

The Current Times

The year 2016 brought together energies and events that allowed us to shape the fourth number of the Statistics and Society journal, a product of the Association of the Americas for the History of Statistics and Probability Calculus (AAHECP, abbreviated in Spanish). The long silence spanning from 2014 until now has been marked by several vicissitudes and events. Among these, the most important one was the change of the journal's head office. The third number was coordinated by Natalia Gil as well as the team from the University of Sao Paolo, which is where the journal was created and its first numbers released. As is made clear by the first three numbers, our colleague and associate Natalia Gil faced the difficult task of building and sustaining the journal with both dignity and efficiency. In fact, the journal strengthened the ties between its collaborators, as in the case of Nelson Castro Serna, Alexandre de Paivia Rio Camargo, from Brazil, and the Argentinian researchers Cecilia Lanata and Claudia Daniel.

Three years after the creation of the journal, the projects and requirements of academic life led Natalia to leave this endeavor in other hands. Thus, the decision was made among the associate members of the journal to move its head office to Mexico, where Leticia Mayer (from the Institute of Applied Mathematics and Systems Research), Ana Medeles (From the National Autonomous University of Mexico's Graduate School of Philosophy of Science) and I (from the Center for Research and Advanced Studies of the National Polytechnic Institute) work, all of us being members of the AAHECP.

In Mexico there is a robust group of scholars from different institutions who are interested in the history and philosophy of science, but a group specifically devoted to study the history and philosophy of statistics and probability is yet to be consolidated. However, we enthusiastically began to learn all the matters concerning the journal that was first established within the University of Sao Paolo. Building the necessary connections with those interested in the journal's subject and finding financial support has taken time. We became aware of the problem that our colleagues in Brazil had already warned us about: the lack of economic resources to sustain the Statistics and Society journal. A part of our time went into looking for funding, another part was used to redesign, as much as the Open Access system allowed it, the journal's format and presentation in order to renew its profile. Indeed, some time went by but here we are again, trying to recover the journal's continuity. Now, time is on our side.

For this number we released a call for papers in which contributors were suggested to elaborate on two aspects of the history of statistics: the history of censuses and registers in

the Americas, and the history of statistics bureaus, offices, and directorates in Latin America. As can be seen in the published articles, our expectations were not only met but exceeded. This number gathers papers on the history of statistics bureaus in three Latin American countries: Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil. It offers, from different moments in history, answers to questions such as: How did the practice of censuses become a part of the life of Latin American nation states? Through which processes did the census offices turn their surveys into legitimate practices for the production of credible public data?

The opening article is Nelson de Castro Senra's *A primeira Instituição estatística brasileira*, which offers a detailed and informed account of the first census office in Brazil. Here, the author explains that this institution did not result from the state's global vision but from a decision made by a provincial notable, Antônio Manuel Corrêa da Câmara, who was troubled by border issues. The second article responding to our call was Hernán González Bollo's. His research, focused on the General Directorate of Statistics and Census (DGEyC, abbreviated in Spanish) of Buenos Aires, reveals that the history of these bureaus is far from being a manifest destiny: just as they can gain legitimacy and public presence, they can also lose them, even when there are civil servants in charge of preserving them. The plot of this office's decadence and almost disappearance allows the author to show how statistics not only entail techniques for the gathering of data and the training of specialized bureaucrats, but also acts of governance and power.

In the article entitled *Produção de Estatísticas Educacionais em Perspectiva Comparada* ('A Comparative Perspective of the Production of Educational Statistics') Jaime Capistrano, Ana Carolina Silva Ciotto, Carla D'Lourdes do Nascimento, and Juliana Marques da Silva build their arguments on the idea that there are several ways of producing statistics and data, and that these influence policies. The case they chose is education, and in their analysis they compared the statistics offices of four countries (Mexico, Brazil, France, and the United States of America) to reveal other aspects in the histories of these offices. By making an emphasis on our contemporary time period, public policies, whether they concern health, housing, urban planning, or education, are shown to be posed and discussed through statistics. But the latter are not the same if they are state-produced or made by decentralized public organizations than if they come from private institutions.

The works by Ana Medeles, Eduardo Martín Cuesta and Guilherme Melo de Freitas, and Diego Rafael de Moraes Silva address, from different perspectives, the matter of how statistics create or recreate concepts. In this case, the notion of 'political majority', as well as

those of 'cost of living' and 'wellbeing', are currently bound by measurements and statistical surveys. Besides, these articles show that the possible meanings of majority, wellbeing, or happiness depend not only on how these experiences are measured but also on local situations and well-defined political interests.

In line with this number's theme, we have included the historical document entitled *La Ley del 26 del mayo de 1882 que constituyó a la Dirección General de Estadística* ('Law of May 26th, 1882 whereby the General Directorate of Statistics was constituted'). In her introduction to this document, Ana María Medeles explains that the purpose of this law was the creation of the General Directorate of Statistics, the bureau in charge of producing information on a wide variety of aspects within public administration: economic statistics and, of course, population statistics. The General Directorate of Statistics allowed Mexico to enter the international statistical movement, and it trained state administrators in the professional task of forming and informing statistics for the state. Along with this document, we have also included a biography entitled "*Antonio Peñafiel Berruecos (1839-1922) y la gestión estadística de los datos nacionales*" ["Antonio Peñafiel Berruecos (1839-1922) and statistical management of national data"], by Laura Cházaro. This biography narrates how a physician institutionalized the General Directorate of Statistics, and it shows that the quest to conduct population surveys stemmed from a commitment with questions of mortality, fertility, and hygiene.

This number also includes book reviews of two important works. Cecilia Lanata Briones comments on Mara Loveman's *National Colors. Racial Classification and the State in Latin America*, and Claudia Carretta Beltrán writes on Jesús Bustamante's, Laura Giraudo's and Leticia Mayer's book *La novedad estadística. Cuantificar, cualificar y transformar las poblaciones en Europa y América Latina, siglos XIX y XX* ('The Statistical Novelty. Quantifying, Qualifying and Transforming Populations in Europe and Latin America during the 19th and 20th centuries'). Both reviews introduce texts that address the history of quantification of populations as well as the history of statistics in Latin America. Further, they call our attention to the canonical historiographical tools we use, mostly inspired by European cases that are often different from or not very significant for the cases we encounter at the other side of the Atlantic: the Americas.

Laura Cházaro, Editor / **Ana Medeles**, Co-editor

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