

Dr. Anne Humbert

Cranfield UK

The meaning of statistics or statistics with meaning?

Reflections on the practice of statistics in a changing context

This presentation examines statistical practice in a changing context such as the rise of neoliberalism and New Public Management as well as increased opportunities arising from Big Data. Using my own career as a statistician, I reflect on the implications of working at the nexus of statistics and social sciences. Using examples of my work on composite indicators and in using socio-metric badges, I show the tension between working out the meaning of statistics and that of creating meaning through statistics. I conclude with a call to use statistics with a purpose, and in today's context, to recognise the dangers posed by the objectification of measures, power and expertise.