

Using Statistics to Effect the Societal Perception Through Governmentality: SAM as a Method Proposal

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This paper analyses the relationship between statistics and politics grounding on the national accounts by using Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality as the baseline. The governmentality concerns the form of knowledge that informs the rational and thoughtful activity of governing. This episteme of government crystallizes what forms of thought, knowledge, expertise, and means of calculation or rationality are employed in the practices of governing. All the sampling methods refer to a systematic structure that provides information about almost all of the topics related to population. In this respect, in order to increase the ability of governing the society, therefore, all governments contribute to the transformation of the national income accounts as a statistical tool. This paper additionally proposes the elastic structure of social accounting matrix (SAM), which allows formation of nonstandard frameworks and creates an opportunity to go beyond the governmentality.

Keywords: governance, governmentality, political economy, representation

Introduction

An etymological origin of the concept of statistics derived from the Latin word *statisticum*, which means affairs of the state. Corresponding to the statistics term in German *Staatenkunde*, it refers to the systematic works in sustaining administrative power of state. The meaning of statistics, in this sense, is the knowledge of the state (Johannisson, 1990; Starr, 1983). More clearly, statistics carries the information of military power, tax revenues, expenditures, and population, which constitutes constructive units of the state. From this perspective, statistics takes on the task of holding and mediating the relationship between state and masses of society.

The main contribution to the development of statistics term conceptually was made by the pioneering works of Hermann Conring (1606-1681) in Germany (as cited in the work of Lindenfeld, 1997, p. 20). The framework of the concept of statistics in this manner was constituted by the systematic works on state, and thus it was conceived not only empirically. An empirical statement of the organic relationship of statistics with the state emerged in the first time through the prominent work *Political Arithmetic* written by Sir William Petty in

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1676. The *Political Arithmetic* is considered as a fundamental thought of modern statistics and the main conceptualization of the intersection of the social sciences and numerical techniques (Murphy, 2009; Roncaglia, 2005).

The governance process, from the national income estimation efforts beginning at the second half of 17th century to the System of National Accounts (SNA), essentially, may be identified as following the course of Petty's political arithmetic tradition. Statistics is a tool of governance, ordering and coordinating many social activities and serving as a guide for public action (Desrosières, 2011). One of the motivations to this work is to ask such questions: Can economics, as a social science, understand and/or explain the national income accounts theoretically? Can it present conceptual framework to understand the relationships of national accounts, which exposes the social projections of production, consumption, and accumulation that are the corner stone of economics?

This study proposes that the questions mentioned above may not be answered from inside of the mainstream economics; therefore, different conceptual framework may be used to answer them. Taken into consideration the relationship between national accounts and economics in perspective, even though the economics produces several theories and arguments upon the production, consumption, accumulation, and distribution, it cannot exert the systematic approach to explain/understand national accounts because of the fact that the concepts used in the national account from the economics present the eclectic structure from the Keynesian and Neoclassical to Marxist side (For the detailed explanations, see Vanoli, 2005).

In this paper, the main reference framework to comprehend the constructed relationship of the statistics between state and society is the Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality and the idea of representation is enhanced by Ian Hacking (2005). The part, which is presented the theoretical framework to understand the set of state, society, and statistics relationships, appears in the second section. The third section describes the national accounts in terms of company metaphor. The last section intends to seek an alternative way to construct national accounts in order to analyze distributional relations between the income groups. Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) is the proposed framework for analyzing income distribution. One of the most important reasons to propose such framework is the elastic structure of the SAM, which allows nonstandard formation and creates an opportunity to weaken the governmentality formed by the institutional dominance of the capital.

Governmentality, Representation, and Statistics

In this section, two essential concepts will be used to comprehend and explain the national income accounts, which are structured as a subset of the statistics. These are the governmentality and the representation that are explained below respectively.

Michel Foucault (2000) proposed three leading indicators, representing the change of government rationality since beginning of the 16th century in the western society: i) a development of governmental tools of the monarchy regimes; ii) analysis of knowledge forms, which is formed by the statistics corresponded to the political sciences, and iii) arising of Mercantilism as a governmental praxis. The statistics concept among these indicators on the basis of state knowledge has been made possible with the transformation of "family" phenomenon to the population perspective within the context of governmental model of the economy.

Before moving on the governmentality, it should be mentioned about the relations between subject and power which are the fundamental problematic in Michel Foucault's studies (Oren, 2015). According to Foucault, the power interferes everyday life and it makes people subject directly by categorizing individual,

determining his own individuality, tying up him to his own identity, and enforcing a law of truth (Foucault, 2005). Secondly, the power is not an institution, structure, a substantial force, etc. The power is the name of a way of interaction in a given society and a complicated strategical situation (Foucault, 2005). And lastly, the power is a relation that is relevant with the actions of all sides. By this means, it is a mode of action which is realized in systemic networks and conceptualized as “dispositive” by Foucault. “Dispositive is the systems of relations which are composed of discourses, institutions, architectural styles, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, heterogenic bodies of scientific, philosophical and moral statements, and discursive or non-discursive elements” (p. 65) as Foucault says. Also, “dispositive” is a network which could be established among all these elements (Revel, 2012). In sum, the government as “conduct of conduct” is more or less any calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, and seeks to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects, and outcomes (Dean, 1999).

Here, it is important to underline the two means of *subject*: subjectivity implies both a free actor and being dependent on a power. So, subject/citizen is never a category of substance, and instead it is historical and social interaction itself which has self-connection to a dispositive (Oren, 2015). These relations of subject/citizen have given rise to a new type of political rationality generated itself by it. Foucault commonly uses the term “political” to identify a certain kind of rationality of government; focus of Foucault’s political rationality is on the overall pursuit of the interests and the welfare of the state and the population ruled by the state (Hindess, 1997). Thus, the target of this new type of reason that is conceptualized by Foucault as governmentality is population. Firstly, the population seems like ultimate goal of government. The goal is wealth, enhancement of conditions, increasing welfare, probability of longevity, and health of population. The population represents the goal of government rather than the power of sovereign; it is the subject of needs and desires but also a object in government hands (Foucault, 2000) as imagining like a biological, social body, rather a sum of just legal and political individuals (Lemke, 2011). The new object of government, by contrast, regards these subject and the forces and capacities of living individuals as members of a population, as resources to be fostered, to be used, and be optimized (Dean, 1999). So governmentality is a whole, comprised by institutions, procedures, analyses and ideas, calculations and tactics which provide the implementation of very specific and complicated kind of power. Also, the basic knowledge type is political economy and basic technical vehicles are apparatuses of security of power according to Foucault. Besides, the governmentality does not reflect on an institutionalism directly as the term of governance. Moreover, it necessitates forms of knowledge that arise from thinking processes and inform the activity of governing as Dean (1995) called the *episteme* of government and also necessitates the *tekhne* of government that answered the questions of what forms of thought, knowledge, expertise, strategies, means of calculation, or rationality employed in practices of governing? How does thought seek to transform these practices? How do these practices of governing give rise to specific forms of truth? How does thought seek to render particular issues, domains, and problems governable? (Dean, 1999). In a word, governmentality is related with how subject governs itself (conduct of self/conduct one’s own conduct) and how this governance is governed (conduct of conduct). In general definition of government as the “conduct of conduct”, the government entails not only relations of power and authority but also issues of self and identity. It might now be said, very schematically, that power, truth, and identity mark out three general dimensions of

government corresponding to what it shall be called its *techne*, its *episteme*, and its *ethos* (Dean, 1999).

The concept of governmentality has correctly been regarded as a “key notion” (Allen, 1991) or a “deranging term” (Keenan, 1982) of Foucault’s work (Lemke, 2002). First, in the early modern period, the family or household was often seen as a microcosm of a state or community, and therefore as providing a model for its government. The development of an autonomous rationality of government requires that families and households should be seen in a different light, that is, as components of the population which is to be governed (Hindess, 1997). Political reason addresses practical questions of how to manage the population of the state and the institutions, organizations, and processes which operate within that population (Hindess, 1997).

The notion of population is crucial to the definition of the ends of the government of the state. Yet, at the same time, government must become an economic government. To govern properly, to ensure the happiness and prosperity of the population, it is necessary to govern through a particular register, that of the economy. Moreover, government itself must be economical, both fiscally and in the use of power (Dean, 1999).

The power, essentially, concerns the inclusion of economy in the governmental process, which is established within the family context. More clearly, managing individuals, goods, and wealth in the family has considered the main indicator of successful administration. Concretion of the economy within the practice of politics as well as distribution of national income and wealth is denominated by political economy. Within the scope of political economy, state administration means a strict control of wealth and behavior of public such as preserving goods and his own house of householder (Usur, 2003).

The population phenomenon excludes the family which has been a subject of government. Afterward, the population represents the purposes of government rather than the power of monarch. Population is a subject of needs and desires but at the same time, an object of the power or government. The population knows their wants in front of administration but they are unaware of real effect of government policies (Foucault, 2000).

Rising outcome of these thoughts from the aspect of governmentality, population, and some kinds of specific phenomenon regarding to the population cannot be reduced to the family dimension or the family model cannot govern the masses (When the population is a subject of government, the family isn’t pushed into the background. The family is of secondary importance besides the population but is going to be considered as an internal figure of population. Every kind of information about the population is obtained through the family). “Paradox of thrift” can exemplify this fact. Conventional government structure accepts the virtuousness of savings of the subject, as is the case in the family. However, such ethical advice may not be true when the bulk of population is taken into account. Because some household’s expenditure generates others’ income, therefore the poverty emerged instead of wealthiness in the society whose members are prudential (Aytaç & Balcı, 2007).

The other important concept, figuring out the mentality of national accounts in the society, is the representation. Representation has two dimensions which are closely related to each other. One of them is about the modes of thought. The other part is related to the data collection methodology.

The modes of thought are needed to draw meaningful conclusions about the society from the collected data (Hacking, 2005). The modes of thought contribute to the construction process of common mentality encoded by the political power. The common mentalities gather the society and state under the roof of common interests and these modes of thought are organized to manipulate the population within the governmentality framework. Every kind of information peculiar to the population including the national income is obtained from the aggregate through the sampling methods of today. All of the methods of sampling refer to a systematic structure that provides information about almost all of the topics related to population (mainly that of national

income) and explains the truths about society represented by a certain probability.

Hacking (2005) suggested that the more natural events were subjected to the indeterminable processes, the more supervising were made. He exemplified the quantum physics. The quantum physics assumes nature subjected to the probabilistic processes and hence it is indeterminable. This kind of exploration about the quantum physics accelerates the abilities of the intervention to the nature, changing the nature course extraordinarily. In a similar manner, indeterminable nature of the truths about the society, in this respect, increases the ability of the state to manipulate and transform the society.

Governmentality and the idea of representation are the two main concepts in order to reveal the relationship between state and society via the statistics. While the governmentality carries the notion of government from the family concept to the population perspective, it enables to reduce the governmental phenomenon to the quantification issues, and thus representation of the ideas focuses on what is worth being represented and what is not, thanks to the modes of thought. The SNA, in this regard, is the reciprocal and mutually determined relationship between the fact of society and the representation of society via the stated statistical data.

The National Accounts Constructed as a Company Metaphor

Collection, compilation, and publication of the data sets, which contained national income and its components, constitute the international accounting system, which is labelled as the SNA. This system corresponds to a sort of power experience denoted by the governmentality, in which the ordinary people get inside but not included.

Considering the governmentality conception, when the family is excluded from the government model, the metaphor of the political power to govern the society becomes “company”. Political power governs the broad masses of the people, that are reduced to the population and thereby they become only quantified figures by adhering to the company model. Several instances can support this determination. Particularly, the double-entry bookkeeping of national income accounts means to account society. The roles of the national accounts and the main economic indicators derived from them in the international economic relations, the criteria, which is determined by the transnational organizations like IMF and World Bank in lending to the countries, credit ratings of independent credit institutions like Moody’s and Standard and Poor’s, the projections of the state related to education, health, security, population, etc. All the instances relevant to the national accounts point out the company metaphor, which is embedded in the administration of a state in connection with the governmentality.

An impressive example about the company metaphor is the bankruptcy rhetoric. Negative effects of the global economic crisis on countries have been described via the bankruptcy rhetoric in recent years. Especially in the 2008, European financial crisis, Iceland, which is the most affected country of the crisis, was narrated with the “bankruptcy of the state” and “sink” metaphors in the world press.

When it looks closely the historical development of national income accounts, the national income has not been investigated until 20th century as a subject separately. The national income was investigated as a research object after the 1930’s. In the historical development of national income, the years of 1930’s and 1940’s have a great importance in many respects. The methodology of national income calculation, regularity of national income data publications, and the definition of production, consumption, and accumulation in the national income account framework are in concret in this period of time (Bos, 1992; Carson, 1975; Comim, 2001;

Kendrick, 1970; N. D. Ruggles & R. Ruggles, 1999; Vanoli, 2005; 2010).

This period also points out the determination of the national identity of national income. This identification process of national income means the accounting of whole society. The ultimate purpose of economic activities denotes the aim of collection and compilation of statistics, besides what the determination of constituent item or theoretical rhetoric is in the accounting of society. The purpose of economic activity and the determination of constituent rhetoric, which is based on the purpose of economic activity, enforce the mentality of governance as a prerequisite.

After the 1930's, statistics became a governmental tool to quantify, account, and control the society with regard to the company model. Especially, in the second half of 1930's, national income accounts make reproduction of a model of corporate accounting. The successive works of Morris A. Copel who is an American economist is of importance in terms of introducing the double-entry bookkeeping usage in the national income accounting and the concept of "social income", which is more inclusionary than national income. Another American economist Robert F. Martin suggested an accounting system for a national economy. Andre Vincent in France perceived economy as a corporation and proposed to superimpose the corporate accounting principles on a national economy (as cited in the work of Vanoli, 2005, p. 16). At last, Ed Van Cleff from Holland perceived the national accounts as a corporation accounts and thought a government as a corporate executive (Copeland, 1932; 1935; 1937; Martin, 1936; Cleff, 1941; Vanoli, 2010).

After World War II, the SNA guided to arrange and compare the nation's income accounts. The society is governed through the guides like SNA. The SNA governs the society through the statistics because of the fact that the SNA determines the criteria and rules, which makes the comparison possible between countries and forces to obey these rules. While the system determines the binding criteria for the national accounts, it emphasizes the flexible structure of the SNA. This shows that the government phenomenon of the SNA is formed by both of the consent of the society and enforcement of political power. Evaluation of national income accounts as corporate accounts and governing the economy as a company management are definite indicators of the reality that capitalism constructs the SNA through the capital hegemony.

The SNA, which is becoming the main tool to comprehend and explain the social relations in the society, forms the society on three main items, consisting of state, household, and company. This formalization of the SNA, which is based on the company model, gives the priority of conceptualization in the accounting system and structural arrangements about the national income to the companies and state, which are formed by the company metaphor, respectively. It is generally observed that several revisions in the SNA are related substantially to the capital and institutional structure of the capital. While the accounting systems gain information about the national income through the representation, at the same time, the accounting systems of national income transmission of information on mentality (governance codes), represented by them, to the layers of society. This system, in which the market reshapes companies and state, forms the household by using the rhetoric of capital. In this way, household is shaped from the capitalist point of view, which is embedded into all the institutions of the state.

Social Accounting Matrix (SAM): Is This a Way to Abolish Governmentality?

National incomes and its components were organized under the SNA after the World War II. The process, which has begun since 1947, continued with the United Nations Report in 1953. The SNA of 1953 was the beginning of a generation period of the SNA. The SNA of 1968, which represented the second generation of the

SNA, introduced firstly the SAM, which is the appearance of national income accounts in the matrix form. By definition, an SAM is the database and accounting system of a certain economic transactions year, which reveals the interrelationships in an economy that contain transactions and transfers between economic agents and institutions, in this sense, which tabulates the structural characteristics of entire economy (Defourny & Thorbecke, 1984; King, 1985; Pyatt & Thorbecke, 1980; Round, 2003; Sadoulet & de Janvry, 1995). An SAM, which demonstrates the process of income generation and distribution together, also offers the most convenient framework to analyze distribution.

National income accounts become an important tool for forecasting the change of an economic condition of a country and analyzing the economic consequences of implemented policies or effects of crises thanks to the SAM. SAM has three important features: i) SAM is a square matrix, which demonstrates the earnings on the rows and outlays on the columns. Transactions appeared in cells, and thus the matrix shows the relations and transfers between the economic agents explicitly; ii) SAM shows all the production, consumption, accumulation, and distribution, thus the whole economical activities; and iii) SAM is a flexible structure, which allows designing the economical construction how you like. It may be that the most important feature of SAM is that household and household groups are in the center of SAM.

With the mentioned features above, especially flexible character of SAM and household as an integral part of an SAM, the SAM may be the main framework for the comprehension of national income and its components in terms of interests or benefits of household. While governmentality reduces a society to a population and governs a society through the quantification, the governmentality becomes an administrative tool of the SNA and SNA designs an economic system in a capitalistic manner. This point of view always points out the policy priorities like economic growth and conceals the unequal income distribution and the role of state in the unequal distribution mechanism.

SAM not only exhibits the national accounts in the matrix form, but also designs the economic system in a desirable form within the general equilibrium framework. From this perspective, SAM can be constructed to point out the distribution mechanism and transform the perception of economy from growth into income distribution. By using SAM, the opportunity can be taken to abolish the capitalistic point of view, which is shaped with the governmentality.

There is a special example from the SAM's perspective, which is relevant to the interests of the household or labor class. Gul (2012) showed the distributional effects of public finance policies by using a class-based SAM for the post-2000 era in Turkey. While the dominant rhetoric emphasizes having primary surplus of budget in terms of macroeconomic stability and economic growth, this study points out the deteriorative role of state on income distribution through the 2002 and 2006 class-based SAM. The SAM is a 45×45 dimension, and households are disaggregated into eight class categories, comprising urban/rural property owners, petty bourgeois, commodity producers, urban/rural working classes, leisured classes, and pensioners; besides public revenues, expenditures are detailed as direct-indirect taxes, non-tax revenues, current-transfer expenditures, and interest payments, respectively.

The main argument of this study mentioned above is that resource allocation mechanism of the state is like a private sector and state behaves like a rational behavior (*homo economicus*) or a company. Especially, this behavior is obvious in the public finance. The state creates primary surplus in the state budget in order to relieve the burden of interest payments. This rational structure of public finance (state) is presented as the "common good" for the society especially the household. This kind of policy perspective leads to the deficits of

the important part of society, which are composed of labor classes.

Conclusion

Governmentality and the representation, as the governmental phenomenon, might be the fundamental framework to comprehend the relationship between statistics and society. Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality is an important notion to construct and function the government rationalization. With the governmentality concept, the subject of the government, which is denominated as a family, reduces to the population and represents the purpose of government. Population, in this sense, enables to quantify the masses in all its aspects. The representation determines the criteria of the quantification process. Governmentality and representation, the two determining concepts, construct the "common good" rhetoric and the common language of capital to manipulate society. That's why "stability", as an economic notion, is one of the constructed rhetoric, which is the common word of both capitalist and laborer. The intersection of statistics and society on the basis of economy is the SNA. The SNA is considered as the rationalization of government through the national income. While the system determines the binding criteria for the national accounts, it emphasizes the flexible structure of the SNA. This shows that the government phenomenon of the SNA is formed by both of the consent of the society and enforcement of political power. Evaluation of national income accounts as corporate accounts and governing the economy as a company management are definite indicators of the reality that capitalism constructs the SNA through the capital hegemony.

The SAM framework, which has a flexible form and includes the household, can abolish the hegemonic structure of the SNA, which is surrounded by the capitalistic manner.

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