



Building and maintaining partnerships between academia and official statistics – Best practice of a lightweight strategic partnership

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Abstract

Research collaborations with academic partners typically start from a mutual interest of the researchers involved. There has to be a shared curiosity to solve a certain question and a shared belief that it's worth to join forces. And, only then, other more practical issues start to play a role, like financial or human resources. It's typically a bottom-up process. This type of collaboration often depends quite heavily on the individuals involved, which can put the continuity at risk. Besides that, it can easily evolve into a colourful collection of all kinds of interesting projects without any strategic direction. This does not have to be a problem as such, but it can be a missed opportunity.

At the same time, organisations have a clear interest to use their resources as efficiently as possible by creating more sustainable collaborations that lead to certain strategic goals. If research funding is abundant, organisations can easily pursue their ambitions by formulating and implementing their own research agenda, which is typically a top-down process. But in many real-life situations, we are confronted with a gap between ideas & ambitions on the one hand, and funds & time on the other hand. In such situations strategic partnerships can play a valuable and also practical role.

In this talk, we will present the collaboration between Statistics Netherlands (SN) and the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) of the University of Amsterdam as a best practice of a lightweight strategic partnership. It started off as any other academic collaboration with many different projects run by enthusiastic researchers and ambitious experts. Over the last year we have managed to bring the collaboration to a whole new level with the establishment of a five-year thematic partnership in a field of mutual interest: Complexity for Official Statistics, and the establishment of a Professorship by Special Appointment in the same field. We will present what the partnership includes, how it works, and some of the first concrete achievements.

Keywords:

Partnerships; Research collaborations; Academia; Official Statistics; Complexity Science