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Blue Skies Thinking Network: Activities 2020 and Proposals 2021

10th Annual Workshop of the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics

18-19 November 2020

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Blue Skies Thinking Network

The Blue Skies Thinking Network is **the "ideas factory" for the statistical modernisation community**. The network provides a research and innovation platform where members can share ideas and look for partners to **explore how new innovations to our production process can benefit statistical organisations**.

The objective of the Blue Skies Thinking Network is to **generate and evaluate proposals for HLG-MOS activities** and where needed, to do short time boxed follow-up studies. The network will be an umbrella structure for a core group and short-term task teams to investigate new ideas and opportunities through short evaluation projects supported by the HLG-MOS Executive Board. **Any idea that is in line with the HLG-MOS Strategic Framework can be considered.** To allow for new innovations, space will also be given to out-of-the-box thinking.

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Blue Skies Thinking Network

BSTN Core Team

- Monthly (online) meetings to supervise ongoing activities and discuss new ideas

Four activities under BSTN umbrella

- Proposed and endorsed at HLG-MOS Workshop 2019
- Different approaches

1) Synthetic data
2) StatsBots
3) DataDriven Decision Making
4) Sustainable Communities

Activity proposals for 2021 (see two-pager with pitches)

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Synthetic Data: Kate Burnett-Isaacs

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BSTN Working Group on Synthetic Data Overview

Purpose

Bring an understanding, international consensus and move toward best practices on methods used to create synthetic data for data protection and disclosure control, how to measure the utility and risk of disclosure and how best to communicate the risks and considerations of using synthetic data.

Membership

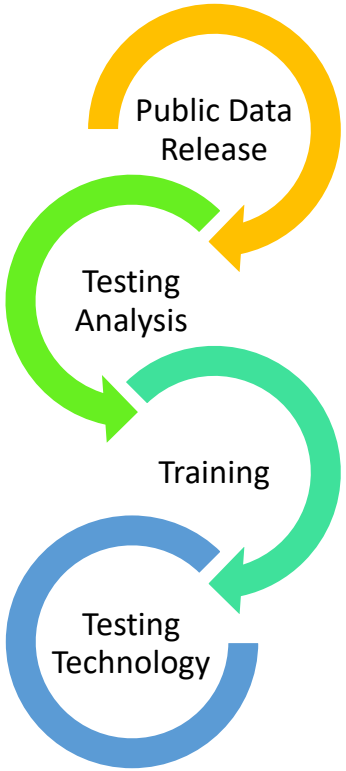
- 30 members
- 11 different countries
- 9 NSOs, academia and private sector

Organization

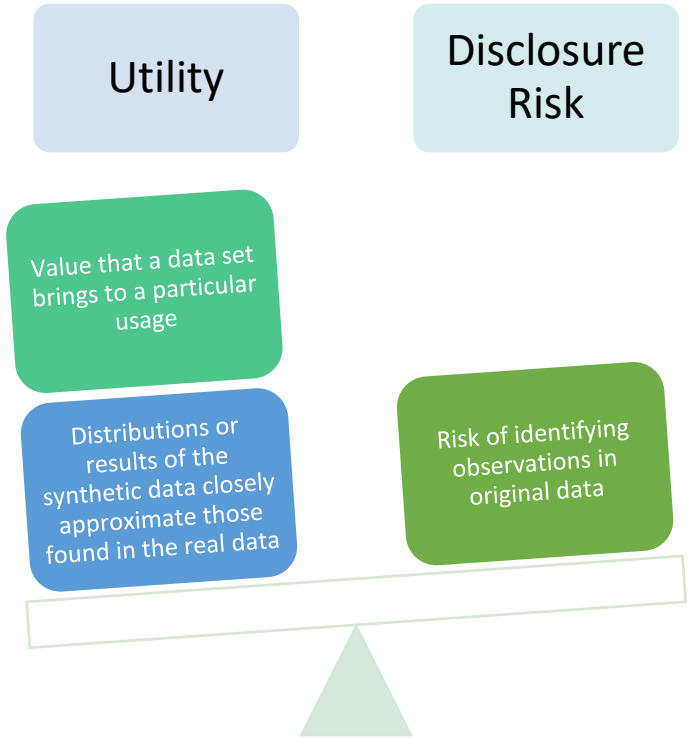
- Methods and Tools Subgroup
- Utility and Risk Disclosure Subgroup

Work Conducted in 2020

Importance of Use Cases



Maximize Utility while minimizing Disclosure Risk



StatsBots: Eric Anvar

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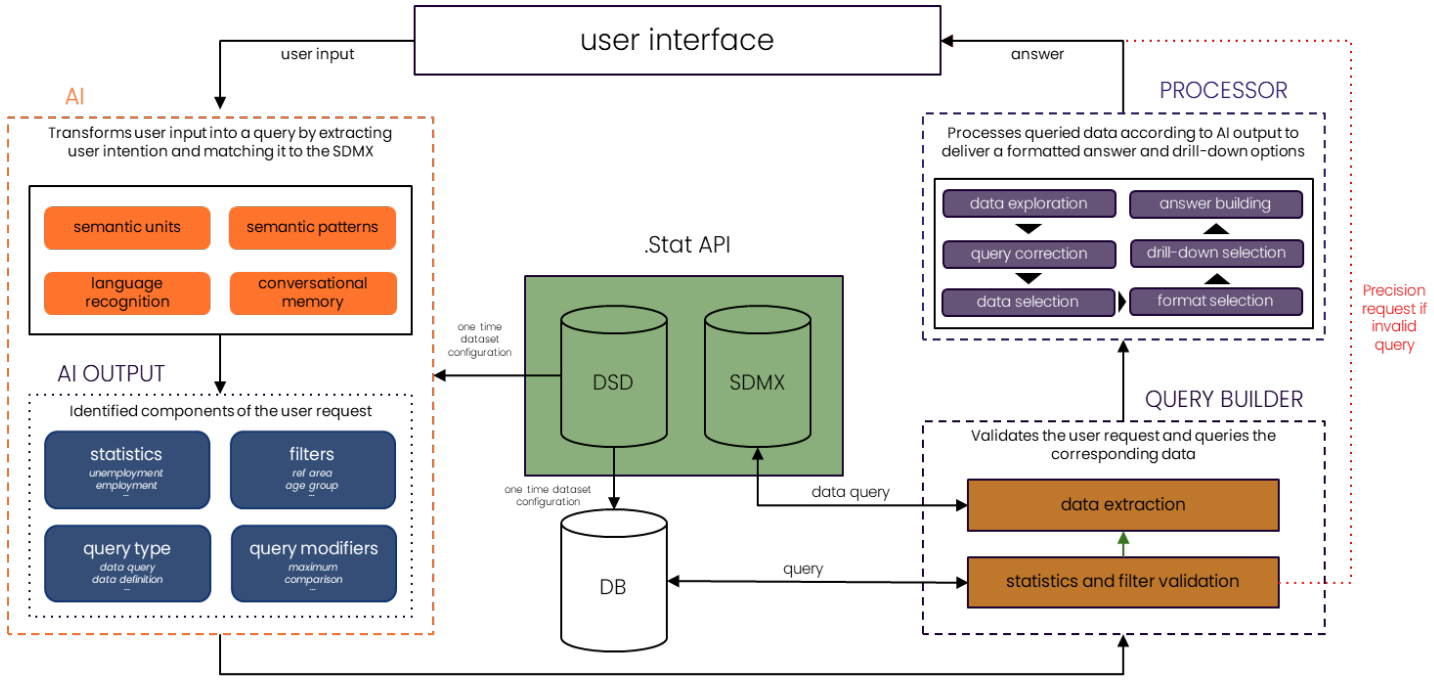
Proof of Concept for a ‘scalable’ StatsBot

Developed in 4 sprints with Golem.AI, start-up specialised in ‘symbolic AI’

Provides with conversational access to labour statistics, leveraging SDMX semantics.



The PoC demonstrated feasibility of a scalable StatsBot

Next steps

1) Workshop organised on Nov 20th with two discussion items
   a) StatsBot, a chatbot for official statistics – PoCs and lessons learnt
   b) Joint user research to drive value and innovation – Assessing where we are, what we could do together

2) Workshop to help identify potential interest in the following scopes of work
   I. Launch a large scale project for the joint development of a generic StatsBot drawing on statistical sources and semantics – eg joint Call for Tender to consult market and co-invest.
   II. Continue the open research work stream on StatsBot with academic partner(s).
   III. Launch one or several joint user research initiative(s), meant to help statistical organisations accelerate in developing the 'next generation data experience', eg:
      Create and maintain the reference 'stats personas' knowledge base
      Carry out a cross national research project on 'data journalists'
      Develop and maintain a toolkit for 'Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) in official statistics'

See detailed project report for more details

Data Driven Decision Making
Support at the Local Level: Branko Josipović

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Data-driven DMS

- Explaining the essence of Data-driven DMS
- Importance of Data-driven DMS
- Data-driven DMS can help NSO
- Data-driven DMS can help local government
- Data-driven DMS can help government

2020 activities

- SORS continues to develop Data-driven DMS
- Helping government with Covid19 situation
- Rapid survey system
- Estimation of economic indicators
- Local governments survey

Sustainable Communities: Juan Munoz

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Sustainable Communities

Objective: To create dedicated (mostly virtual) **communities of experts** on new methodologies and technologies, aiming at modernization of official statistics, with special attention to **support by an online platform**.

Justification: The HLG-MOS has been actively working on various initiatives to modernise statistical organisations and in particular, the production of statistical information and streamlining of associated processes. **The HLG-MOS may wish to protect and preserve their investments** to avoid that resources utilized and knowledge created are wasted.

- Based on a project proposal for the 2019 HLG-MOS workshop
- Appreciated by participants, but not selected
- Adopted by BSTN core team for follow-up
- Elaborated in a few rounds of discussions
- Submitted to Executive Board in Summer 2020
- Supported by ONS for pilot on follow-up of Machine learning project

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Activity Proposals for 2021

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Activity proposals for 2021

1) The power of network data: feasibility studies (Daniel Elazar, ABS)
2) COVID-19 hotspot joint biosecurity centre platform (Eric Deeben, ONS)
3) User research for official statistics (Eric Anvar, OECD)
4) Rapid survey system (Branko Josipović, SORS)
5) From experimentation to implementation in official statistics (Kate Burnett-Isaacs, StatsCan)
6) Microdata for understanding falling response rates (Gary Dunnet, StatsNZ)

See two-pager with pitches

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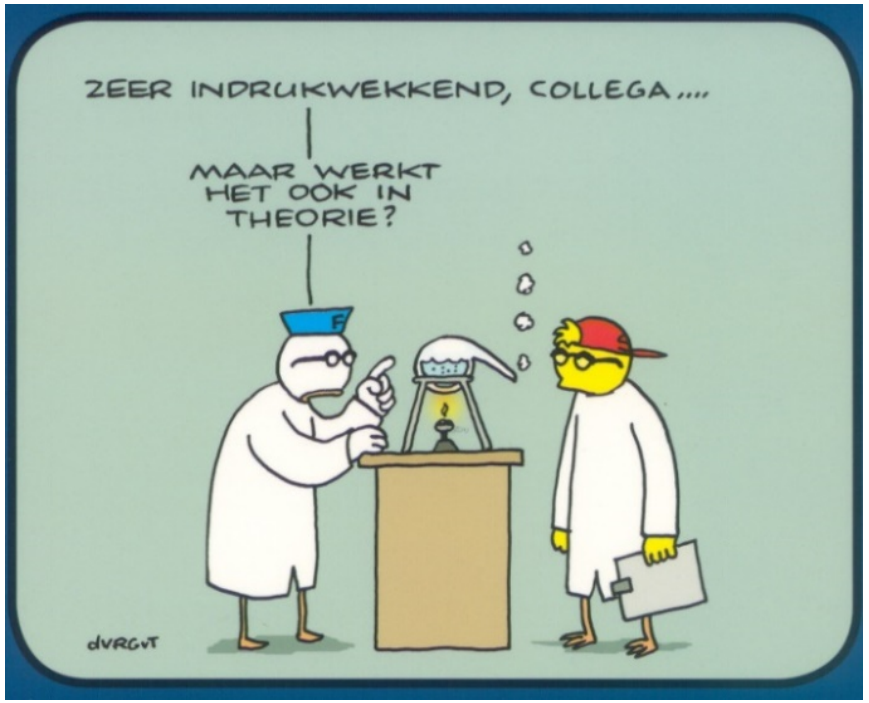
That's it for now-
but innovation never stops ☺



Very impressive my dear colleague-
but does it also work in theory?

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