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Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services|
Helsinki | 17-18 June 2014

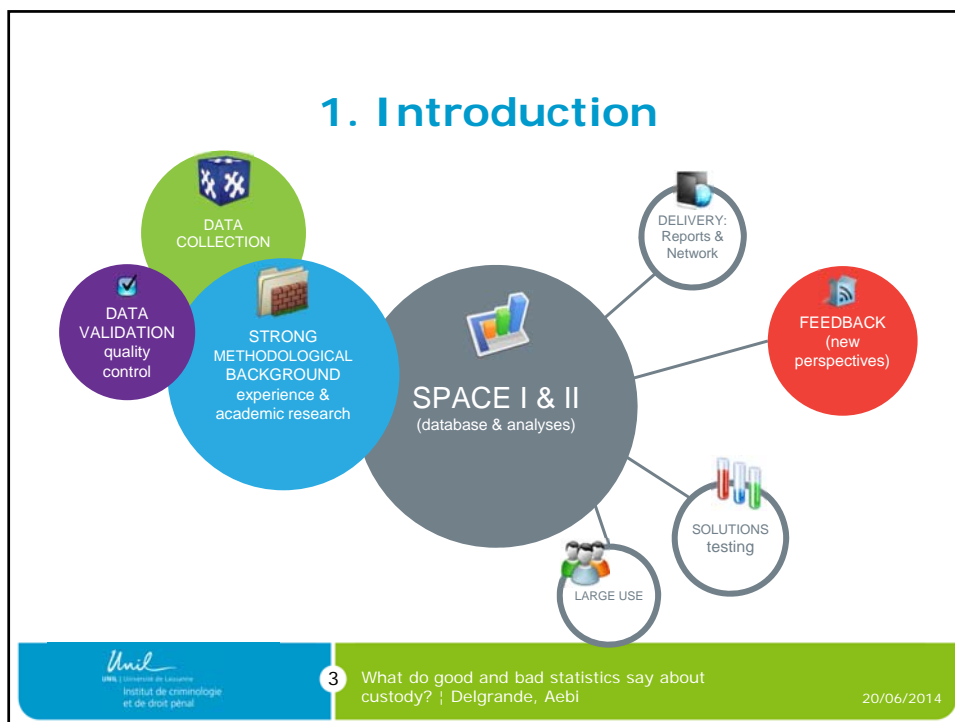# What do good and bad statistics say about custody?

Natalia Delgrande
Marcelo F. Aebi

| le savoir vivant |

20/06/2014

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3. Quality of custodial indicators
Definition *versus* meta-data

80% Data on the regular adult CJ inmates

6% N/A

10% Missing meta-data

4 % SPACE meta-data

340 thousands

missing

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The role of meta-data in the international surveys

Conditional release
Deaths in custody
Sentenced <1 year
> 2 months in custody
Drug offences Foreigners Juv. & Young
Overuse capacity Adults Medical staff
100 €/inmate Females
Turnover ratio Pre-trials Suicidarity
EU-citizens Theft Amnesties & other
Entries into custody
Inmates/custodian

Why to use meta-data in SPACE?

– Compare what is meant to be comparable

– Reliable **raw-data** and knowledge of the national rules

1. Categories included/excluded in the prison population
2. Age of criminal majority and the qualification of young adults
3. Categories of costs included in the calculation of the expenses
4. Breakdown of categories of staff working in penal institutions
5. Categories of inmates per each judicial status
6. ... 7. ...

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Risk of Errors (1)
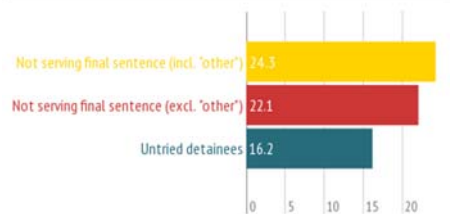
- ✓ When you make an *academic study*, you may impose the respect of the unified definitions…

- ✓ … When you make an *international survey*, you ask for meta-data!

  – It is never enough!
    - Until where the meta-data should be enlarged?
  – Meta-data remain a raw-figure.
    - What exactly is understood by the respondents?

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Risk of Errors (Example I)

Example of the use and… of the misuse of custodial indicators…

% Detainees not serving a final sentence*

Not serving final sentence (incl. 'other') 24.3
Not serving final sentence (excl. 'other') 22.1
Untried detainees 16.2

0 5 10 15 20

*Median values on the basis of the calculated indicators for 47 PA

Accurate breakdown by each category in inmates according to the judicial status is available in…

47 countries — Final sentenced prisoners

34 countries — Untried detainees

13 countries — Detainees found guilty but not yet sentenced

23 countries — Sentenced prisoners who have appealed

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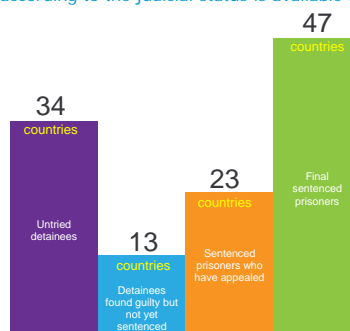
Risk of Errors (Example II)

Example of a misreading of the results:

(based on a retrieved political discourse of an official in a country with the overrepresentation of females in custody)

% of pre-trial females:

1. Calculated on the basis of the **total** number of **pre-trial** detainees? ... or...
2. ... on the basis of the **total** number of detainees **without a final sentence**?
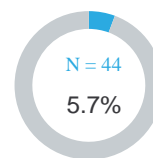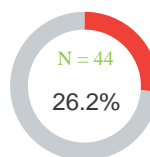3. ... on the basis of the number of **female inmates**?

N = 31
6.2%
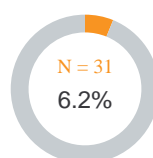
Basis: untried inmates

N = 44
5.7%

Basis: inmates without final sentence

N = 44
26.2%

Basis: only female inmates

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4. European comparative perspective: how "good practices" become "bad sideboards"?

Survey' meta-data	Rigour	Internal rules
Supranational view	Goals	Internal functioning
General overview	Comparability	Specific topics
Adjusted reliability	Consistency	Cross-over CJ network
International rec./rules	Projection	Pilot-projects, reforms
Better standards	Added benefits	Increase of efficiency

● Cross-sectional   ● National Peculiarity

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Rigour and comparability…

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Goals and consistency…

21.3%
Average % of foreign inmates

33.7%
EU cit. among foreign inmates
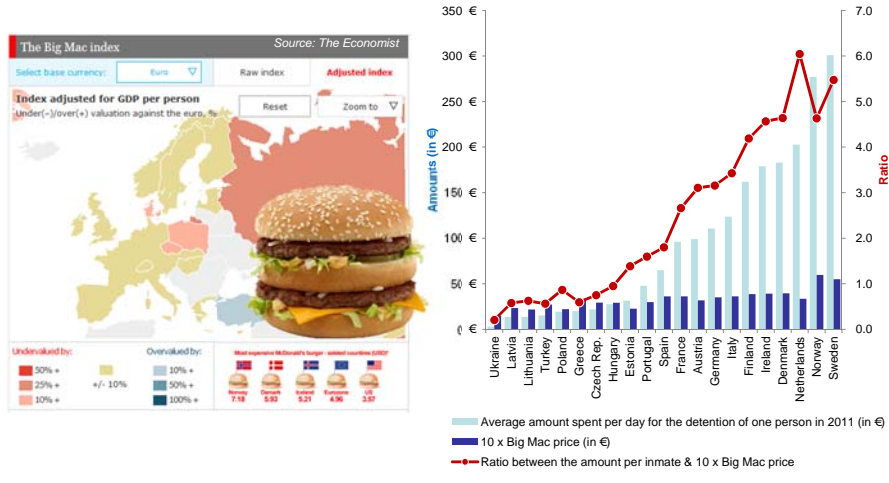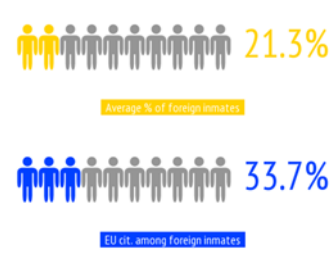
Foreigners:
1. How many? …and
2. Where?
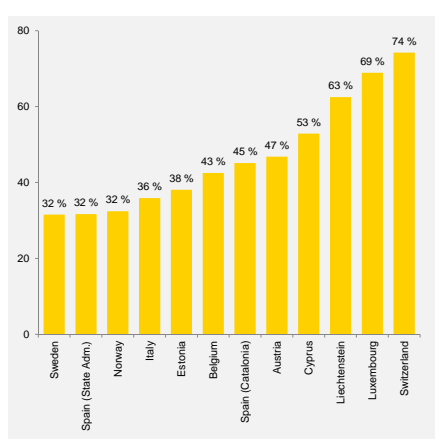
Highest % of foreign inmates in the total prison population on 1st Sept. 2012

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Swiss case study: **Foreign inmates**

CH inmates (by nationality)

- 26 %
- 37 %
- 20 %
- 11 %
- 7 %

- ■ Nationals
- ■ Long-term resident permits
- ■ Asylum seakers
- ■ Administrative measures
- ■ Other foreign inmates

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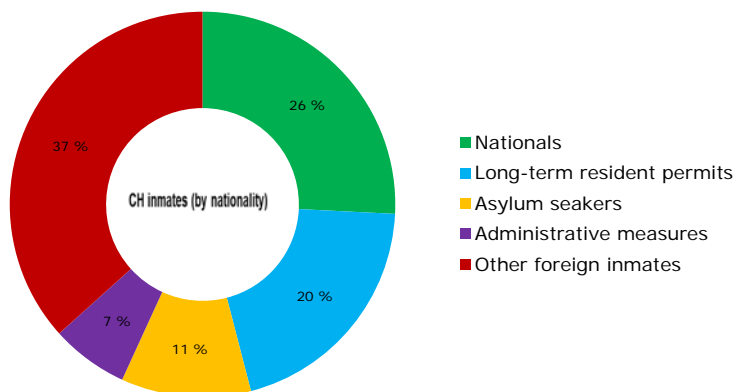custody? ¦ Delgrande, Aebi
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Projection **and** added benefits...

Length of imprisonment:

1. Time in custody vs. length sentence

2. Part of the time spent in custody before final sentence

3. Question of alternatives

4. Evolution of the PPR

5. ...

Turnover in % — Length in months

- ■ Turnover Ratio
- ■ Indicator of average length of pre-trial imprisonment
- ■ Indicator of average length of imprisonment

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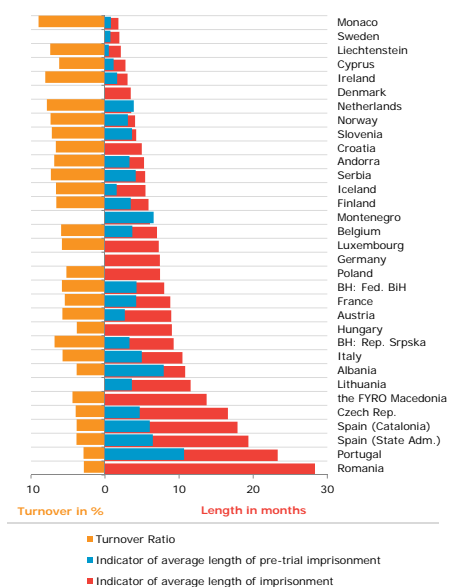
5. Discussion

- *"If other countries include this or that, I should do the same…"*
  - At the end, there was no need to pick up any data from other services and to adjust what is not supposed to be adjusted!
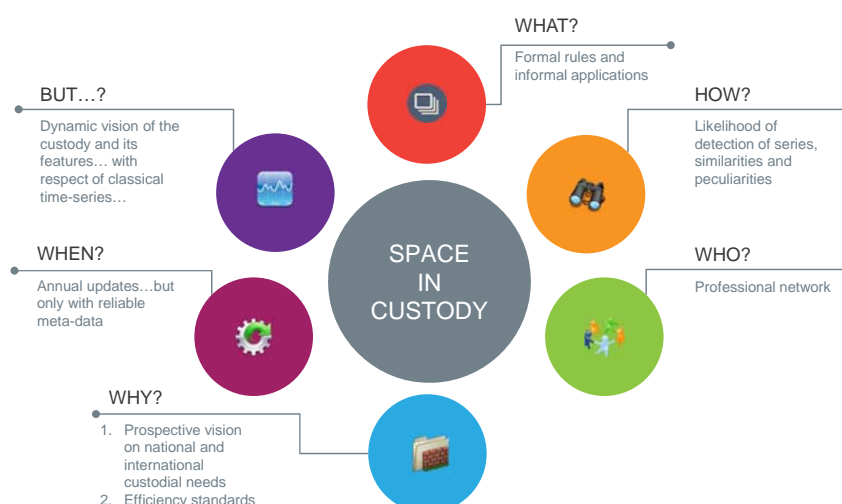
- We can do our best today, have the most adventurous and innovative ideas… yet… tomorrow these acts will be just old-fashioned tips.
  - Don't pretend to use the best tool; since you make a cross-sectional work, you'll be requested to adapt all the time!

- Statistics are our working tools, not our final [efficient] result!

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Conclusion

WHAT?
Formal rules and informal applications

BUT…?
Dynamic vision of the custody and its features… with respect of classical time-series…

HOW?
Likelihood of detection of series, similarities and peculiarities

WHEN?
Annual updates…but only with reliable meta-data

WHO?
Professional network

WHY?
1. Prospective vision on national and international custodial needs
2. Efficiency standards

SPACE IN CUSTODY

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Contact & follow us…

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Coming soon…

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When you have exhausted all possibilities, remember this: you haven't.
-- Thomas Edison
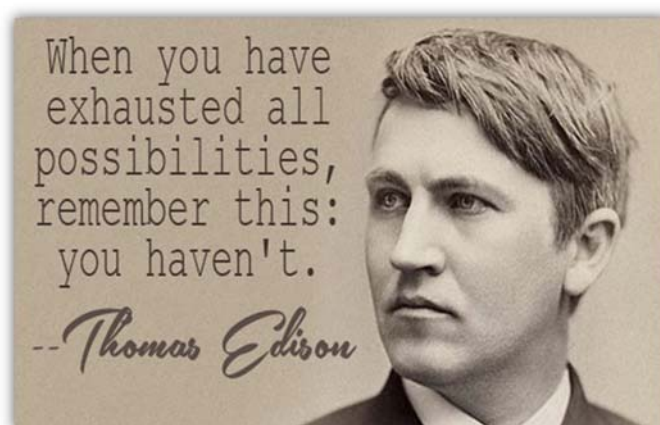
Thank you for your attention!

We are looking for the new possibilities…
Natalia.Delgrande@unil.ch

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