Statistical and public controversies in today’s world.
Jean-Pierre Beaud
Université du Québec à Montréal
Montréal, Canada
beaud.jean-pierre@uqam.ca

The official version of the history of statistics often gives special attention to success stories, rationalization, innovation and progress. Such a generous reading, without being false of course, does not cover every aspect of the subject. A history of the failures of the statistical communication is also possible and desirable. This other reading would identify the scientific controversies and especially all those which overflowed the limits of the 'statistical world' to become public controversies. A public controversy is often embarrassing for a statistical bureau. The statistical arguments, which put forward scientific and pragmatic points of view, must then compete with philosophical, political and/or moral arguments. It is not sure that the statistical arguments always prevail. A few examples of recent statistical controversies will be presented and analyzed. A formalization will then be sketched.
Keywords: history of statistics, arguments, crisis, formalization.