup> on the Population and Housing Census round 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic causes major changes in society in general, in the economy, the natural environment, and the government. Susanne Schnorr-Baecker in 'Well-being in urban and rural areas, challenges, general policies, and their monitoring: Some evidence for Germany before and during the Covid-19 pandemic'<sup>5</sup> elaborates, based on the indicators for measuring well being on small-area scale, current trends in changing living conditions and those changes expected due to the pandemic, especially the disparity between the urban and rural level in Germany. Though it is unclear what exactly the long-term consequences of the drastic measures of the current global COVID-19 pandemic will be, the contribution offers starting assumptions for later analysis of opportunities and risks for urban or rural areas post COVID-19.

In the fifth contribution to this issues COVID-19 section a team of 15 authors around the 'Nigeria team' of the Georgetown University – Centre for Global Health Practice and Impact (Washington, US and Abuja, Nigeria), in 'Forecasting the spread and total size of confirmed and discharged cases of COVID-19 in Nigeria using an Arima model' shows the results of the application of an Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) model to predict COVID-19 cases based on the numbers of Total Confirmed Cases (TCC) and Total Discharged Cases (TDC) and based on the daily data from February 2020 to June 2020. The autocorrelation function (ACF), and partial autocorrelation function (PACF) were used to predict the trend of TCC and TDC for the next 200 days (June to December 2020). The result shows a significant increase in both TCC and

<sup>2</sup>Based on her presentation in the webinar/side event to the United Nations Statistics Committee meeting on the 12th of February 2021, organized by Paris21: Enhancing financing for development data.

<sup>3</sup>Statistical Journal of the IAOS, Vol 36/4 2020, pp. 861–866.

<sup>4</sup>Statistical Journal of the IAOS, Vol 36/1, 2020, pp. 1–240.

<sup>5</sup>A slightly modified German version has been published in the German journal 'Zeitschrift für amtliche Statistik Berlin Brandenburg' (Journal for official statistics Berlin Brandenburg).

TDC from COVID-19 which should guide the government roll out and management of the different NPI and policies to contain the virus.

### 3. Governance in Official Statistics

The United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (UNFPOS) are the main and overarching international standard for official Statistics. It defines the basic rules that frame the quality requirements by describing the principles for the structures and procedures in official statistics that organizations active in this field have to comply with. In 2019 the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its adoption and to mark this milestone and drive further adoption of the principles, a UNSC Friends of the Chair Group (FoC) was convened to work on selected aspects of implementing the UNFPOS. In their manuscript *‘Assessing compliance with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics: A Maturity Model for Continuous Improvement’*, Rachael Milicich (Statistics New Zealand), Teresa Dickinson (ABS, Australia), Gemma van Halderen (ABS, Australia), Thérèse Lalor (ABS Australia), Heather Niven (Statistics New Zealand) report on the development of a maturity model that both assesses compliance with the UNFPOS and identifies areas for continuous improvement. The Maturity Model was endorsed at the 51st session of the UNSC in March 2020. Compliance with the UNFPOS signals that official statistics are produced in a trusted apolitical way and that governments and citizens have available valuable and reliable information about their economic, social, environmental and demographic situations. In the era of ‘fake news and alternative facts’ compliance with the globally endorsed ethical, professional and scientific standards and guidelines that make up the UNFPOS builds confidence and trust in official statistics.

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### 4. Governing by the numbers: Data4Policy

A series of manuscripts in the Journal on the *‘The future role of Official Statistics in the informational*

*ecosystem’* was introduced in the December 2019 issue (Vol 35/4) with the opening article *‘Governing-by-the-numbers/Statistical governance’* (Radermacher, Vol 35/4, pp. 519–538). This opening article was accompanied by two articles and followed by five articles in the June 2020 issue (Vol 36/2), two articles in the December 2020 issue (Vol 36/4), five articles in the March 2021 issue (Vol 37/1), as well as a number of comments on the corresponding discussion platform. In this issue this series is closed with an article by Ron Kenett (Israel) and Filomena Maggino (Italy) *‘Techniques for analyzing and presenting official statistics indicators’*. In this issue you will also find the closing article by Walter Radermacher on the 2nd discussion on the SJIAOS Discussion platform<sup>6</sup> and at the same time on this series of manuscripts *‘Governing-by-the Numbers – Resumé after one and a half years’*.

Kenett and Maggino describe different perspectives of indicators produced by official statistics agencies, with an emphasis on technical aspects. They discuss statistical methods, impact, scope and action operationalization of official statistic indicators with a focus on multivariate aspects in analyzing and communicating such indicators. The authors use examples from well-being and sustainability reports, from the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and a Eurobarometer example to illustrate the measures. The overall objective is to enhance the added value of official statistics indicators, as they are communicated, and thus strengthen evidence-based policy-making.

### 5. Agricultural statistics

The International Conference on Agricultural Statistics (ICAS) is a three year recurrent well established international conference with a clear focus on the domain of Agriculture and related statistics. The successful ICAS VIII conference in November 2019 in New Delhi, India, was again a milestone in the exchange of expertise on new developments in agricultural statistics. In SJIAOS, Vol 37/1 2021, two manuscripts<sup>7</sup> from this conference were already presented. A further two articles from this conference are published in this issue

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://officialstatistics.com/news-blog/why-should-there-still-be-need-elaborate-official-statistics-future>.

<sup>7</sup> Lazar, A., J. Selenius, C. Wirtz and D. Florescu: Agricultural census 2020 – how to reduce costs and burden? The European Statistical System approach, In: Statistical Journal of the IAOS, Vol 37/1 2021. Castano, J: Integrating agricultural statistical operations for optimal data collection, In: Statistical Journal of the IAOS, Vol 37/1 2021.

(Vol 37, (2021), Nr. 2). Linda Young (NASS, USA), emphasis editor on Agricultural Statistics for the Journal, introduces in her ‘*Guest Editorial: Agricultural data integration: the 2019 International Conference on Agricultural Statistics in New Delhi*’ the ICAS conference and the current direction in Agricultural statistics as well as the two contributions in this issue: respectively by Riccardo D’Alberto and Meri Raggi (Italy, ISTAT), in ‘*From collection to integration: Statistical matching of primary and secondary farm data*,’ and ‘*Integration of statistical and administrative agricultural data from Namibi*,’ by Emily Berg, Jongho Im, Zhenyuan Zhu, Colin Lewis-Beck, and Die Li (all Iowa State University, USA).

## 6. Quality in statistics

The 10th European Conference on Quality in Statistics planned for 9–12 June 2020 to be held in Budapest Hungary, was cancelled due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This conference is considered to be a main recurrent (two yearly) event to facilitate the exchange of experiences and new insights in developments in quality management and procedures and governance for achieving official statistics of a high quality. In earlier issues of this Journal there were many manuscripts published that originated from papers and presentations from this series of conferences. When the decision was taken to cancel the 2020 Conference, with the help and agreement of the organizing committee, the Journal could approach successfully the authors of around 10 papers to prepare their paper as a submission to the Journal. In the March issue the first two manuscripts<sup>8</sup> dating from this initiative were presented. In this issue (June 2020, Vol 37/2) another two articles follow. More manuscripts planned for this conference are expected to follow in the second half of 2021 and March 2022.

Arriana Carciotto and Marina Signore (Istat, Italy) in ‘*Improving relevance: Istat experience on experimental statistics*’ describe how the Italian National Statistics Institute (Istat) publishes since April 2018 in line with Eurostat and other National Statistical Institutes experi-

mental statistics. Experimental statistics inform users on topics not fully exploited by official statistics, and differ from them because they are not yet entirely developed. The primary purpose of experimental statistics is to improve relevance. The authors describe several features of experimental statistics, the procedures and objectives. These are the use of non-traditional data sources, the use of innovative methodologies, the geospatial reference or other types of data visualization, the integration of multiple sources.

Taylor Lewis, Burton Levine, Jim Nonnemaker and Matthew Farrelly (all RTI, Washington, USA) introduce in their article ‘*Standardized Calibration Adjustment Index (SCAI) – A New Measure of Survey Data Quality*’ a new indicator of survey data quality. The SCAI quantifies the difference in the distributions of variables used in the calibration of survey respondents to the target population, accounting for the study design. It does so by a function of the change in respondent-level weights developed to calibrate the survey data to known population totals. A key feature according to the authors is that the SCAI does not require auxiliary information to exist on the sampling frame. The SCAI can be used as a survey data quality metric in both probability and nonprobability sample settings. The authors illustrate the working of the indicators through example applications with an outbound dual-frame random digit dialing telephone survey, an address-based sample survey, and a redirected inbound call sampling survey.

## 7. Articles on diverse topics (other themes)

The legal systems of nearly all countries are generally modeled upon four legal systems: Mesopotamian law, Roman law, Islamic law and Anglo-Norman law. Kazusuke Tsujimura and Masako Tsujimura (Japan) in their article ‘*Roman Law in the Perspective of National Accounting: Usus, Fructus and Abusus*’<sup>9</sup> compare in their paper these four legal systems in detail and argue that especially the Roman law of things has furnished the foundations of much of the modern law of property and obligations in civil law systems. Usus, fructus and abusus have been recognized as pillars of private property since the antiquity. Although the concepts are intrinsic to property rights, they are useful tools to

<sup>8</sup>Szutkowska, J, Improvement the methodology and quality of measurement of the Producer Price Index (PPI) in industry from the perspective of data users. In: Statistical Journal of the IAOS, Vol 37/1 2021. Updating the Paradigm of Official Statistics: New Quality Criteria for Integrating New Data and Methods in Official Statistics. In: Statistical Journal of the IAOS, Vol 37/1 2021.

<sup>9</sup>In the Statistical Journal of the IAOS, Vol 35/4, 2019, pp. 691–702, a related article by the same authors was published: Flows of funds analysis: A combination of Roman law, accounting and economics.

delineate the characteristics of claims and obligations. This links to the foundation of any accounting system, including national accounting, balancing assets and liabilities; assets include both property rights and claims while liabilities are legal obligations. They argue that the application of accounting discipline to the organization of economic data aids in both collection and interpretation of economic and jurisprudential knowledge, for it highlights gaps in the basic statistics and clarifies interrelations among the parts of the structure.

Edgar Vielma Orozco, José Vences Rivera and Gustavo Aguilar Mata (INEGI, Mexico) in *'Labor figures for Mexico's municipalities. Small Area Estimation'* use Small Area Estimation (SAE) techniques with the incorporation of a spatial component to estimate 2018 labor statistics for Mexico's municipalities. Based on combined data from the Mexican National Survey of Occupation and Employment (ENOE), variables from population censuses, administrative records, and population projections, they estimated the Economically Active Population, the Employed Population and the Informal Employed Population. Based on comparing the results with for example results from the 2010 Population and Housing Census and direct results from the ENOE at a federal entity level for those municipalities which had a sufficient sample with acceptable coefficients of variation, the authors conclude that the results obtained by the Small Area Estimation are plausible and register coefficients of variation below 10 percent.

Tucker McElroy, Anindya Roy, James Livsey, Theresa Firestine and Ken Notis (Census Bureau, USA), argue in *"Anticipating Revisions in the Transportation Services Index (TSI)"* that to overcome a two months lag in release date due to source data availability, for this important US indicator, it is desirable to model a preliminary TSI that is advanced two months ahead. The TSI is forecasted using a co-integrated Vector Autoregression in considering also two other explanatory series that do not have publication delay. Based on this model the authors are able to produce forecasts and now-casts of the index. They demonstrate that – during normal economic conditions – out-of-sample performance is within the scope expected by the forecast confidence intervals, but also that at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the large forecast errors at this regime change are beyond the bounds indicated by the model.

In *'Tackling Virtual Production – Special Purpose Entities, Economic Activity and Global Production Arrangements in National Accounts'*, Josef Falkinger, Elisa Huber and Johannes Chalupa (statistics Austria)

contribute to the discussion on how to deal in national accounts with the multinational enterprises shifting certain economic activities to special purpose entities abroad for reasons of tax optimization. The authors argue that a transfer of production to a special purpose entity abroad permitted by tax law is not necessarily a transfer of production in an economic sense. Special purpose vehicles can be involved in production processes from a legal point of view without producing any goods or services in reality – a phenomenon the authors call 'virtual production'. Thus, simply mirroring the legal transactions in national accounts may result in a distorted representation of economic reality. They argue that, the System of National Accounts in its current version as well as other existing guidelines lack a clear guidance to distinguish virtual from real economic activity in the context of special purpose vehicles. The authors aim with this paper to offer a proposal for improvement of existing definitions and concepts.

The article *'The construction of Minor Statistical Output Areas in Iceland'* by Omar Hardarson and Eimar Hreinsson (Statistics Iceland) describes the construction of Minor Statistical Output Areas (MSOAs) in Iceland in preparation for the 2021 Census of the population and housing. It explains how these areas were generated by a partitioning algorithm in the densely populated areas, using pre-existing planning zones as the building blocks or source zones. Approximately a fifth of the MSOAs were constructed manually in the sparsely populated areas by grouping together smaller municipalities and splitting larger localities from the surrounding rural areas.

Within the context of reducing prohibitive processing time needed for record linking, enabling survey data to be integrated with other data sources, Scott Campbell, Dean Resnick, Christine Cox and Lisa Mirel (NORC, USA and CDC, USA) describe in *'Using Supervised Machine Learning to Identify Efficient Blocking Schemes for Record Linkage'* the application of a supervised machine learning algorithm, known as the Sequential Coverage Algorithm (SCA). The novelty they describe concerns blocking, which is a commonly used strategy that reduces the number of pairs to be evaluated (and the time needed to do so) to identify the vast majority of matches. The US National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) conducted a case study with the aim to examine how during record linkage, the SCA improved the efficiency of blocking. In the case study two data sources are joined, the NCHS 2016 National Hospital Care Survey and the US Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services Enrollment Database.

Muhammad Kharis and Siti Mariyah (BPS Indonesia) propose in their study ‘*Convolutional Neural Network with U-Net Architecture to Detect Buildings in Satellite Imagery for Statistical Purposes*’ an innovative approach to underpin the population census in certain – by definition – uninhibited areas – so called non-SLS – such as inland and forest, where these areas however are inhibited by tribal people. These areas are difficult for enumerators to collect data in. In the proposed approach it is assumed that the presence of a building in an area indicates the possible presence of people living there. The research developed nine Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) models with U-Net architecture capable of performing semantic segmentation to detect buildings on Sentinel 2 and Landsat 8 satellite imagery using some bands. The result showed that the U-Net architecture is the best model with input dimensions of  $N \times 64 \times 64 \times 10$ , where N is the amount of data capable of detecting buildings in Sentinel 2 satellite images.

The so called 5 safes framework is developed to manage the disclosure risk for releasing such data. With increasing demand from the research community for more frequent and unrestricted access to data, National Statistical Offices (NSOs) are more and more adopting this approach. Siu-Ming Tam (ABS, Australia) shows in his contribution ‘*Disclosure Probability Statements for the 5 Safes Framework*’ that the probability of disclosure, given the controls in the 5 safes, is not greater than the product of the smallest conditional disclosure probability amongst the 5 controls and the Risk Ratios of the remaining four safe controls. By computing the disclosure probabilities of all possible configurations of the controls in each of the 5 dimensions of the framework, one can select the set which has the least control on data, but which also meet the confidentiality and privacy requirements of the NSO. Where the required assumption of unconditional independence of the safes cannot be met, the paper proposes a merger of some of the controls to overcome the violation.

## 8. SJIAOS discussion platform

In August 2019 the Statistical Journal of the IAOS launched the on-line platform for discussion on topics of significant relevance for official statistics ([www.officialstatistics.com](http://www.officialstatistics.com)) as part of the SJIAOS website. The discussion platform invites to contribute to important discussions at a time of own choosing. With each release of an issue of the Statistical Journal, a new discussion topic is launched via a leading article or based

on a section in the Journal. Each discussion runs for a year and is closed with a concluding commentary by the article author(s).

### 8.1. Closing of the 2nd SJIAOS discussion: *Governing-by-the Numbers – Resumé after one and a half years*<sup>10</sup>

The 2nd discussion “*Governing-by-the-numbers/Statistical governance*” was launched in December 2019 with the release of Vol 35/4 (2019) of the Journal. This discussion initiated by Walter Radermacher, invited for a reflection and discussion on the future of official statistics in a digital and globalized society. At that date it could not yet be foreseen how much the world would change in 2020. 18 months later, the COVID pandemic has according to Walter Radermacher taught us painfully how urgent the availability of reliable statistical information is. He describes the COVID Pandemic as a magnifying glass through which to view the interplay between science, statistics and society, which has already led to sometimes steady, sometimes abrupt developments in all areas of statistics over the past two centuries. In his closing contribution he looks back at the published articles and contributions to the discussion as well as describes the main challenges for official statistics within the COVID impacted digital and globalized society.

### 8.2. Closing of the 3rd SJIAOS discussion: *Population and Housing Censuses: An overdue and old-fashioned instrument or still a modern, severely needed and steadfast tool?*<sup>11</sup>

The third discussion was launched in March 2020 with the publication of the Special issue on the Population and Housing Census round 2020 (Vol 36/1, 2020), guest edited by Jean-Michel Durr. In this issue this discussion is officially closed with the article by Jean-Michel Durr (France) ‘*Population and Housing Censuses: an overdue and old-fashioned instrument or still a modern, severely needed and steadfast tool?*’ The discussion was kicked off via questions around 4 themes: about the definition of a census, its methodology, the relevance of census taking and the census technology.

<sup>10</sup><https://officialstatistics.com/news-blog/why-should-there-still-be-need-elaborate-official-statistics-future>.

<sup>11</sup><https://officialstatistics.com/news-blog/population-censuses-are-statistical-dinosaurs-able-adapt>.

This article presents the summary of the contributions posted on the platform.

*I wish you pleasant readings of these interesting articles.*

### **9. Some words about the next issues (Volume 37(2021), Nr. 3, Nr. 4)**

The next two issues of the journal are already in full preparation. The September 2021 issue (Vol 37 (2021), Nr. 3) will be a Special issue on ‘*New developments in training and Data Science*’. The Guest Editorial team (Pedro Campos, Reija Helenius, Helen MacGillivray, Steve MacFeely, Hugues Kouadio and Pieter Everaers) are preparing this September issue. This issue will contain manuscripts on the role and the current need for training in statistics, with several manuscripts dealing with the challenges due to the COVID-19 related changing circumstances but also challenges that already longer exist on financing and organizing training. A third section is dedicated to examples of models in training currently applied. Finally some manuscripts will deal with training in specific domains of official statistics, like national accounts or data science.

It might be that in this issue some slots remain available for articles on other topics, as these are currently in the pipeline, among others manuscripts on quality, agriculture, banking statistics and on governance in official statistics. The September 2021 issue will also have the closing manuscript of the fourth SJAOS discussion: Pre-release Access in a world that changes.

The December issue (Vol 37 (2021), Nr. 4), will contain mainly manuscripts based on papers from the ISI World Statistics Conference in July 2021 in The Hague. IAOS members are very well represented in the organization of the Invited Paper Sessions and consequently it is expected that a large number of authors would like to submit their manuscript for consideration to be published in the Journal. Some 20 session organizers already have confirmed their interest. Further there are still several manuscripts submitted stemming from the side meetings to the 2021 UN Statistical Committee meeting as well as the April 2021 Paris 21 Annual Meeting. Also the 2021 Bern UN World Data Forum might result in some contributions. From the pipeline it appears that manuscripts are in preparation on statistics on difficult but very important population groups like Stateless people, Displaced persons and refugees as well as homeless people. Finally, the December 2021 will also have the closing manuscript of

the fifth SJAOS discussion: The future of economic statistics.

Beyond these issues with a diversity of manuscripts, there is for the coming four issues one more Special Issue planned: a guest editorial team has started preparing a Special Issue on ‘*New developments in Statistical Capacity Building*’. The team is in search for additional authors and manuscripts, so, do not hesitate to inform me when you have a manuscript or idea for a manuscript for this special. (pevssjiaos@gmail.com).

Of course there are always slots for other manuscripts; authors are kindly invited to submit their manuscript to: <https://www.iospress.nl/journal/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/?tab=submission-of-manuscripts>.

### **10. The COVID-19 pandemic and new ways of soliciting manuscripts**

The COVID-19 pandemic has in 2020 and 2021 substantially changed the international conference agenda. Conferences are canceled or postponed (or organized virtually). As for many other research fields the cancellation or change of format of the international conferences has an important impact. Many Journals (also SJAOS) are partly based on the active soliciting by the editors of articles on important and relevant new developments via the participation in conferences, networking and observing presentations listening to peers etc.

Virtual conferences have proven to be a good alternative. In general it is easier to participate in a virtual conference (from home, no traveling costs, etc). However the oversight and flexibility for the editor in chief will be substantially restricted compared to walking around and switching sessions in physical conference, and this risk that Journals will – to a lesser extent than before – be able to catch at an early stage important developments. New ways to solicit manuscripts are experienced. The editorial board of SJAOS is inviting all readers, the editors and reviewers and other interested not to hesitate to send important papers and manuscripts for review.

<https://www.iospress.nl/journal/statistical-journal-of-the-iaos/?tab=submission-of-manuscripts>.

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