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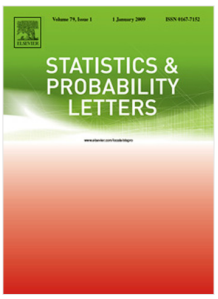

Big data and public policies: Opportunities and challenges

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Big data and public policies: opportunities and challenges

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Abstract. Big data are often presented as a strategic opportunity for the design of new public policies, improving the quality and effectiveness of public services and using resources more efficiently. The paper discusses such opportunities and identifies a few open questions.

Keywords: Public policy design; public value; big data; personal policies

1. Introduction

Secchi (2017) clarifies how the "big data revolution" is creating new challenges to statisticians: volume, velocity and variability of often unstructured data will (or could) require new theories, methods, and tools for data integration and visualization. However, such an effort will result in "a better society", only if there are "problems" where the characteristics of big data can improve the quality of decision making and the decision makers themselves are aware of such opportunity and willing to take advantage of it.

The **design and implementation of public policies** is, from this point of view, a promising area for an extended use of big data in decision making (Maciejewski, 2017, Mercel 2017). In this paper, I will try to clarify why there is a strong potential in supporting public policies through big data and what is the value added to our society. I will also argue that to turn such potential into reality, we must face new organizational and conceptual problems, whose solution requires the joint effort of statisticians together with scholars of many other disciplines, from ethics to law, from political science to management.

The paper is articulated in three main sections:

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