Scoping Paper SP8 for Radstats meeting, 2nd October. Rachel Cohen

Radical → Radical Statistics (rather than Statistics → Radical Statistics)

also related to : Strategy for the Project

Most proposals for Radstats activities and publications focus on ways of making statistics more radical. In contrast, this suggestion is focused on enabling radicals to gain more from statistics. My experience within Radstats has been that this has received insufficient attention (perhaps understandably given that most active members of Radstats have a strong statistical backgrounds).

Proposal for a handbook: 'Statistics for Radical Change'

A 'how to' for local community and protest groups wanting to make use of and interpret statistics to achieve radical ends, it would include practical suggestions about the following, and perhaps more, for instance case studies, group activities:

- how to create your own data;
- how to access and assess reliable data (including official data sources);
- how to produce useful (accurate and relevant) statistics, charts etc;
- how to tell convincing stories about society using statistical data;
- how to evaluate impact/change using statistical data;
- how to successfully critique statistical analyses;
- where to get additional support and advice.

Why now?

Radstats has done this kind of thing in the past, but given the changes in accessibility of data and changes in the tools available to analyse them (including rise of R), data analysis is within the grasp of, and of use to, an increasing number of 'radical' (small, campaigning or protest) groups.

With rapid recent changes in data and the tools available for its statistical analysis there is a need for up to date and hands-on advice.

The proposal fits with Radstats founding principles of increasing community control over the use and production of statistics. But it also links up with new ideas, for instance data-drives, hackathons.

The audience

Radical groups and campaigns, including charities, community groups, trade union branches but also less formally constituted (anarchist or socialist) organisations. This is a potentially large market.

Many of these organisations would find traditional data analysis books, aimed at academic or policy analysts, irrelevant or overly complex. In contrast the logic of this handbook would be rooted in an understanding of the power of control over, and knowledge of, numbers in political, social and economic struggle.

Or a web book

Alternatively the 'handbook' could be produced as a free web resource. This would usefully cement Radical Statistics as the first stop for social organisations and groups wanting to use statistics for radical aims. Perhaps most usefully this could occur alongside a 'matching' database, that allowed people with statistical support needs to be matched with people with statistical skills.