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Alternative methods of enumeration of the population, in particular hard-to-count population groups

Some thoughts on taking a census of hard-to-count populations based on a few examples in France

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Summary

The objective of this paper is to present a few examples of particularly hard-to-count populations in France and to draw lessons as far as both recommendations for carrying out censuses of this kind and the expectations that can be held on these matters are concerned. After the specific background to the census in France is outlined, three census operations will be presented: the census of the migrant camp established in Calais in northern France; the census of gold washers in French Guiana — clandestine prospectors for gold in this French territory located in Latin America on the Brazilian border and covered mainly by the equatorial forest; and the census of the population of Mayotte, a small French island of the Comoros Archipelago located in the Mozambique Channel between Madagascar and Mozambique, on the southeast coast of Africa. In the final part of the paper, some lessons will be drawn from these three particular cases.

¹ This document was submitted late due to the late submission of the document of the Institute.



I. Introduction

1. In order to come up to the expectations of information users and facilitate the funding of the census, the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE) has introduced a new census method. It makes it possible to disseminate all the population data and the expected statistical results of a census at all geographical levels, including below the municipal level. The census, called a rolling census, is legally based in laws and regulations. It relies on a five-year cycle of surveys carried out exhaustively on a rotational basis in municipalities of fewer than 10,000 inhabitants and on a sample basis in the biggest municipalities, with INSEE and the municipalities working in close partnership. The law has nonetheless maintained, as an exception, an exhaustive five-year census in Mayotte and in the Pacific Islands. Following a review of the basic principles of this census in the first part, the paper will zoom in on the census of specific populations, namely migrants from the Calais camp and the gold washers of French Guiana, and on the census in Mayotte. The objective is to share information on the difficulties encountered with other European countries faced with similar problems and to attempt to bring good practices to light, while trying to gain a better understanding of what information can be gathered and sometimes raising questions about international recommendations on this issue.

II. French census

1. The legal basis for the French census

2. The principles of conducting the census were defined by a law enacted in 2002, supplemented by regulations setting out the manner in which the law is to be implemented.

2. Background

3. Since 2004, the census has been based on an annual collection of data on all municipal areas, one after another, over a period of five years. The census, organized according to this method, succeeds the general population censuses, the last of which was taken in 1999. The first five census surveys were carried out between 2004 and 2008. They allowed the results of the census to be produced, in 2006, which was the midpoint of the period. Since then, every year, census results are produced from the most recent five annual surveys, with information derived from the oldest survey being withdrawn and the latest survey taken into account.

3. Topics covered in the French census

4. The personal information collected during the data collection phase covers the civil status of individuals, their nationality, family situation, level of training, occupation or education, place of residence, place of work or study, place of residence one year earlier and the means of transport used to go to work, i.e. approximately 25 questions, and the characteristics of their housing and comfort based on 15 questions or so.

4. Geographical framework

5. The census covers metropolitan France and the overseas departments (Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guiana and Réunion), the overseas territorial communities of St-Barthélemy, St-Martin and St Pierre and Miquelon. As an exception, the department of Mayotte and the Pacific territorial communities (New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna Islands) carry out general censuses every five years.

5. Various collections of data

6. There are three types of data collection, organized according to the characteristics of the occupied dwellings in question: collection of data from households living in ordinary dwellings; collection of data from individuals residing in communities; and collection of data from persons living in mobile homes or homeless persons.²

6. Frequency of the operation

7. Census surveys are annual. Each year, the census provides results from the information collected during the most recent five annual surveys.

7. Data collection period and method

8. The census is conducted under the responsibility of the State. INSEE collects data from communities with its own enumerators. For collection of data from ordinary households and persons living in mobile homes or homeless persons, municipalities prepare and conduct the census surveys;³ the French statistical office INSEE is responsible for organizing and monitoring the collection of information. It then gathers the information collected, makes use of the questionnaires and disseminates the results. The information is collected in January and February. Since 2015, households living in ordinary housing can respond to questionnaires via the Internet; nearly 40 per cent of households chose this response option in 2016.

8. Sample design

9. Municipalities of fewer than 10,000 inhabitants conduct a census survey covering the entire population at a rate of one municipality in five per year. Municipalities of 10,000 inhabitants or more conduct an annual sample survey of a cross section of dwellings representing 8 per cent of their population. The sampling frame is the located buildings register, established for each of the approximately 1,000 municipalities of 10,000 inhabitants or more, which contains all dwelling addresses and, for each such address, the number of dwellings. Thus, every year, the annual survey is a sampling of 14 per cent of persons living in France. In a five-year cycle, all inhabitants of municipalities of fewer than 10,000 inhabitants and 40 per cent of the population of municipalities of 10,000 inhabitants or more are taken into account in the census.

10. Moreover, an exhaustive census of communities is taken once during the five-year cycle. The same applies to persons living in mobile homes or homeless persons, who are

² In addition, once every five years, there is a particular collection of data from persons living in a boat engaged in inland navigation.

³ Except in territories that still conduct a general census, as an exception.

surveyed in the municipality census year for municipalities of fewer than 10,000 inhabitants and in the years ending in 1 and 6 in municipalities with 10,000 inhabitants or more.

9. Methodology

11. The information thus collected is adjusted to apply to the same date for all municipalities in order to ensure equal treatment among them and to obtain a high level of data reliability. In the municipalities of 10,000 inhabitants or more, an exhaustive located buildings registry giving the number of dwellings by address is used. In the municipalities of fewer than 10,000 inhabitants, the data collected in surveys with breakdowns of dwellings derived from tax files (housing tax) are brought up to date.

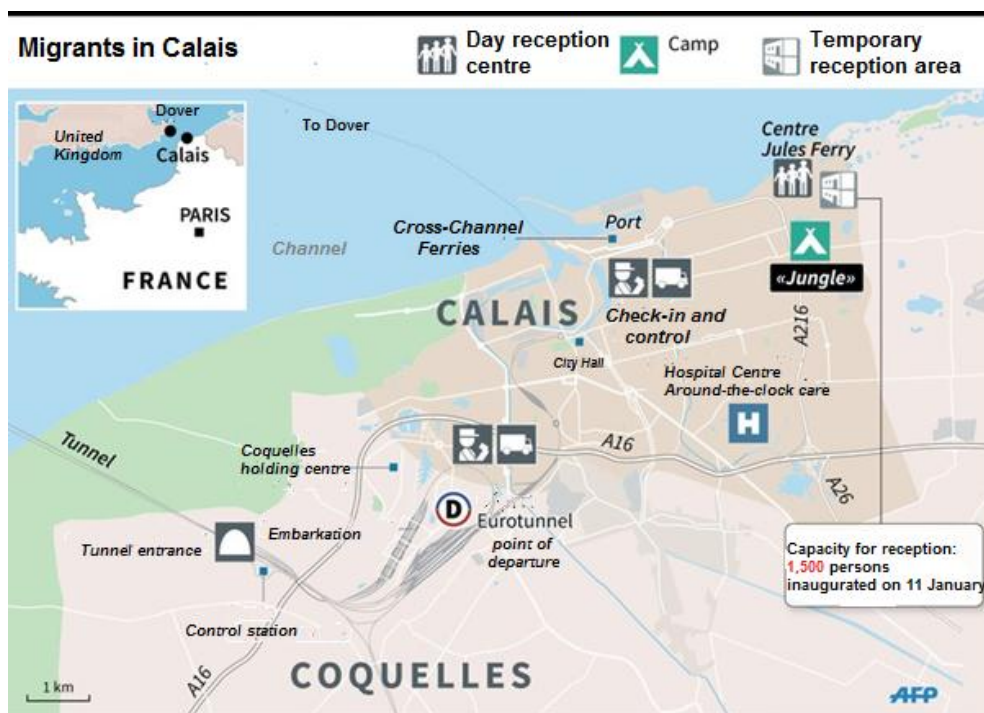
12. The population census data are annually authenticated by a legal instrument; they serve as a basis for the calculation of allocations provided by the State to municipalities to ensure their functioning. In the light of the continued decline of such allocations observed in recent years, elected representatives at the municipal level act with due care and attention when it comes to the size and development of their constituency.

III. Some experiences with censuses of hard-to-count subgroups

1. Census of the “jungle” of Calais

13. Calais is a city of 73,000 inhabitants located in northern France; it is a port which allows for journeys to England by sea and, above all, Calais is located in the immediate vicinity of the entrance to the Channel Tunnel used by high-speed trains as a link between France and England.

Map 1: Calais and the migrant reception area



14. As the United Kingdom does not form part of the Schengen area, there is no free movement of goods and people between France and the United Kingdom: controls are maintained for nationals of third States when crossing the border between France and the United Kingdom. Cooperation as regards circulation between the two countries is specified by a bilateral agreement signed in 2003 (the so-called Le Touquet agreement). The agreement provides that controls for entry into the United Kingdom are to be performed in the State of departure, i.e. in France. Put more simply, it is tantamount to establishing the border at Calais and, as a result, many people from countries such as the Syrian Arab Republic and Afghanistan who wish to reach the United Kingdom are held up at Calais, pending the possibility of their crossing, and stay for an indefinite period in this city.

15. Several thousand people thus live in the territory of the municipality of Calais, whose one hope is to make their way to the United Kingdom. It is considered that a census of this population should be taken in accordance with international recommendations (see para. 20). Furthermore, the municipality calls for this population to be enumerated as accurately as possible so that the allocation provided by the State to the municipality and based on the number of its inhabitants takes due account of it, for it gives rise to costs for the municipality such as, for example, the cost of household waste collection (with an annual allocation amounting to approximately 100 euros per inhabitant).

16. In an attempt to count this population, the first task was to define precisely the territory concerned and how life is organized on the ground in order then come up with an appropriate data collection protocol thereafter. The objective was to carry out this census count by adhering to the principles of the French census as specified by regulations and not to conduct a specific census operation for migrants. A member of the national team in charge of designing and piloting the census visited the area in the presence of representatives of the local authorities. The visit helped to confirm that the area extends only to the municipality of Calais, without spilling over into the territory of other municipalities, and that it is organized into different areas:

- Organized areas managed by an association, including
 - A reception centre comprising accommodation (mobile homes or tents) sheltering women and children, organized around common facilities (bathrooms, kitchens) and a food distribution centre
 - A temporary reception centre composed of about a hundred containers equipped for accommodation and civil protection tents



- An unstructured area known as the “jungle of Calais” consisting of numerous tents and informal settlements seemingly spread out haphazardly within an area of approximately 20 hectares



Furthermore, a field hospital run by a non-governmental organization has been set up in the area.

17. The work then consisted in coming up with a data collection protocol to be used for each area and in collecting information that could be gathered on the inhabitants of each of these areas. As mentioned earlier, the organization of data collection in the French census varies, depending on whether it involves households living in ordinary dwellings, persons living in institutions (communities), or homeless persons or persons living in mobile homes.

18. The reception centre that houses women and children who live together on a permanent basis and take their meals together was classified as group living quarters. Indeed, it meets the definition a community as defined in the French census (a set of living quarters coming under the same management authority whose inhabitants usually share a common way of living). It also meets the definition of a camp given in the recommendations of the Conference of European Statisticians for the 2010 and 2020 population and housing censuses issued by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. According to these recommendations, a camp is a set of semi-permanent or temporary buildings which, by the way it has been built, rebuilt or converted, is designed for the temporary accommodation of groups of persons with common activities or interests and which constitutes their place of usual residence. Such premises usually have certain common facilities such as kitchens, toilets and baths. This category includes military camps and refugee camps. In the French census, in cities of 10,000 inhabitants or more, a census of the communities is taken once every five years. A census will be taken of those in Calais, including the reception centre, in 2018 for Calais. It was important to abide by this rule, which is in line with the principles of the French census, and not to carry out a specific census of migrants.

19. The temporary reception centre made up only of containers in which migrants use for sleeping was not considered a community, because there are no facilities in this area that allow for living communally such as a communal kitchen. It was decided to conduct a census of the centre, like the informal settlements, tents and shelters made of sheet metal located in the “jungle”, as a so-called census of mobile home units. In municipalities of 10,000 inhabitants or more, a census of persons in mobile homes and homeless persons is taken once every 5 years in years ending in 1 and 6. A census of the temporary reception centre and the “jungle” must therefore be taken in 2016.

20. In the French census, data on persons in mobile homes and homeless persons is collected by enumerators recruited by the municipality who comb through the area assigned to them during the first two days of the collection of information and fill in, often by dictation, census questionnaires for homeless persons or persons living in mobile homes identified during this operation. Such data collection was not feasible in the case at hand, as requirements for ensuring the safety of the enumerators were not met, and the population is very distrustful of and reluctant to respond to interviewers, notwithstanding the appropriate assurances given about the confidential nature of the data collected. Thus, no direct

collection of information in the field could be carried out. It was therefore necessary to rely on the only data available, which were used as a proxy, namely:

- For the temporary reception centre, information given in the register kept by the association that runs the centre, i.e. name, age and nationality
- For the “jungle”, a count was done by the local authorities a few days before the reference date of the census. INSEE wished to obtain enough information on the progress of this counting in order to evaluate its reliability and draw on its results. The methodology used by the local authorities consisted in:
 - Surveying the area by aerial photography
 - Dividing it up into sectors based on the maps drawn up by this air survey
 - Assigning to these sectors teams that, all at once, combed the area on foot for half a day, opened each tent and each shelter and counted the persons who were staying there

21. The methodology seemed sufficiently in keeping with the principles for censuses for the results to be retained. In particular, it was important not to make do with a number of tents or shelters for estimating the population, because some of the tents are vacant or used for related purposes (cooking, storage etc.). It was necessary to check on the ground what they were actually being used for.

22. On the whole, for the “jungle” part, we were able to obtain a count but no further information on the characteristics of the inhabitants (sex, age or nationality). However, for the part managed by the association, we were able to obtain information on age and nationality. We have taken into account these few details to make up for the non-responses observed in the “jungle” part.

23. There was a question as to whether the entire population in this area should be considered as a population residing usually in Calais and thus recorded in the census when the goal of such persons is to leave France for the United Kingdom. According to the international recommendations referred to above:

- The population to be recorded must be the population residing usually in the territorial division, meaning that it has lived in that area for at least 12 months or has the intention to stay there for at least one year. A part of the population of the area of Calais obviously does not meet those criteria, as there are populations whose sole aim is to reach the United Kingdom as soon as possible;
- In particular cases, it is necessary to include persons for whom the concept of usual residence does not apply, such as nomads and vagrants; the inhabitants of the “jungle” of Calais cannot be likened to nomads or vagrants, as they have settled in this area and leave it only in order to try to make the crossing to England;
- Persons who may be illegal, irregular or undocumented migrants such as asylum seekers or refugees must be included in the resident population according to the same rules of usual residence as those applied to other persons; they must meet the requirement of usual residence, which a good number of migrants of the “jungle” of Calais do not satisfy;
- For long-term migrants — those whose stay abroad exceeds 12 months — the country of destination of the migrants should be the country of usual residence; for the population of concern, the destination country is supposed to be in the United Kingdom but without any assurances that they will arrive there one day;
- Lastly, the recommendations stipulate that, for persons without a place of usual residence, such as homeless persons or nomads, the place of enumeration should be

considered as the place of usual residence. It is on the basis of that recommendation that INSEE counted all the inhabitants located in the area among the usual population of Calais. Nevertheless, the document is unsatisfactory, because the persons in question are not really lacking a place of usual residence, insofar as the containers, tents and sheet metal shacks that they occupy constitute their residence, contrary to homeless persons, persons without a fixed address or nomads, who regularly change the place where they spend the night. It might be worthwhile to hone the recommendations on this point in order to take account of situations of this kind.

24. Throughout this process, it was necessary to be very mindful of public relations: there are many players involved, and the political and media issues surrounding the situation of that migrant camp are critical, creating an atmosphere of mistrust.

2. Census of gold washers of French Guiana

25. Guiana is a French department located in South America, between Brazil and Suriname. The territory is very extensive, approximately 84,000 km², with 98 per cent covered in equatorial forest and with just under 250,000 inhabitants.

26. The gold contained in the subsoil of French Guiana has been worked for more than 150 years, both by some regular mining operators and, above all, by illegal gold washers, known as *garimpeiros*, who come mainly from disadvantaged regions of Brazil and Suriname. The activities of the *garimpeiros* have given rise to environmental problems (destruction of the tropical forest), public health problems (contamination of Amerindian populations by the mercury used for amalgamating small gold particles) and violence. For the past 20 years, military operations have been led against clandestine sites, with equipment being destroyed and migrants deported, with a view to combating illegal migration, procuring, smuggling, drug trafficking etc.



27. These illegal gold-washing sites extend to municipalities bordering Suriname, from St-Laurent-du-Maroni to Maripasoula, in the southern part of the department and along the border of Brazil (Saül, Régina and Camopi). Elected officials of these municipalities make sure, in particular, that these populations are included in the population of their municipality, based on the principle of universality of the census, and are therefore considered in the calculation of allocations provided by the State.

28. Taking a census of such illegal gold washers in accordance with the protocol for data collection prepared for the French census collection would involve:

- Identifying gold-washing sites
- Determining the type of data collection (households, communities, or persons living in mobile homes and homeless persons) to be used, especially in municipalities of more than 10,000 inhabitants where taking the census of individuals living in ordinary dwellings is achieved by sampling
- Sending enumerators (recruited by the municipality) to places in order to deliver and to have the questionnaires completed
- For INSEE, being able to monitor the volume and quality of information collected, which, in practice, implies accompanying enumerators on the ground

This must all occur in an area in which travelling can be done only by helicopter or canoe on rivers and along the Amazon, which involves considerable costs.

29. Notwithstanding the type of dwelling actually occupied by the population residing on gold-washing sites (not only principals and gold prospectors but also cooks, boatmen, carriers, prostitutes, jewellers, grocers, butchers, carpenters, drug traffickers and others), it was decided that the only census possible was an exhaustive census, conducted by direct questioning of residents and, therefore, if a field operation was possible, by treating it as a census of persons living in mobile homes or homeless persons.

30. However, it became apparent that not all requirements were met to enable INSEE enumerators in the field to be sent to monitor the collection of data and, likewise, most municipalities did not wish to send their staff into areas renowned for violence. It also appeared that the cost of such an operation would be very high without any certainty of being able to obtain a count of sufficient quality of populations living at these gold-washing sites. A municipality has in the past sent enumerators into the field to take a census of such sites, but, because there were no means of monitoring the figures provided, the results could not be taken into account. Contact was established with Brazil in order to know how a census was taken of workers in gold-bearing areas; the response was, in the usual way, with locally recruited enumerators, accompanied by armed forces, if necessary, to ensure their safety. This scheme could not be launched in French Guiana, as the situation of workers is not the same (there are more foreigners — Brazilians in particular — in an irregular situation in Guiana).

31. All things considered, it has been found such areas cannot be surveyed by means of a census operation, as was found for the “jungle” of Calais. We then turned to the local authorities (armed forces, Gendarmerie, public services) that, as part of efforts to combat illegal gold washing, identify gold-washing sites with a view to destroying wells and encampments and deporting foreigners in an irregular situation.

32. On the basis of the information provided (which cannot be detailed here given that it is confidential), it is possible to prepare an estimate of populations living on gold-washing sites based on a method that is sufficiently reliable. The method is to enumerate and identify sites (mainly by aerial means) and, on the basis of data observed during field operations conducted by the armed forces, work out ratios of the average number of persons living in a camp or a *carbet* (hut without walls serving as a shelter built in the forest) from the data related to the housing and data on the gold prospecting equipment. Ultimately, a census is thus taken of a few thousand persons in the illegal gold-washing sites of French Guiana. Only this estimate is available, and no data on the characteristics of the population can be collected.

33. There is the issue of updating these figures, broken down for each municipality. One course of action could be based on an estimate of the overall number of *garimpeiros* linked to the efforts to combat illegal gold washing made by the armed forces.

3. Population census of Mayotte

34. Mayotte is an island of the Comoros Archipelago located in the Mozambique Channel between Madagascar and Mozambique, on the southeast coast of Africa.

35. The Comoros Archipelago comprises four islands: Grande Comore, Mohéli, Anjouan and Mayotte. Following the referendums organized in 1975 on the Comoros islands, Mayotte wished to remain French, while the three other islands chose to become independent. The Comoros islands are among the world's poorest territories: Comoros is ranked 132th out of 177 countries according to the human development index.

36. Then, in March 2011, following the referendum held in Mayotte in 2009, Mayotte obtained the status of department and became the 101st French department, with the consequence that the legal provisions in force in other French departments should gradually be applied to Mayotte.



37. The 2002 law that defines how censuses in France are taken has maintained a traditional census, conducted every 5 years in the overseas territorial communities, of which Mayotte was a part at the time of the promulgation of the law. Given that Mayotte became a department in 2011, the law could have been amended so that a rolling census was introduced in Mayotte as in other French departments. However, this option was not chosen, as requirements have not been met to date in that territory for a census to be taken as in other departments.

38. The last census, a traditional exhaustive census, took place in 2012. Mayotte then had 212,000 people, the second highest population density in France after the Paris region; 40 per cent of the population are foreigners, 95 per cent of whom come from Comoros, and the island includes many foreigners in an irregular situation. Indeed, Anjouan, another island of Comoros, is located only 70 km from Mayotte. Many people from Anjouan come illegally by boat to Mayotte not only in order to escape the widespread poverty in Comoros and to settle in French territory in search of a better life, but also to have access to the system of care or deliver their babies in French territory, as babies born in Mayotte can automatically acquire French nationality when they reach the age of 18. Many people from Anjouan arrive clandestinely in small boats called *kwassa-kwassa* run by smugglers in Mamoudzou, the capital of island where there is a hospital for the delivery of babies. The hospital of Mamoudzou is the largest maternity hospital of France: 6,000 births were

recorded in Mamoudzou in 2015 and 9,000 births in total on the island. This very large number creates considerable resource requirements. Thus, for example, this small territory of 212,000 inhabitants in 2012 witnessed, on average, 25 births per day in 2015, which means that, in the years ahead, when those babies reach school age, an additional school classroom will have to be created every day. The island includes many persons in an irregular situation, who are hard to count, as they are very distrustful when it comes to responding to a questionnaire about their situation, for fear that such data could be used to deport them or expel them from French territory.

39. The second difficulty is related to types of dwelling: a very significant part of the population lives in slums, composed of informal settlements, called *bangas*, made from salvaged materials, mainly pieces of sheet metal. These settlements are either scattered here and there in the territory or grouped in areas and constitute a genuine village. These are, of course, houses built without permits, and there are no standardized addresses (names of streets or numbering of houses on the street). It is therefore not possible in such a territory, where slums are so widespread, to draw up an exhaustive located buildings register that is updated continuously, while this component is the basis needed for taking the census of municipalities of 10,000 inhabitants or more (and most of the 17 municipalities of Mayotte have more than 10,000 inhabitants).

40. The third challenge facing us in the next census to be held in 2017 is related to the security problems that now pervade the island: there exist many conflicts today between the resident population and population of migrants in an irregular situation, to such an extent that everyone is very wary of any person who shows up at his or her home, and people have witnessed the widespread destruction of *bangas*, making it even more difficult to locate dwellings.

41. Against this backdrop, where a rolling census is not applicable or there is no administrative source concerning the population and its characteristics, maintaining a traditional census appears to be the only possible solution. The next census will therefore be held in summer 2017, and preparations for it have been under way for several months now. It is of the utmost importance, as, even more than elsewhere, it is important to know precisely the population of this territory, its development and its characteristics: elected officials have high expectations of receiving allocations relating to the population, which are needed to cope with requirements for equipment and infrastructure, and the authorities also need to understand the demographic situation more fully in order to anticipate needs. Mayotte is an outermost region that benefits from specific aid from the European Union, which requires reliable demographic data if it is to provide such aid. The census of 2017 will start with a cartographic survey conducted by INSEE investigators who will locate all dwellings, including illegal dwellings. Enumerators will be recruited with the assistance of the municipalities from among the diverse communities inhabiting the island who speak the local language (Shimaore). Everyone will have a sector of which to take a census determined by the prior cartographic survey. It is they who will provide information for the census forms under the dictation of the people surveyed. Meetings of mayors have already been convened in order to engage them as much as possible in the census. In particular, they will have to validate the results of the cartographic survey and supervise the taking of the census in order to ensure that no dwelling in the territory of their municipality has been forgotten. Lastly, significant efforts will be made in the area of public relations, by relying in particular on the support of religious leaders and cadis, or Muslim judges, as the 95 per cent Muslim population is very religious.



IV. Lessons learned

42. These three examples of particularly hard-to-count populations have the following points in common: a significant population of migrants in an irregular situation; substandard housing; a lack of administrative data on these populations; and areas with a high level of violence. In all three cases, only a traditional census with thorough combing of the area may lead to an acceptable estimate of the population. It should be noted in passing that these censuses, sometimes for very small populations, such as the gold washers in French Guiana, incur significant costs.

43. In all these cases, despite the complexity of the situation, local elected officials expect the statistical office to take account of these populations, first by adhering to the principle of universality of the census (the population count must focus on each individual residing in the given territory of a country), primarily because those populations entail costs for the municipalities and taking them into consideration increases the allocations that the State provides to municipalities.

44. It is only through cooperation with local authorities (associations, municipal governments, public administration, the armed forces and religious representatives) that an estimate of the populations concerned can be obtained. But such cooperation is often complex because of the political, media and security issues involved in the monitoring of these populations. In addition, for the “jungle” of Calais or the gold washers of French Guiana, INSEE took account of population estimates obtained only if it was possible to obtain sufficient information on the methodology used to prepare the estimate in order to ensure that the figures obtained were of sufficient quality. It is noteworthy that, in all cases, there is an exhaustive prior surveying of dwellings — by aerial means for tents and huts serving as housing for the “jungle” of Calais and for illegal gold-washing sites for French Guiana and by systematic combing of the territory by INSEE investigators in Mayotte.

45. Estimates made in the “jungle” of Calais and illegal gold-washing sites remain very rough: on one hand, for some, they rely on simple ratio assumptions but that have a decisive influence on the figures and, on the other, they may rather greatly vary over time, particularly since demolition operations are conducted when it comes to persons in an irregular situation or engaged in irregular activities.

46. Many questions have been raised about compliance with international recommendations on censuses. The main issues are about the notion of a resident population, as a part of this population does not intend to remain in French territory, while it is impossible to know whether it will one day leave the territory, and also the notion of the lack of place of usual residence elsewhere. Moreover, the issue of characterizing the type of dwelling arises and therefore of determining the protocol for data collection to be applied (households, communities or persons living in mobile homes and homeless persons, along with the impact of these choices on the calculation of populations in cases involving the French rolling census). It is also worth noting that the reference date does not mean much. In French Guiana and Calais, the data are taken on the date that they are retrieved by

the authorities who led the local operations. All in all, it appears that taking the census of these specific populations is hardly referred to in international recommendations, and it might be useful to make a compendium of good practices in order to capitalize on and share the results of experiments carried out by different statistical offices.

47. Although the expectations for gaining knowledge about the characteristics of the populations concerned are great, including, with respect to migrants, their nationality, their level of education and previous profession, none of these data could be obtained in the first two examples cited. The counting of populations — already a challenge in itself — seems to be the only goal achievable by these means. Knowledge of the characteristics of some populations will probably require other statistical approaches, such as the 10-year surveys of homeless persons that have been conducted in France for the past 20 years. This is a fact to be taken into account when developing European regulations.

48. There is quite a lot more at stake surrounding these situations than statistical knowledge: they entail major political issues, media issues and security issues, which complicate operations whose original intent was a count of the population for the purpose of improving statistical knowledge, and these issues need to be taken into consideration.

49. The issue of dissemination of such data also remains to be clarified. The choice made in France was not to disseminate estimates on these particular populations specifically but to integrate them into the usual standard categories, which in most cases makes it impossible to identify them separately.
