

SJIAOS Discussion Platform

Launch of the 20th discussion: ‘Good Data are Used Data’

With the release of this issue of the Journal (June 2024), the 20th SJIAOS discussion will be opened. This discussion; ‘*Good Data are Used Data*’ invites the readers to react with their opinion on a statement from Stefan Schweinfest in the interview published in this issue. In the interview with Pieter Everaers, Stefan Schweinfest, when speaking about the current greater complexity in the world of official statistics, states that he changed his opinion on the role of official statisticians, from an approach focussing on the quality of producing and dissemination to an approach giving much more importance to the use of the data. He says that ‘... data have to be validated from two dimensions: First, they are ‘good’ items from a production side, methodologically solid, and trusted. But secondly, they are also only ‘good’ if they are used’¹

The statement ‘*Good Data are Used Data*’ raises several questions. First of course on what is considered ‘Data’, but also how to define ‘Used’ or ‘Good’. In the interview, Stefan Schweinfest uses a rather broad concept of users ‘*And when I say users, it is also not only official users. This is also something that has changed: the data that we are producing are not only for the government but they are also used by civil society and in the private sector.*’²

To make this statement more concrete it is useful to reflect on the concepts behind ‘Data’, ‘Good’, and ‘Used’, as well as on the operationalization of these concepts. For this discussion, it is proposed to consider ‘Data’ as covering all information, facts, numbers, etc. that are published/disseminated by official statistics organizations (Regional, national, and international statistical organizations).

According to the statement, to identify the ‘Good’ data it is required to qualify the ‘Used’.

¹Interview with Stefan Schweinfest by Pieter Everaers: ‘Good data are used data’. In Statistical Journal of the IAOS, Vol 40, Nr. 2., pp. . . .

²Interview with Stefan Schweinfest by Pieter Everaers: ‘Good data are used data’. In Statistical Journal of the IAOS, Vol 40, Nr. 2, pp.

This leads to the main question for the discussion: how to measure data use?

To come to an operationalization of the ‘used’ concept, one needs to define a measurement rule: such a rule will contain elements like which societal groups are potential/real users; whether there are specific groups (policymakers) that we consider main or more important users. We also need an indicator that can adequately represent ‘data use’ (beyond the number of downloads), and specific thresholds criteria for deciding when we should consider data used or not-used? Or maybe an impact measurement of the used data?

The questions the readers will be invited to comment on will be more concretely formulated in on the discussion platform. The 20th discussion will be opened around mid-June 2024 on the SJIAOS discussion platform (www.officialstatistics.com).

Several other discussions are still online on the SJIAOS Discussion platform (www.officialstatistics.com)

The 19th discussion (March 2024)

Launch of the 19th discussion: What qualities are needed by statisticians to achieve top leadership positions?

The 19th SJIAOS discussion was opened beginning of April 2024. This discussion; ‘What qualities are needed by statisticians to achieve top leadership positions?’ invites the readers to react with their opinion on the content of the manuscript “Reflections on Statistical Leadership: Summary of a panel discussion at the WSC” with contributions from Stephen Penneck, John Bailer, Ed Humpherson), Mariana Kotzeva and Denise Silva. The manuscript reports from a panel discussion held at the ISI World Statistics Conference in Ottawa in July 2023. During this session and summarized in the manuscript, five panelists shared their opinions and experiences by responding to five key questions on statistics leadership. A main theme in this discussion in the journal is the need for official statisticians to complement within the frame of ‘statistical leadership’ the basic elements of statistics as a profession (skills, knowl-

edge and a set of values) with elements of leadership (vision and communicating this, getting the right work done and work done better).

The 18th discussion (December 2023) was announced with the release of the December 2023 issue. This discussion; **‘Are Data Scientists Going to Replace Statisticians?’** invites readers to react with their opinion on the future ‘job’ profile of those working in/contributing to the production and dissemination of official statistics. The discussion at the recent 9th EMOS. workshop (Prague, 26–27 October 2023), and the reflections in the editorial of this issue, together with the manuscript on ‘Data Science, skills, Data Scientist, Data Scientist job, Data Scientist Salary’, constitute the background for this 18th discussion.

The 16th (June 2023) and 17th (September 2023) discussions are joined. The 16/17th discussion on **‘The impact of AI and the availability of data in the so-called Data ecosystem on the development of official statistics’** invites readers to react with their opinion on how far and in what direction the governance of official statistics will change thanks to these developments. The readers are specifically invited to sketch in a maximum of 500 words how in their opinion the (national) statistical offices in 2030 are functioning. The contributors are free to choose an emphasis for the production and dissemination but are equally invited to reflect on the governance structures in official statistics in 2030.

The 15th discussion **‘Success, failures, challenges and opportunities for official statistics in the development and implementation of the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’** was opened at the beginning of May 2023.

The discussion builds on the reflection in the editorial in this March issue. The 15th discussion invites readers to react to the statement that official statistics, following the endorsement of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data at the UNSC in 2017, on the one hand, have greatly benefited in strong support for developing new methodologies and indicators, a renewed governance of the statistical system, etc.. Still, on the other hand, official statistics are confronted with unrealistic expectations concerning several other indicators, the impossibility of finding/collecting required data, and their implementation in general and regional coverage.

The leading question to the discussion is ‘Did the challenge of developing the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals give a boost to Official Statistics or was it a burden?’ Detailed questions will fo-

cus on the successes, failures and more specifically the challenges, obstacles and opportunities.

The readers are invited to either react with supporting or disagreeing arguments to this reflection, examples of successes, failures and suggestions on how to tackle challenges.

Some background on the SJIAOS discussion platform

In August 2019 the Statistical Journal of the International Association for Official Statistics (SJIAOS) launched an online platform for discussion on topics of significant relevance for official statistics (www.officialstatistics.com) as part of the SJIAOS website. The discussion platform invites you to contribute to important discussions at a time of your 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. The online discussion platform of the SJIAOS is an opportunity for anyone working or interested in official statistics, to contribute to topical discussions, at your convenience.

Every three months there is a new discussion item. With each issue of the SJIAOS, a new discussion topic will be launched via a leading article. Statements from this article will then invite you to post your opinions and arguments. Each discussion will run for a year and be closed with a concluding commentary by the article author(s).

The discussion platform can be found on the SJIAOS website (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 are not appreciated.

The SJIAOS discussion platform editor (Pieter Everaers) moderates the discussions and the quality of the contributions (but of course not on the positions taken), takes decisions on the integrity of the arguments, and is available for support when needed.

Closed discussions

Find below an overview of the ‘closed’ SJIAOS discussions since September 2019. Their statements, back-

ground for the statement, and comments can be found at: <https://officialstatistics.com/discussion-platform>.

- September 2019: *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?*
- December 2019: *Why should there still be a need for elaborate official statistics in the future?*
- March 2020: *Population censuses; Are statistical dinosaurs able to adapt?*
- April 2020: *Crises, politics and statistics: Official statistics in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.*
- June 2020: *Pre-release access to official statistics is not consistent with professional ethics.*
- September 2020: *The future of economic and business statistics.*
- September 2020: *Official statistics methods need investments to be robust enough to maintain sufficient product quality in times of economic downturns.*
- December 2020: *Successes and challenges of regional cooperation and capacity development in Statistics.*
- March 2021: *Misuse of statistics: Time to speak out*
- June 2021: *The UN Fundamental Principles for Official Statistics: a suitable and current self-regulatory instrument or an outdated ‘paper tiger’?*
- September 2021: *The demand and format of Training in Official Statistics*
- December 2021: *The measurement of difficult-to-measure population groups*
- March 2022: *Large international projects on the development of official statistics, the 50x2030 Initiative as an example.*
- June 2022: *The positive and negative aspects of ‘standardization’ in official statistics.*
- September 2022: *The role and position of the International Statistical Organisations.*
- September 2022: *A Fast-Evolving Landscape For Official Statistics (Krakow Working Group)*
- December 2022: *How can Official Statistics find a way out of the fog?*