

The Role of Big Data and Administrative Data in Statistical Social Research and Counterfactual Impact Assessment

Nuno CRATO
University of Lisbon, Portugal
European Commission Joint Research Center, Italy
<http://pascal.iseg.utl.pt/~ncrato/>

Abstract

National administrations, European institutions and public organisations collect, supervise, and keep track of extremely varied and extensive types of data. Modern technologies and better organized civil lives have facilitated the collection and custody of these data on a scale previously unknown. This opens novel perspectives to our daily lives, but also allows for a much more detailed and sound knowledge of our economies and our societies. In what follows, I will deal with an important issue within this general framework: the case for the collection, treatment, availability and use of micro-data, in particular administrative data (admin-data). I will urge to take action on the use of these data for a better, easier and more cost-effective evaluation of policies. In fact, there is already an incredible wealth of available data that opens the door to a better knowledge of our economies and our societies. If these data are well kept, organized, complemented, and linked, if data are regularly updated and used for the knowledge of the economic and social situation, if policy measures are recurrently evaluated and adjusted on the basis of this information, and if appropriate scientific methods are used, then our societies can make a better use of their resources and our policy measures can be more efficient. At a moment of increasing attention to the efficacy of public spending, of increasing scrutiny over the effects of policies, it is more important than ever to be able to understand our society and to know how policy measures are impacting over our lives. We have the data, we have the means, and we have the necessary scientific methods. We have to do it.