Editorial

Governing by the numbers

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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 Reflections on the future of official statistics in a digital and globalised society' (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) as well as a number of comments on the corresponding discussion platform. In this issue (Vol 36/4) this series on 'Data4Policy' will be continued with two more articles.

1. Statistics and society

Three main driving forces are responsible for the development of (official) statistics: new data, new scientific methods and new social issues, in other words science, statistics and society. Over longer periods of time, this development takes place slowly and steadily. But we do not live in such times. We are currently experiencing a rapid change in the conditions under which official statistics produce their results with the availability of new data sources and new methods of data science. For this reason, it is very understandable that in recent years the focus of interest has been on questions concerning the technical and methodological integration of such new data sources and methods into statistical processes. What received less attention were aspects of interaction with society and its current burning issues. However, at the latest with the explosion of the COVID-19 Pandemic, but also with the pressing questions regarding the implementation of the global 2030

strategy (sustainable development) as well as the anti-factual political movements in many societies, it has become clear that this third driving force is of enormous importance for development in statistics. In this issue two articles are devoted to this topic, the interaction between evidence and decisions and the co-production of statistics and society:

Markus J. Prutsch "Science, Numbers and Politics in a "Post-Truth" World" While science and politics operate according to different logics, they have become considerably intertwined over time. Two opposing, but interrelated, developments can be observed in this regard: on the one hand, a scientization of politics, since science is increasingly relied upon when political and social challenges are being addressed, manifest in the increasing involvement of experts and scientific (policy) advisors; on the other hand, a politicization of science, because of the increasing influence of political decisionmakers on the objects, methods and processes of scientific research and funding. Both developments are accompanied by clear risks, and open debate is needed about what scientific evidence – which is often expressed and mediated by means of numbers – can realistically do in and for politics. This is especially true at a time characterized by widespread distrust of experts and even facts, and a re-ideologization of politics that is perhaps best captured by the popular expression of "post-truth politics".

Gaby Umbach "Of Numbers, Narratives and Challenges: Data as Evidence in 21st Century Policy-Making" This article offers reflections on the use of data as evidence in 21st century policy-making. It discusses the concept of evidence-informed policy-making (EIPM) as well as the governance and knowledge effects of data as evidence. It also analyses the normative

effects of defining and identifying data as evidence. With this focus, the article interlinks the analysis of statistics and politics. It deals with essential features of EIPM that impact on the production and use of data as evidence and draws conclusions on its challenges for statistics and data providers. After introducing the concept of evidence-informed policy-making and the impact of evidence use on policy-making the paper focusses on science and knowledge as resources in policy-making, on the institutionalisation of science advice and on the translation of information and expert knowledge into evidence. Further, the article reflects on data as evidence in policy-making, on both abstract and concrete functions of data as governance tools in policy-making, on data as a robust form of evidence and on the effects of data on knowledge and governance. Finally, it draws conclusions on the production and use of data as evidence in EIPM.

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