

Foreword

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This issue of the Institute's Bulletin is a collection of papers on the 2000-1 Census, Micro data, and Register-based statistical production. These papers were presented at Kyushu University's Department of Economics' international seminar and at the international workshop under the sponsorship of the Japan Statistics Research Institute at Hosei University in October 1999.

Today, government statistical organizations in every country have been confronted with demand from statistics users and the public to produce and disseminate timely, detailed and precise data of societal and economic changes, thrust upon us by globalization and the spread of information technology.

At the same time there is a demand in the promotion of efficiency in government statistical services, to reduce of the burden respondents. These demands on government statistical organizations arise from the resource allocation reduction pressures and a fall in degree of cooperation from people.

In such situations, statistical organizations in every country are exploring new directions and taking steps forward towards practices based on the exchange of various experiences and information at international levels. These directions revolve around the introduction of information technology in all phases of statistical services. This includes production, storage and dissemination of statistical data; the reinforcement of user (customer) services, including the reinforcement of user-friendliness and dialogue with users; preparing substantial small area (geographical) information systems; offering micro statistical sets; register-based statistical production etc..

The 2000-1 world population and housing census round is just around the corner. Population and housing censuses have been the center of statistical services in every country for about 200 years world-wide. So, statistical communities in every country are striving to overcome the specific and common difficulties inherent in conducting

censuses with utmost effort. This situation reflects general features and the development of statistical services in every country.

Recently, we held international workshops on the 2000-1 Census. We expected to gain some understanding of the response to various demands and to overcome various difficulties in government statistical services. We also expected to gain an understanding of the current state of census taking in every country at the turning point of the century. Important guests from United States, the United Kingdom and Germany were invited. We intended also to discuss the related issues of micro statistical data use and register-based statistical production.

As for the 2000-1 Census, the United States, who has had enormous legal and illegal immigrants, has been faced with under-count problems. The United Kingdom also has similar problems to some degree. Both countries use different questionnaires than Japan and are trying hard to reinforce customer services. In Germany, leanders (states) have strong autonomous authority and have not undertaken a census since 1987. Census taking in these countries is different in terms of the organization structure, census regulating laws, organization responsible for carrying it out, questionnaire content, questionnaire distribution and collection methods, handling completed questionnaires, information technology use, different language use, the degree of under-count, and methods to revise them etc..

The micro data I referred to above, as a measure to innovate statistical services, is a set of anonymously constructed questionnaires that are produced by removing the identifiers from collected questionnaires as to protect the confidentiality of individual information.

With these micro data sets, users can freely produce statistical tables according to their own purpose, avoiding the frustrating use of rigid ready-made tables provided by producers. Here, the demand for detailed data will be fulfilled. If we can use micro data from the Census linking it with other survey's micro data, in particular panel data that follows the same individuals for a few years or life long periods, we can get the most detailed informative data to date. Of course, there are various regulations for the use or publication of this micro data as to preserve confidentiality. It has been a long time since the United States provided Public Use Micro data in 1963. In Britain, various fruitful results have been produced from research use of micro data led by CCSR.

On the other hand, so called register-based statistical production means the type of statistical production through the use of registered documents provided by the people or establishments to various government organizations. This type does not need to undertake the statistical censuses or surveys that distribute and collect the questionnaires to and from respondents. To produce statistics from registers linking various materials held by different governmental organizations, we need to have registers of related information and with identifiers such as personal numbers. We also need to take care of privacy protection in this type of statistics production.

This type of statistics production has already been adopted in Nordic countries where statistical organizations do not worry about the response or failure of cooperation from respondents. It seems that the international statistical community has recently been very interested in this type of statistics production. Germany, having some favorable conditions, such as holding registers, is inclined to move into this type of census taking in near future. The observation that this type will prevail in the future production of statistics seems strong to me.

The guests we received from foreign countries at our seminars and work shops were Mr. C. Easley Hoy from the United States Bureau of the Census, who has served as a chair of the Disclosure Review Board, Mr. Rajendra P. Sign from the United States Bureau of the Census, who is preparing the 2000 Census, Ms. Angela Dale from the University of Manchester, United Kingdom, who is a director of CCSR that provides British censuses micro data for research use, and Mr. Dieter Bierau from the Federal Bureau of German Federal Statistical Offices, who is in a position responsible for Population Census. It goes without saying that all of these guests are well acquainted with the situation of the 2000-1 census taking in their countries and are presenters in great demand.

The presenters from Japan were Mr. Keiro Hamasuna from Kyushu University, Mr. Akira Ishida from Keiai University and Mr. Hiromi Mori from Hosei University.

Topics included '2000-1 census and Micro data use' from the International seminar at Kyushu University and 'The present situations and Issues of 2000-1 World Population Census', from the international workshop at Hosei University.

All papers read at both meetings were, as you can find in this bulletin, excellent, very instructive, and well prepared, properly summarizing the current situation, problems, and

challenges concerning the census and related issues. Discussions at both meetings were also lively and interesting. Discussions in Tokyo were especially instructive thanks to eager participants from the Japanese statistical community.

I suppose this was also a fine opportunity for guests from foreign countries, as they could exchange information and discuss face to face during about a week of travel. During breaks and parties, participants could discuss with guests as goodwill flourished. As a whole, I regard these international seminars and work shops as very successful and fruitful. I expect the results of these meetings and this bulletin to contribute to the international exchange of information and serve as an incentive for the reformation of statistical services in Japan.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of the guests, Mr.C. Easley Hoy, Mr. Rajendra P. Sign, Prof. Angela Dale, and Mr. Dieter Bierau who came to Japan from far abroad, made excellent presentations and eagerly joined in discussions, Prof. Keiro Hamasuna who invited guests to Kyushu university and escorted them from Fukuoka to Tokyo for about a week, Prof. Hiromi Mori who served as organizer of both meetings with Prof. Hamasuna, and Prof. Akira Ishida, who made presentations and served as a chair, eager participants who came to seminar from afar, from Kansai districts and Metropolitan areas, and supported the meeting, and Mr. Yasuhiro Arai, Mr. Kenetsu Takahashi, Ms. Itsuko Sato, and Ms. Kazuko Watanabe who made the technical arrangements for the Hosei workshop.