Ethics, Governance
A Reflexive Approach to Statistics

53. Session UNSC
Side event 08.02.2022
Walter J. Radermacher, ISI Advisory Board on Ethics
Truth and Politics, Hannah Arendt

“Seen from the viewpoint of politics, truth has a despotic character. It is therefore hated by tyrants, who rightly fear the competition of a coercive force they cannot monopolize, ... . Facts are beyond agreement and consent, ... . unwelcome facts possess an infuriating stubbornness that nothing can move except plain lies.”

• The declining authority of statistics is at the heart of the crisis that has become known as “post-truth” politics

• The statistical logic of the past two centuries is being replaced by a data logic

• With the authority of statistics waning, and nothing stepping into the public sphere to replace it, people can live in whatever imagined community they feel most aligned to and willing to believe in
Individualised Data Science vis-à-vis Standardised Official Statistics
(Official) Statistical Information

Facts are Products
- Constructed
- Objective

Product Quality
- Codified
- Verified

Social
- Mandate
- License

Ethics, Governance
Beyond ‘**STEM**’: conceptual basics

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>What is official statistics?</th>
<th>What is official statistics’ role in the public discourse?</th>
<th>What is data/statistical literacy?</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>A public infrastructure, a factory, a product, a language, all based on scientific methods</td>
<td>Providing verified facts</td>
<td>All dimensions of competence: knowledge, aptitudes, skills, motivation and attitude</td>
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<td>Concept: Total Quality Management à la W.E. Deming</td>
<td>Being policy relevant without being politically driven</td>
<td>All map all stages of the knowledge ...creation process from data</td>
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<td>Concept: Économie des Conventions à la A. Desrosières Th. Porter</td>
<td>Concept: Data Literacy Framework à la K. Schüller</td>
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<td>Science &amp; Technology Studies à la Sheila Jasanoff</td>
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Walter J. Radermacher
Ethics, Good Governance Principles, e.g.

Committee on a Code of Ethics for Statisticians, 1979-1985:
R. Jowell, W.E. Deming, A. Donda, H.V. Muhsam and E. Rapaport
http://www.isi-web.org/about/policies/professional-ethics/isi-declaration/1985

Declaration on Professional Ethics

Economic and Social Council

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 24 July 2013
[on the recommendation of the Statistical Commission (E/2013/56)]

European Statistics Code of Practice

Recommendation of the OECD Council on Good Statistical Practice
As approved by the Council on 23 November 2015
Global Guidance and Assessment, e.g.

World Development Report 2021
Data for Better Lives


Dashboard Architecture

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<th>Pillars</th>
<th>Dashboard Architecture</th>
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<td>Data Use (User Types)</td>
<td>Legislature</td>
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<td>Data Services (Service Types)</td>
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<td>Data Products (Topics)</td>
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<td>Data Sources</td>
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<td>Data Infrastructure</td>
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Review of the existing principles

Strengths

• Based (partly) on legal codification, implementation can be tracked and enforced
• Quality can be certified
• Official statistics independence significantly strengthened
Review of the existing principles

Weaknesses

• Depending on Public Integrity Maturity: rule of law accepted and applied, scientific arguments and facts undisputed, accountability of the public sector, etc.

• Awareness of the principles unsatisfactory

• Defensive strategy, building fortresses of official statistics, not flexible/innovative; missing links and guidance for other statistical producers

• Insufficient relevance for and coverage of data sciences

• (International) concerns and warnings by professional statistical societies depend on anecdotal evidence

• Sovereignty of states setting limits to the influence of international institutions
Reflections

The Scientific Approach: STEM + SHAPE

- Reflexive components in statistics education, research, conferences etc.

Data Ethics and Governance Principles

- Individual conduct of statistics & data sciences
- Social responsibility of the profession
- Good Governance, Public Integrity

Integration of Data Science, AI etc.

- (in particular) Criteria for output quality (predictions)

Data and Statistical Literacy

- Promotion of data ethics and governance
- **Standardisation** of Data Literacy
- **Data Literacy Charta**

Improving Evidence

- on data culture, adherence to principles
- Global monitoring
- Strengthening the involvement of civil societies
Thanks

Official Statistics 4.0
Verified Facts for People in the 21st Century

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