

The Platypus Syndrome

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Paper Abstract:

The SNA updating process that resulted in the publication of the SNA 2008 has been characterised by some original features, such as the rather long gestation (2004-2007) for the resolution of the issues for revision, backed on the preparatory work by some specific working groups, such as the Canberra group on non-financial assets.

On the other end, the way by which the SNA text has been finalised did not actually followed, for several reasons, the commitments that had previously been taken ahead of the UN statistical commission.

We are now in the position to assess how the changes that were initiated by the update have been implemented in practice, and how the resulting estimates have been perceived by users.

It would be interesting to capitalise on this experience in order to examine if the whole governance of the field of national accounting could be improved, and made more transparent. There seems to be the need for four levels in this respect:

- a forum that is able to stay tuned to users, in a general sense, to perceive the needs emanating from the changing world and to think about the way demands can be translated in the various fields of national accounting ;
- a strategic direction, that appreciates the possibilities of introducing changes in the system, that ranks the priorities, that decides about the timing ;
- an autonomous conceptual level, that would be of a rather permanent nature - which does not mean that it should be composed of permanent members ;
- an implementation forum, from which feedbacks should be required.

Many of the present statistical agencies in the world have adopted some of the features of this governance. It is also possible to take inspiration from other bodies, such as the general accounting standard setters.