Why is there a disparity in the levels of technical and institutional capacity reached by national statistical offices (NSO) in Latin America and the Caribbean?

Who wants to know?
The Political Economy of Statistical Capacity in Latin America

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Content

- Conceptual and methodological framework
- Findings
- Recommendations
The book analyzes the political economy of statistical capacity applying the capacity of the State conceptual framework to the study of National Statistical Offices (NSO)
The study of capacity in State institutions focuses on two relevant dimensions:

- Resources
- Autonomy

To study NSOs it is necessary to add another dimension:

- Coordination
Conceptual map of the impact of the NSO on Overall State capacity

NSO capacity
Political economy context

NSO autonomy

NSO work product

Overall State capacity

Source: Taylor, 2016. BID
In general the level of development of a national statistical office is correlated to the level of development of the country.

The NSO is understood in the context of the State it is part of.

But its technical specialization can turn it into an island of efficiency with a higher development level than the rest of the State.
Three levels of analysis

- Common historical processes
- Political economy factors
- Institutionality and agency
Common Historical Processes

Emergence of developmentalist States in the 60s and 70s

Demand for better quality social policies

Decentralization processes that require data with higher geographical disaggregation
Common Historical Processes

The democratization processes and their greater demand for transparency in the 80s and 90s

Economic crisis in the 80s which negatively hit the region and weakened its bureaucracies (-)

Fiscal reforms in the 90s that reduced the number of, and the resources available to statistical offices (-)
Political Economy Factors

The existence of technical areas in the State that require statistics to carry out their functions

International demand and the availability of resources from international cooperation
Political Economy Factors

1. Fulfil the requirements to be part of an international organization
2. Sustainable Development Goals
Political Economy Factors

- The effects of economic and political crisis
- Users outside of government are very relevant
- The role of the president of the country
Institutionality and Agency

The NSO builds **coalitions** outside of the State to increase its relevance to others

Make use of **international networks** to reinforce the NSO with knowledge and resources
Managers and bureaucrats use their statistical knowledge to become essential.

Managers and bureaucrats exploit opportunities to promote a better institutional framework.
Improve the use of administrative records. The original “Big Data”.

Promote the modernization of legal frameworks. **Obsolescence-free.**

Encourage alignment to international standards. **They are an endorsement.**

Promote dialogue among data producers and users. **The supply has to be aligned to the demand.**
Recommendations

Promote transparency

Increase data dissemination

Strengthen a **culture of statistics (data literacy)** that encourages the creation of a critical mass of data users outside of the government.
Consolidate the coordinating role of the National Statistical Office in the national statistical system
Key message

- Demand for information is fundamental
- Users are essential
- Demand has to be stimulated
LONG LIVE STATISTICS!
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