

B-Stat News

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Soci t  Belge de Statistique

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EDITORIAL

B-Stat or not B-Stat News?

As President of the Society, I would like to wish all members a Happy and Prosperous New Year 2006. May the SBS-BVS continue to grow in harmony with other societies and groups, not only in size but also in quality!

The past year has seen many ups and downs. Our statistical environment is experiencing sometimes dramatic changes. Two of our renowned institutions have "gone with the wind". First, the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) has virtually disappeared, at least its name. Fortunately, the SBS-BVS board can still hold its regular meetings in this venerable institution. The front door on *44, rue de Louvain-Leuvenseweg* is no longer accessible to all those who used to visit NIS and you will have to enter the building now from the back door on *67, rue de la Croix de Fer-Ijzerenkruisstraat*. Secondly, the Institute of Statistics of the Free University of Brussels (ULB), our oldest and pioneering centre, is near of being dismantled after over 30 years of existence and outstanding contribution to both national and international statistics.

The good news comes from the Interuniversity Attraction Pole (IAP), coordinated by the Institute of Statistics at UCL and involving the Centre for Statistics of the University of Hasselt (we have to get use to this new appellation!), the Biostatistical Centre at KUL, the former Institute of Statistics at ULB, among others, which has achieved impressive results on "*Statistical techniques and modelling for complex substantive questions with complex data (Project P5/24)*", in a rather short time period. Congratulations! Also, the statistical group at the University of Ghent has to be commended for organizing the 13th annual meeting of the SBS-BVS in the Priorij van Corsendonk (Oud- Turnhout). The scientific program, set up jointly with the Quetelet Society, the 3CC RSS local group and b-ENBIS, was of high quality, combined with a friendly and warm monastic atmosphere.

At the end of 2005, Mia Hubert and Philippe Lambert, the co-editors of B-Stat News, asked to be replaced after 3 years of loyal services. They have done a superb job, collecting the necessary material to keep our newsletter alive. A call for new editors was launched. Unfortunately, the response rate was disappointing. Only two applications in due forms were received. I warmly thank Sophie Vanbelle (University of Liège) and Olivier Thas (University of Ghent) for their generous involvement. They have been

appointed by the Board as the new co-editors of the SBS-BVS newsletter for the next 3 years (2006-2009).

Thus, my question: "*B-Stat or not B- Stat News?*" Our newsletter has been, since the revival of the Society in 1991, the periodical link between our members. It reports on our statistical centres, their publications and theses, it announces meetings, conferences and symposia, it reprints the minutes of the annual general assembly, the list of members or the statutes updates and it publishes other relevant information to our members. The little blue issues of B-Stat News which lay on our bookshelves are the written memory of the Society. A recent survey showed that a majority of members preferred to keep receiving the paper version rather than the electronic one. Should we continue to produce our newsletter? When looking at other statistical societies, let us observe what's happening. The RSS has improved the quality of the former "*RSS News and Notes*" into the "*RSS NEWS*". Moreover, its new magazine "*Significance: statistics making sense*", published four times a year, is receiving wide acceptance and success. The "*AMSTAT NEWS – the membership Magazine of the American Statistical Association*" has also undergone a lift-up and is more agreeable to read. Even the Institute of Mathematical Statistics (IMS) has considerably ameliorated the presentation and content of its periodical newsletter "*The IMS Bulletin*". The same applies for the "*Biometric Bulletin*" the magazine of the International Biometric Society. In the Internet society, we would expect the disappearance of newsletters, bulletins and magazines published by scientific societies. By contrast, they flourish and continue to provide a natural way to inter-connect members of a same society.

I think the B-Stat News, which was started in 1993 by Pierre Dagnelie, has still many years to go. Its content will reflect the members' contributions, whether major or modest. Rephrasing a famous saying: "*Don't ask yourself what the Society can do for you, but what can you do for it!*"

I thank again our new editors Sophie and Olivier and I wish them good work and success. I count on all our members to help them in their endeavours.

Adelin Albert
President of the SBS-BVS

HISTORY OF SBS-BVS ANNUAL MEETINGS

| BSS | Year | Location | Organizers |
|-----|------|---------------------|------------|
| 1 | 1993 | De Haan | KUL-ULB |
| 2 | 1994 | Spa | ULG |
| 3 | 1995 | Houthalen | LUC |
| 4 | 1996 | La Roche-en-Ardenne | UMH |
| 5 | 1997 | Mol | UIA |
| 6 | 1998 | Houffalize | FUNDP |
| 7 | 1999 | Nieuwport | UG |
| 8 | 2000 | Herbeumont s/Semois | UCL |
| 9 | 2001 | Oostende | KUL |
| 10 | 2002 | Kerkrade (NL) | LUC |
| 11 | 2003 | La Roche-en-Ardenne | ULB |
| 12 | 2004 | Vielsalm | ULG |
| 13 | 2005 | Oud-Turnhout | UG |
| 14 | 2006 | Houffalize | UCL |

CHRONOLOGY OF SBS-BVS EXECUTIVE BOARDS

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|------------------|----------------------------|----------------|------------|
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| | Vice-President | M. Hallin | (ULB) |
| | Secretary | I. Gijbels | (UCL) |
| | | L. Simar | (UCL) |
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| | | | |
| 2002-2004 | President | N. Veraverbeke | (LUC) |
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**13TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BELGIAN STATISTICAL
SOCIETY, PRIORIJ VAN CORSENDONK, OUD-TURNHOUT,
14-15 OCTOBER 2005**

The BVS-SBS 2005 annual meeting was organised by the Center for Statistics of Ghent University. The conference took place at the Prioory of Corsendonk in Oud-Turnhout, located in the north of the province of Antwerp. For the first time in the history of the BVS-SBS, the meeting was organised jointly with a few other Belgian societies related to statistics. In particular, the following societies participated in the organisation: the Belgian Branch of the European Network for Business and Industrial Statistics (b-ENBIS), the Three Country Corner local group of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS-3CC) and the Quetelet Society. Each of them organized one session in which they had one or two invited speakers.

In total, there were 124 participants, among which there were 10 invited speakers. Adding the presentations of the 25 contributed paper, there were 35 oral presentations distributed over 9 sessions. In a dedicated coffee break, 7 posters were presented.

According to the tradition, the first (plenary) session was opened by the president of the BSS, Adelin Albert, who was immediately followed by the first invited speaker, Gerda Claeskens (KULeuven) who talked about some important issues in model selection. Next there were 3 contributed paper presentations, followed by a talk of Peter Slock (NIS-INS) about probability survey sampling. After lunch, two parallel sessions were organised by the Quetelet Society and b-ENBIS. The latter had invited Jeroen De Mast (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands) and Paul Eilers (Leiden University, The Netherlands) who talked about Gauge R&R studies and scatterplots, respectively. Their session was concluded by one contributed paper on the preparation and presentation of tables. The Quetelet Society had invited Andreas Wienke (Martin-Luther University, Germany) who presented bivariate cure models based on frailty. These two sessions were followed by the poster session extended coffee break. The last scientific part of the day consisted of two parallel sessions organised by the BVS-SBS and the RSS-3cc. Both sessions had 4 contributed paper presentations and 1 invited talk. In the general BVS-SBS session, Elvezio Ronchetti (University of Geneva, Switzerland) talked about robust model selection. In the other session, Peter Diggle (Lancaster University, United Kingdom) gave a presentation about an application of model-based geostatistics to

epidemiology. The first day was closed by a delicious dinner, but most of the participants couldn't find their beds early after this exciting day, and they decided to go to the bar for an after dinner discussion about (extra-) scientific issues.

After a short sleep in one of the comfortable rooms, the scientific program commenced on the second day with a plenary session in which Saskia Le Cessie (Leiden University, The Netherlands) gave a talk about goodness-of-fit methods for regression models. She was followed by 3 contributed paper presentations. In the two next (parallel) morning sessions another 7 contributed talks were given. One of these sessions was hosted by the Biostat section. The conference was closed with a plenary session, but not before another well tasted lunch was served. This final session had two invited speakers. Norbert Henze (University of Karlsruhe, Germany) talked about goodness-of-fit tests based on the L_p norm, and Kristel Van Steen (UGent) gave a presentation about statistical issues in genomic screening.

The organizing committee found the atmosphere really friendly and thanks all participants for their contribution.

We are all looking forward to the future meeting to be organised by UCL in 2006 and we hope to meet you there again.

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE BELGIAN
STATISTICAL SOCIETY**

KU Leuven, February 22, 2006

The SBS-BVS annual General Assembly will take place at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Auditorium Kasteel Arenberg, Kasteelpark Arenberg 1, Heverlee), on Wednesday 22 February 2005 at 17:00.

It will be preceded by two scientific talks according to the following program:

14:30 – 15:30 *Analysing On-line Monitoring Data in Intensive Care*

Ursula GATHER
University of Dortmund, Germany

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee break

16:00 – 17:00 *Penalized Spline Smoothing and Generalized Linear Mixed Models – Some Theory and Applications*

Göran KAUERMANN, University of Bielefeld
Germany

You are all cordially invited

VUB ANNOUNCEMENT

The VUB is pleased to inform the Belgian Statistical Society that as of February 1, 2006 Dr. Andreas Christmann will join the Department of Mathematics, Faculty of Sciences to further strengthen the statistics program at the VUB. In recent years there has been a growing demand by the students for the option “statistics” within the mathematics program of the VUB. Christmann will be involved both in the bachelor program where he will teach basic statistics courses and in the master program of the department where he will offer specialized courses related to his research. His research expertise in applied statistics is a valuable addition to the present expertise in probability and theoretical statistics at the Department of Mathematics of the VUB.

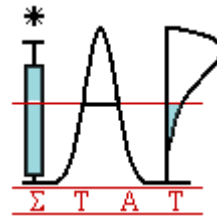
Many members of the Belgian Statistical Society might already know Christmann as he was involved in joint research projects with colleagues from the universities of Antwerp, Gent and Leuven. He was also one of the main speakers at the annual meeting of the Belgian Statistical Society which was held in 2003 at La Roche.

Andreas Christmann is of German nationality and he grew up in Schleiden which is about 20 km from Belgium. From 1983 to 1988 he studied statistics at the University of Dortmund where he also received his doctor’s degree in 1992. (Promotor: Prof. Dr. U. Gather). He then worked as a statistical consultant, first for a private company and then afterwards at the statistical consulting center of the University of Dortmund. During that period he also continued his research in mathematical statistics which led in 1998 to his “Habilitation” at the University of Dortmund. Since then he has been teaching at the statistics department of the University of Dortmund and in 2003 he was promoted to “Hochschuldozent” (= Associate Professor) for “Data Analysis”.

Christmann has been conducting research in the following areas:

- Statistical machine learning (convex risk minimization, support vector machine)
- Computational Statistics
- Robust statistics
- Risk differentiation and scoring methods for insurance companies
- Data Mining

We are confident that Christmann will help us to have a high level statistics program at the VUB and that he will be a positive addition to the excellent statistical research in Belgium.



ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE IAP-NETWORK

`Statistical techniques and modeling for complex substantive questions with complex data'

The IAP (Interuniversity Attraction Pole, Phase V, 2002-2006) network is a research network in statistics between the universities of KULeuven, UHasselt, ULB, UCL (main coordinator), UJF Grenoble (France) and RWTH Aachen (Germany). The research project focuses on statistical techniques for dealing with complex problems and/or complex data structures. The project is organized around six work packages: Functional estimation, Time series, Survival analysis, Mixed models, Classification and mixture models, and Incompleteness and latent variables.

Forthcoming activities of the network :

February 22-23, 2006 : Short course on 'Mixed models and incomplete data' by Geert Molenberghs (U. Hasselt) and Geert Verbeke (K.U.Leuven) at K.U.Leuven

March 16-17, 2006 : The fifth annual workshop will take place in Louvain-la-Neuve on the topic 'Flexible statistical analysis adapted to complex data structures'. See next page for details.

March 6-24, 2006 : Short course on 'Support Vector Machines and Statistical Learning' by Anestis Antoniadis (U.J.F. Grenoble) at U.C.L.

May 2-3, 2006 : Short course on 'Introduction to numerical techniques for statisticians' by Geert Molenberghs (U. Hasselt), Geert Verbeke (K.U.Leuven) and Francis Tuerlinckx (K.U.Leuven) at K.U.Leuven

May 19, 2006 : Meeting on 'Survival analysis' organized by U.Hasselt and U.C.L. at U.Hasselt

Updated information can be found at

www.stat.ucl.ac.be/IAP

**WORKSHOP: `Flexible statistical analysis adapted
to complex data structures`**

16 and 17 March 2006

At the Institute of Statistics, UCL, Louvain-la-Neuve

Fifth workshop of the IAP research network in statistics between RWTH (Aachen), UJF (Grenoble), KUL (Leuven), UH (Hasselt), ULB (Bruxelles), and UCL (Louvain-la-Neuve). The topics cover the main scientific interests of the research network: functional estimation, time series, survival analysis, mixed models, classification and mixture models, incompleteness and latent variables.

The following people have agreed to give an invited presentation:

- Alois Kneip, Universität Bonn
- Enno Mammen, Universität Mannheim
- Hernando Ombao, University of Illinois
- Ricardo Cao, Universidade da Coruna
- Göran Kauermann, Universität Bielefeld
- Mike Kenward, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

Everyone, whether or not a member of the IAP network, is invited to submit an abstract for an oral or a poster presentation before 17 February 2006.

Updated information on the workshop can be found at

www.stat.ucl.ac.be/IAP/WorkshopV

FORTHCOMING STATISTICAL EVENTS

April 19-21, 2006 – Ghent – Second international meeting methodological issues in Oral Health research: assessing and improving data quality
Website: <http://www.med.kuleuven.be/biostat/conferences/Dental2006/>

August 27-31, 2006 – Geneva – ISCB 2006. Contact persons: David W. Warne (david_w_warne@bluewin.ch), Chair, Local Organising Committee, or Lutz Edler (edler@dkfz-heidelberg.de), Chair, Scientific Programme Committee.
Website: <http://www.iscb2006.info>

September 3-8, 2006 – Liège – International Congress for Mathematical Geology.
Website: <http://www.geomac.ulg.ac.be/iamg06/>

14th Annual Meeting BSS2006

The next annual meeting of the SBS-BVS will be organized by UCL and not by FUNDP as previously announced. The dates have also been changed.

The meeting will take place in Houffalize (Ol Fosse d'Outh), 11-13 October 2006. More information about the meeting will be available soon on the website.

RECENT PhD THESES

Université libre de Bruxelles

Stephan Marius. *Contributions to the small area estimation* (August 26, 2005 – Promotors: Jean-Jacques DROESBEKE and Catherine DEHON)

In the survey sampling theory there are two possible approaches: the survey design approach and the model approach. In the first case the inference is based on the survey sampling distribution which is the distribution generated by the random mechanism which selects the sample. In the second case, there are two sources of randomness: the survey design and the model and the inference should take into account both distributions. If the sample design is non informative than the sampling distribution can be ignored. Otherwise, the sampling design have to be taken into account.

A domain is a sub-population of the target population. In most cases we may want to estimate the mean of a domain μ_i . The sample we have is relevant to estimate the mean of the whole population not of a sub-population. If we use the sample design approach than the estimator of μ_i uses only the observations in the sample coming from the domain i (direct estimator) which may not be enough to make estimations of adequate precision. In this case the domain is a *small domain* or a *small area*. That is why in small area theory one adopts the model based approach which allow the use of all the sample to estimate μ_i (indirect estimator).

Many of the models used in the small area theory are particular examples of the general mixed linear model (see Rao J.N.K.(2003)). There are two possible cases: the *infinite population* case when μ_i is approximated by a linear combination of the parameters of the model; the *finite population* case which consists of predicting only the unobserved part of the small area. Under both cases one looks for the best linear unbiased predictors. Their values are unknown because of the variance components. We estimate and replace them to obtain two stage predictors called empirical best linear unbiased predictors.

The mean squared error of the best linear unbiased predictors can be calculated exactly. However, this is not true for the mean squared error of the empirical best linear unbiased predictors which means that one has to find an approximation and then an estimator for it. The first result consists of finding an approximation to terms of order $o(1/m)$ and an estimator of bias of order $o(1/m)$ for the case when the variance components are estimated

by the *minimum norm quadratic unbiased estimator* (see Rao C.R. (1971)). The proofs are done under an one-fold nested linear model proposed by Batese, Harter and Fuller (1973).

Stukel and Rao (1999) propose a two fold nested linear model with fixed variances which supposes that the variances are the same for any small area or primary units. The second result consists of proposing a two fold model with random variances obtained by relaxing the hypothesis of constant variances. Under such a model and for both types of populations, we obtain an approximation and an estimator for the mean squared error of the small area predictor with the same proprieties than above.

For both results we supposed a non informative sampling design. In case one uses an informative sampling design, the sampling design must not be ignored otherwise the inference can be largely biased (see Pfeffermann (1993)). One way of taking it into account is to incorporate the sampling weights into the formulas of the model-based predictors. Pfeffermann, Skinner,...(1998) argue that doing it is not so evident giving the fact that in small area theory most of the models are multilevel models where the final weights are product of the weights coming from the different sampling designs which compose the complex sampling design. In Prasad and Rao (1999) and You and Rao (2002) there are two methods to incorporate the weights proposed for an one fold nested linear model and for the *infinite population* case. The simulations in both papers are done using a non informative sampling design. So, we first studied how the pseudo predictors (predictors with weights) perform under an informative sampling design. Then we adapt the two methods to a two fold nested linear model and show how the *finite population* case can also be handled.

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Maria Caterina Bramati. *Some robust methods in the analysis of multivariate time series* (October 07, 2005 – Promotors: Marc HALLIN and Christophe CROUX)

The goal of this thesis is to study some inference problems in multivariate models. Two main topics are considered: robust regression estimators in panel data models (Chapter 1) and semiparametric hypothesis testing in vector autoregression models (Chapters 2 and 3).

Panel data estimators can be strongly biased in the presence of outlying observations. Although most researchers are aware of this problem, little literature is existing on robust estimation of the parameters in a panel data model. In Chapter 1 we study robust regression techniques in the fixed effects linear panel data framework. Robustness of the procedures is investigated by means of breakdown point computations and simulation experiments. A distinction between outlying blocks and cells in a panel is made. To show the potential of robust panel data methods an empirical example on the response of the private sector behaviour to fiscal policy is presented.

In Chapter 2 we construct a class of locally asymptotically most stringent (in the Le Cam sense) tests for independence between two sets of variables in the VAR models. These tests are based on multivariate ranks of distances and multivariate signs of the observations and are shown to be asymptotically distribution-free under very mild assumptions on the noise, which is obtained by applying a linear transformation to a block of spherical innovation. The class of tests derived is invariant with respect to the group of block affine transformations and asymptotically invariant with respect to the group of continuous monotone marginal radial transformations.

The issue of *instantaneous causality* between two groups of variables has been the object of some controversial positions in the last few decades. According to the definition of Granger (1969), when the knowledge of the current value of a series x_t helps in predicting the current value of a series y_t , we can speak of instantaneous causality. The aim of Chapter 3 is testing *for instantaneous noncausality*. Since instantaneous correlation of the innovations is a necessary condition for instantaneous causality (Pierce and Haugh, 1977), we focus on testing some restrictions on the covariance matrix of the noise. The class of the derived tests is locally asymptotically most stringent (in the Le Cam sense), invariant with respect to the group of block affine transformations and asymptotically invariant with respect to the group of continuous monotone radial transformations. Those tests are based on multivariate ranks of distances and multivariate signs of the observations and are shown to be asymptotically distribution-free under very mild assumptions on the noise.

**HOGE RAAD VOOR DE STATISTIEK
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Next issue

We would like to publish in this *Newsletter* any statistical matter such as :

- information about universities, institutes (1 to 3 pages);
- lists of recent publications and technical reports;
- abstracts of recent PhD theses;
- news of members;
- forthcoming statistical events and announcements;
- short papers about teaching methods in statistics, statistics in the industry, official statistics, etc.

Suggestions are welcome: please, contact us.

Suitable information for the next issue, prepared as **(LA)TEX or WORD FILES**, should reach the editors of the Newsletter **BEFORE April 15, 2006**, preferable by e-mail to:

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Any change of job, address, phone number, ... ?

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