"GDP THINKING"[1] VERSUS SNA – THE GREATEST INVENTION OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Nana Aslamazishvili
PhD in Economics, Associate Professor
Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Abstract

For nearly eight decades, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has remained at the center of economic analysis, international comparisons, economic and social policies, and strategic decisions. During this time, both his fetishization and criticism also became a common story. However, over time, in parallel with the increase in the level of his fetish, the depth of knowledge about him began to decrease, and it became completely superficial not only among researchers, but even among national accountants. It seems that it has become too trivial for them to rethink/update knowledge about which economic category they are dealing with, what is its nature, how to explain its development trajectory, etc., especially in today's rapidly changing world.

GDP is a child of the System of National Accounts (SNA). The complexity of this system, on the one hand, and the lack of enthusiasm to delve into its essence, on the other, lead to a deepening in the gap between GDP and knowledge about it. Well-known researchers of national accounts (see, for example, Prof. Frits Bos) write and talk quite openly about this, and it is impossible not to agree with it.

Nevertheless, the SNA is deservedly named among the great inventions of the 20th century, and this fact cannot remain unnoticed by its users. This means that the fundamental principles on which not only the calculation of GDP but also the entire business process of producing macroeconomic statistics are based deserve a deep understanding. It is extremely important to note that the challenges that time has brought, and which can often make GDP the subject of criticism, do not mean that the SNA has exhausted its potential or that its uniqueness has become questionable.

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the main methodological findings through which SNA was formed into a unique accounting system and thus became one of the greatest inventions of the 20th century. In this paper, we present view, not that the SNA calculates GDP, but how it calculates GDP, which we believe is what actually earns the system a place among the greatest inventions. On the other hand, the paper examines some aspects of the recent criticism of GDP and points to the dangers that can be appeared by developing this issue unwisely; it tries to consider whether the arguments of GDP critics to replace it with other statistical instruments are justified.

Key words: *National accounts, SNA, GDP, "GDP thinking", Great invention, Consequentiality.*

I. Introduction

In one of his books, one of the prominent scholars of National Accounts Prof. Frits Bos, quotes expression of the professor of economics Jules Teeuwes, that by his opinion "the archaeologist Indiana Jones has one of the most exciting scientific jobs in the world", in contrast to national accounts, which are "… one of the dullest and least interesting topics in economics" (Bos, 2009, p. 2). Against this view, Prof. Frits Bos cites world-famous economists, whose great contributions have made national accounts one of the most remarkable inventions of the 20th century. These are: „Tree Nobel-prizes have been awarded to economists ma-

[1] According to Joseph E. Stiglitz, winner of the 2001 Nobel Prize for Economics, seeking to boost GDP in the misplaced expectation that that alone would enhance well-being.

inly working on the national accounts (Kuznets, Leontief and Stone). Many other Nobel-laureates have significantly contributed to the development of the national accounts (e.g. Hicks, Meade and Frisch) or were major users of national accounts (e.g. Tinbergen, Klein, Friedman, Prescott and Kydland)" (Bos, 2013, p. 3).

Indeed, people who have looked deeply into the national accounts unanimously agree that: "while the GDP and the rest of the national income accounts may seem to be arcane concepts, they are truly among the great inventions of the twentieth century"(Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010, p. 386).

Moreover, back in 1999 at a special press conference held in Washington, D.C., on December 7, in connection with a review of the activities and achievements of the U.S. Department of Commerce, with the participation of U.S. Secretary of Commerce William M. Daley, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers Martin N. Bailey, and Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs Robert J. Shapiro, national accounts were recognized as one of the greatest inventions of the 20th century (Landefeld, 2000).

Nevertheless, national accounts are not widely admired. "National accounts statistics could be regarded as an economic hamburger produced and consumed all over the world. Like hamburgers, there is a problem of reputation and image. National accounts are looked at disdainfully by many economic theorists ("dull bookkeeping", "messy concepts", "a description but not an analysis", "irrelevant for real policy issues"), applied economists ("we use the national accounts statistics but it is not necessary to know the underlying concepts and measurement methods") and statisticians addicted to sampling theory ("unscientific compilation methods")" (Bos, 2009, p. 3). Moreover, like hamburgers, when nearly 1 in 5 American adults do not know that they are made from beef[1], there is the same with users of national accounts: they use the national accounts statistics having no idea what exactly they are studying.

What is the reason for such decline in knowledge about GDP?

Fioramonti notes, that "Before the Second World War, economists were rarely quoted in the media, but ever since the invention of GDP and its quarterly updates, economic experts of all sorts have become essential players in public debate and, more often than not, they have been viewed as the holders of some type of canonical truth" (Fioramonti , 2013, p. 48). Researchers of the history of national accounts actively talk about this and name the period 1930-1950 Revolutionary decades, "… when national accounting was drastically transformed" (Bos, 2008, p. 21). However, later on, the talk about GDP was died down and the national accounts became "… a language not very well spoken and understood anymore. This applies to policy-makers, economic researchers and national accountants alike" (Bos, 2009, p. 7). However, only a few scholars have noticed the expected threat of a weakening of interest in national accounting and, as a result, a worldwide illiteracy in this area. Almost only GDP remained a subject of widespread interest.

The scale of criticism of national accounts has also gradually increased from economists, politicians and other users, mainly due to their disappointment that GDP does not measure social progress, well-being, changes in environmental conditions, inequality in life, etc. Differences in opinions regarding national accounts are deepening against the background of current aggravations of economic, political, social and ecological processes.

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, world-renowned economists recognize that GDP has played an important role in the world economy over the last nearly eight decades, thus national accounts rightly deserve worldwide recognition.

It should be noted, however, that when the above-mentioned and other prominent economists praise the importance of national accounts, they are mostly referring to GDP as a vital economic indicator. For instance, according to Samuelson and Nordhaus,

> "GDP is part of the national income and product accounts (or national accounts), which are a body of statistics that enables policymakers to determine whether the economy is contracting or expan-

[1] https://www.iflscience.com/millions-of-americans-think-chocolate-milk-comes-from-brown-cows-42216

ding and whether a severe recession or inflation threatens. When economists want to determine the level of economic development of a country, they look at its GDP per capita" (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 2010, p. 386).

William M. Daley, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce, speaking about the advantages of national accounts, emphasized that economic policy makers are very much like doctor, who "… can only make a diagnosis and prescribe a treatment after first sitting down and piecing together all the test results that have been taken. … So what the GDP accounts have done is to give us the tools to make those critical decisions" (Landefeld, 2000).

And there are many similar opinions in various economic publications. In other words, the emphasis is on the contribution of national accounts to the calculation of GDP and other related indicators. Moreover, today users have become so used to these phrases that they take GDP for granted, no idea where does it come from. It may come as a surprise, but national accounts are much more in terms of economic knowledge and its application in practice then GDP and its components. It seems that this is very important to know and understand not only for national accountants, but also for economic researchers and macroeconomists, policymakers, businesses, etc. as "it is impossible to understand statistical figures without understanding how they have been compiled" (Schumpeter, 1954, p. 12).

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to shed light on the main methodological findings through which SNA was formed into a unique accounting system and thus became one of the greatest inventions of the 20th century. In next chapter, we present view, not that the system calculates GDP, but how it calculates GDP, which we believe is what actually earns the system a place among the greatest inventions.

II. The real innovative nature of the SNA

Just as Chair of the Federal Reserve Board, Alan Greenspan once said "The consistency-forcing structure of the national accounts has been one of its most significant contributions and least heralded" (Survey of Current Business, 2000, p. 13).

It should be noted that at the beginning of 2008 SNA (para. 1.1), the essence of the system is formulated in a seemingly extremely modest way: "The System of National Accounts (SNA) is the internationally agreed standard set of recommendations on how to compile measures of economic activity in accordance with strict accounting conventions based on economic principles" (United Nations, 2009, p. 1). However, if we delve deeply into the second part of the sentence, we will find completely correct priorities on which the system is built. It is this approach, through which the SNA gradually and consistently addresses these priorities, that determines the innovativeness of the entire system.

What kind of approach is this anyway?

The uniqueness and novelty of the approach lies in its ***strict consequentiality,*** with which it meticulously and precisely solves the most difficult economic problems. Since the task of the SNA concerns to measure ***what takes place in the economy,*** to find out this it poses a very simple, but a genius question at the very beginning "who does what?". We strongly believe that this is a key question N1 in national accounts, around which is constructed the structure and mechanism of the entire system.

"Who" i.e. economic/institutional units are the main actors of the economy, regardless of whether we are dealing with the national economy or the world economy. However, to distinguish the latter from each other, SNA needs to introduce a next important concept, and that is residency. By introducing the concept of residency, the SNA draws a clear boundary between the national economy and the rest of the world, and quite rightly it can be said that this is the next key moment, by which the concept of "the economy" is defined. And this is while before the invention of the SNA and GDP, one could argue that the concept of "The economy~ did not exist (Karabell, 2014). By introducing the concept of economic units and their residence,

it became possible to determine the clear borders of the national economy, that is, to determine the coverage of GDP.

The entire set of resident institutional units forms a total national economy. In the contrary, "Institutional units that are resident abroad form the rest of the world (United Nations, 2009, p. 2). This is the starting point, which is fundamental for determining the scope of GDP in terms of space. According to the SNA, „...the distinction between resident and non-resident institutional units is crucial to the definition and coverage of GDP (United Nations, 2009, p. 105)". As for as measuring GDP as a production of all resident producers does not mean that all production taking place within the geographical boundary of the economic territory. Some of the production of a resident producers may take place abroad, while some of the production taking place within the geographical boundary of the economy may be carried out by non-resident producer units. That is why the scope of GDP is determined by the residence of economic units, wherever they do business, and not by the geographical boundaries of the country. Nevertheless, in the economic literature, there are frequent examples of ignoring this fact and cases of fleeting definition of GDP (see Box 1), which is clearly unjustified. Often, such superficial and unclear definitions are found even in official publications, which causes confusion among users less versed in statistics.

Box 1. Examples of definitions of GDP in published economic literature that differ from the official definition of this concept

„GDP measures the monetary value of final goods and services – that is, those that are bought by the final user – produced in a country in a given period of time (say a quarter or a year). It counts all of the output generated within the borders of a country" (Callen, 2024).

„An alternative concept, gross national product, or GNP, counts all the output of the residents of a country. So if a German-owned company has a factory in the United States, the output of this factory would be included in U.S. GDP, but in German GNP" (Callen, 2024).

„Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at market prices is the total value of final products and services, produced within the domestic territory of a country during an accounting year. It should be noted that goods and services must be produced within the country" (Siddiqui & Sidduqui, 2011, p. 338).

"Gross Domestic Product: the total value of goods and services produced by a country in a year" (Cambridge Dictionary. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/gdp).

In the SNA the term gross domestic product / GDP is used 256 times. In 9 of these paragraphs (1.39, 1.49, 2.138, 6.70, 6.82, 6.84, 7.10, 7.21, A4.24) the definition of GDP is given 11 times (Aslamazishvili N. , 2021, p. 3), where it is clearly stated that GDP is the **sum of gross value added** produced **by resident** institutional units (plus net taxes). For instance (United Nations, 2009):

> „1.39. GDP is intended to be a comprehensive measure of the total gross value added produced by all resident institutional units."
>
> „1.49. The GDP of a country, viewed as an aggregate measure of production, is equal to the sum of the gross value added of all resident institutional units engaged in production (plus any taxes, and minus any subsidies, on products not included in the value of their outputs)."
>
> „2.138. GDP is the sum of gross value added of all resident producer units."
>
> „6.70. The sum of value added for all resident units gives the value of gross domestic product (GDP)."

„6.82. The underlying rationale behind the concept of gross domestic product (GDP) for the economy as a whole is that it should measure the total gross value added from all institutional units, resident in the economy."

These examples show that the fundamental concept and one of the novelties of national accounts related determining the boundaries of the national economy and therefore the issue of GDP coverage are not understood by users at all.

Thus, it can be unequivocally said that the fact that the national accounts established the concept of "the economy" as a fundamental economic category is above all criticism.

Moreover, the fact that the national accounts defined the concept of "the economy" almost 80 years ago and defined it in such a way that it does not require rethinking even today, even in light of such a high scale of mobility in the modern world, stands far above any criticism.

Coming back to main invention of the system – consequentiality, it should be noted that it is the backbone of national accounts, which means that the whole system is built on it, and not only. First of all, it is the sectorization of resident economic units and the strict and logical sequence of economic integrated accounts, interrelationships between accounts through balancing items, etc. These issues are also not perceived by the user, although it is not possible to discuss the relevant topics within the scope of this paper.

However, there is an issue that for some reason is not paid attention to even by national accountants. This is the simple question mentioned above ("who does what?") and a cascade of subsequent questions: "Who does what, with whom, in exchange for what, by what means, for what purpose, with what changes in stocks?" (United Nations, 2009, p. 16) These questions are another important indication of the consequentiality of the national accounts, which will influence the right determination of the structure of the data step by step and consistently. The purpose of this series of questions is to explain how to obtain comprehensive statistical data, and "porganize the recording of economic flows and stocks in a comprehensible way" (United Nations, 2009, p. 16). These questions are more, than a "...simple links" explaining what happens in the economy (Hundessa & Alemayehu, 2020, p. 63), since following this path allows, among other things, to correctly define the desired data structure that is appropriate for the tasks of digitization of statistical production. And most importantly, „Answering these questions for all economic flows and stocks and operators in a given economy would provide an enormous amount of information describing the complete network of economic interrelations" (United Nations, 2009, p. 16).

And again, finding such a precise way for defining data structure several decades ago, suitable for successful utilization even today in the digitization era it is worth applauding.

We have successfully used this ingenious approach in the statistical practice of the National Bank of Georgia, which is described in the relevant publications (for example, see (Aslamazishvili, 2022; Aslamazishvili, 2017). What statisticians need to do is to find the right questions for each statistical domain that will describe in detail the desired data structure.

The format of the paper does not allow for a more comprehensive presentation of the merits of the national accounts. Nevertheless, we still managed to cover the principle and innovative approaches on which the whole system stands, but in our observation these approaches lack proper appreciation and use by both users and national accountants. Accordingly, the criticism is getting more and more acute.

III. Is the criticism addressed correctly?

In February 2008, the President of the French Republic, Nicholas Sarkozy, unsatisfied with the present state of statistical information about the economy and the society came out with a proposal to create a Commission, subsequently called "The Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and So-

cial Progress". He asked Joseph Stiglitz (President of the Commission), Amartya Sen[1] (Advisor) and Jean Paul Fitoussi[2] (Coordinator) to head the commission.

> "The Commission's aim has been to identify the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress, including the problems with its measurement; to consider what additional information might be required for the production of more relevant indicators of social progress; to assess the feasibility of alternative measurement tools, and to discuss how to present the statistical information in an appropriate way" (Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi, Report by the Comission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, 2008).

Indeed, today there is a growing number of critics who argue that GDP has outlived its usefulness. Economists mainly focus on three categories of criticism:

> „The first are measurement problems within the existing framework arising from changes in the economy and society – most notably globalization and digitalization. The second set of criticism deal with the limits of the SNA Framework itself and are sometimes described by the catchall "Beyond GDP" and center on questions as to whether the SNA can or should measure well-being and sustainability. The third is that the construction of GDP promotes a growth-at-all-costs' ideology which works against environmental and social reforms" (MacFeely, van de Ven, & Peltola, 2024, p. 1).

Truly we live in a time when events are not only changing rapidly, but also when completely new and unknown challenges are emerging (say, pandemics, environmental disasters, etc.). But did anyone promise us that GDP would instantly work a miracle, like a magic wand, and put a new picture of the world instantaneously in our palms? Moreover, according to professor Stiglitz, "Since World War II, most countries around the world have come to use gross domestic product, or GDP, as the core metric for prosperity."

The word "prosperity" is used only once in the SNA, in the same context, albeit with a neutral sound: „... the International Comparison Program (ICP) makes estimates of absolute levels of GDP and GDP per capita across countries in order to try to establish a relative level of prosperity" (United Nations, 2009, p. 406). GDP is not intended to measure prosperity. It measures the performance of the economy as a result of policy decisions, be it prosperity or poverty. It's very simple. The main thing is that methodologically, it does this in a systematic, organized, consistent manner. As for the complexity, this issue is a subject of constant work, because ecological disasters, environmental pollution, various crises, wars and pandemics sometimes appear "out of nowhere" to which it is difficult to make an immediate statistical response. However, national accounts have sufficiently flexible mechanisms to successfully reflect previously non-existent events even within their existing structure.

To prove that these are not baseless words, we tried to reflect in it such a topical issue as the contribution of informal employment to the GDP, moreover, including gender aspect, which are also subject to harsh criticism. The lines we have added to the generation of income account and allocation of primary income account of SNA (Tables 1) below make it clear that this is possible, and that the relevant information can be collected within Labor Force Survey (LFS) framework. Similar examples could be given, but in a different publication format.

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1 An Indian economist and philosopher. Sen has taught and worked in England and the United States since 1972. In 1998, Sen received the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for his contributions to welfare economics.

2 French economist and sociologist of Sephardi Jewish descent.

TABLE 1: CONTRUBUTION OF INFORMAL EMPLOYEES TO THE TOTAL COMPENSATION OF EMPLOYEES BY INSTITUTIONAL SECTORS

	Non-financial corporations		Financial corporations		Government		Households & NPISH		Total economy		Rest of the world		Total	
	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R	U	R
GENERATION OF INCOME ACCOUNT														
Gross value added at basic prices														
Compensation of employees														
of which:														
compensation to formal employees														
o.w. women														
compensation to informal employees														
o.w. women														
Taxes on production and imports														
Subsidies (-)														
Gross operation surplus														
Gross mixed income														
ALLOCATION OF PRIMARY INCOME ACCOUNT														
Gross operation surplus														
Gross mixed income														
Compensation of employees														
of which:														
compensation to formal employees														
o.w. women														
compensation to informal employees														
o.w. women														
Taxes on production and imports														
Subsidies (-)														
Property Income														
Balance of primary income/National Income														

The same can be said about „well-being." The correlation of the SNA to this category is explained as follows:

> "An individual's state of well-being, or welfare, is not determined by economic factors alone. Personal and family circumstances, quality of health, the satisfaction of lack of it derived from employment are just some other factors that affect welfare. It is difficult to imagine an objective way in which factors such as these could be quantified and more difficult to imagine the usefulness of including them in a system designed primarily to facilitate economic analysis" (United Nations, 2009, p. 13)

Thus, criticism for what is not the purpose of SNA is tantamount to recrimination.

However, the biggest problem that leaves criticism unanswered is the undesirable level of analytical responsibilities of SNA producers. As professor Bos repeatedly emphasizes in his publications:

> "… national accountants often do not speak their own language fluently: many have problems in understanding the logic, merits and limitations of their own concepts. Even the most famous example to ridicule the national accounts, 'marrying your housekeeper reduces national income', seems not to be common knowledge anymore. In their daily work, national accountants generally focus on compiling statistics. Explaining the concepts to data users and investigating their relevance for various types of data needs is usually not a priority." (Bos, 2009, p. 4).

Moreover, "Among economic researchers there is a worldwide illiteracy in national accounting" (Bos, 2013, p. 3). And more, "The widespread illiteracy in national accounting among researchers should therefore be regarded as a threat to economics as an empirical science" (Bos, 2009, p. 4). Hence our next question: Is the criticism of GDP addressed correctly?

In the light of the above, it seems to be the most rational idea about "dashboard" with limited set of metrics, including metrics for health, sustainability and any other values that the people of a nation aspired to, as well as for inequality, insecurity, and other harms that they sought to diminish (Stiglitz J. E., 2020, p. 3). However, it would be wrong to use the dashboard as an alternative to GDP. On the contrary, the dashboard should be a tool for the explaning and correct interpretation of GDP. It should replace "GDP thinking" and not GDP. It is important to note here that, the problem is not that there is no dashboard, but that there is no knowledge to use for analytical purpose the huge informational capability that exists today in the form of various statistical databases. Dethroning GDP, as Stiglitz urges (see Stiglitz J. E., 2020, p. 3) will harm entire statistics and this is completely unacceptable in today's information age. The dashboard itself

will be meaningless if statistical literacy continues to be widely unencouraged. This responsibility and corresponding initiatives should be established as the most important priorities of the national statistical services, as SNA itself is undoubtedly a rich source of statistical literacy.

GDP is a very important and scientifically well-considered indicator, criticism of which should not become a laughing stock. It is required to be more sophisticated than in 1968, when Senator Robert Kennedy harshly criticized GDP in a speech to students at the University of Kansas:

> "… the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country, it measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile. And it can tell us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans" (Kennedy, 1968).

GDP is quite a deep and multifaceted indicator to measure such pathetic feelings. However, its presentation forms can be designed in such a way that the user of any "taste" gets the information he wants to get.

IV. Conclusion

Finally, instead of a conclusion, it would be appropriate to list a few key things we should know about SNA:

- SNA is recognized as a greatest invention of 20th century;
- The invention of the SNA is one of greatest achievements of economic science;
- High degree of consequentiality is the main characteristic of the SNA, which determines its uniqueness;
- Before the invention of the SNA and GDP the concept of "The economy" did not exist;
- In the series of questions in the SNA "Who does what, with whom, in exchange for what, by what means, for what purpose, with what changes in stocks?", the idea of a mechanism for gathering properly structured information about economic events is embedded;
- Many of the capabilities of the SNA, due to the uniqueness of its structure, are still not fully utilized;
- The SNA is undoubtedly and indisputably a rich source of statistical literacy, which is power in the hands of an informed society.

In a word, if we want to know where a specific country is located, we look at a map. If we want to know what place a country occupies in the world economy, we should turn to the national accounts, especially if the latter deservedly ranks among the greatest inventions of the 20th century.

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„მშპ აზროვნება“[1] ეროვნულ ანგარიშთა სისტემის – მე–20 საუკუნის უდიდესი გამოგონების წინააღმდეგ

ნანა ასლამაზიშვილი
ეკონომიკის დოქტორი, მიწვეული პროფესორი
ივანე ჯავახიშვილის სახელობის თბილისის
სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი

ანოტაცია

უკვე თითქმის 8 ათეულ წელზე მეტია მთლიანი შიდა პროდუქტი აგრძელებს ეკონომიკური ანალიზის, საერთაშორისო შედარებების, ეკონომიკური და სოციალური პოლიტიკისა და სტრატეგიული გადაწყვეტილებების ცენტრში ყოფნას. ამ ხნის განმავლობაში არ წყდება მისი როგორც გაფეტიშება, ისე კრიტიკა. თუმცა, რაც დრო გადის მასზე საუბარი სულ უფრო ზედაპირული ხდება და მის არსში ღრმად ჩახედვას თავს არიდებენ არა მარტო მომხმარებლები, არამედ მისი მწარმოებლებიც. ან მიაჩნიათ ზედმეტად ტრივიალურად იმისათვის, რომ მუდმივად გადაიაზრონ/განაახლონ თავიანთი ცოდნა იმის შესახებ, თუ რა ეკონომიკურ კატეგორიასთან აქვთ საქმე, როგორია მისი ბუნება, როგორ ახსნას მოითხოვს მისი განვითარების ტრაექტორია და ა.შ.

მთლიანი შიდა პროდუქტი ეროვნულ ანგარიშთა სისტემის პირმშოა. სწორედ ეროვნულ ანგარიშთა სისტემის კომპლექსურობა, ერთი მხრივ, და მეორე მხრივ ამ რთულ სისტემაში გარკვევის ენთუზიაზმის ნაკლებობა განაპირობებს მშპ-სა და მის შესახებ ცოდნის დაშორიშორებას. ამაზე საკმაოდ დაუფარავად წერენ და საუბრობენ ეროვნული ანგარიშების სერიოზული მკვლევარები (მაგალითად, Bos, 2009), რომლებსაც შეუძლებელია არ დავეთანხმოთ.

მიუხედავად ამისა, ეროვნულ ანგარიშთა სისტემა, სრულიად დამსახურებულად, მე-20 საუკუნის დიდ გამოგონებათა შორის დასახელდა და შეუძლებელია ეს ფაქტი დარჩეს მის მომხმარებელთა ყურადღების მიღმა. ეს ნიშნავს, რომ ის ფუნდამენტური პრინციპები, რომლებზედაც აგებულია არა მარტო მთლიანი შიდა პროდუქტის გაანგარიშება, არამედ მთლიანად მაკროეკონომიკური სტატისტიკის წარმოების მთელი ბიზნეს პროცესი, იმსახურებს ღრმად გააზრებას.

თუმცა, რაც დრო გადის იზრდება მშპ-ს კრიტიკოსთა რიცხვიც. მაგალითად, კრიტიკა ეხება იმას, რომ მშპ არ ასახავს საზოგადოების კეთილდღეობას, რომ იგი არ აკმაყოფილებს ციფრული ეპოქის მოთხოვნებს, რომ გარემოსდაცვითი და ეკოლოგიური პრობლემები მშპ-ს მიღმაა და ა.შ. კარგია, რომ საზოგადოება ხედავს პრობლემებს, მაგრამ ცუდია, რომ მას საჭირო ადგილზე არ ხედავს. საქმე ისაა, რომ მიუხედავად თანამედროვე გამოწვევებისა, ეროვნულ ანგარიშთა სისტემის ხელახლა აღმოჩენის მსურველთა და შესაბამისი უნარის მქონეთა რიცხვი ძალიან ცოტაა და რაც უფრო სამწუხაროა, მათ ნაკლებად, ან საერთოდ არ უსმენენ. ეროვნულ ანგარიშთა სისტემა უნივერსალური გამოგონებაა, რომელიც ბოლომდე არ არის გაგებული და ამ გარღვევის დაძლევა ბევრ თანამედროვე გამოწვევას მოუძებნიდა ახსნას. ამ საქმეში კი ლიდერის პოზიციას უნდა იკავებდნენ ეროვნული სტატისტიკური სამსახურები, კერძოდ კი ეროვნული ანგარიშების სპეციალისტები. სწორედ ამ უკანასკნელთა მონდომების დეფიციტი განა-

[1] ეკონომიკის დარგში 2001 წლის ნობელის პრემიის ლაურეატის ჯოზეფ სტიგლიცის მიხედვით, მშპ-ს ზრდის მიმართ გაუმართლებელი მოლოდინი, თითქოს მხოლოდ მას შეუძლია კეთილდღეობის უზრუნველყოფა.

პირობებს იმას, რომ მშპ-ს კრიტიკამ უმწვავესი ფორმა მიიღო და გაისმა კიდეც მისი უარყოფის მოწოდება.

სტატიას ორმხრივი მიზანი აქვს. პირველი, წარმოაჩინოს ეროვნულ ანგარიშთა სისტემის ის ფარული უპირატესობები, რომლებიც ხშირად ამ დარგის სპეციალისტების მხრიდანაც კი ყურადღების მიღმაა დარჩენილი, მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ ამ უპირატესობებში საკმაოდ დიდი რესურსია სტატისტიკის ანალიტიკური შესაძლებლობების გაფართოების თვალსაზრისით. მეორე, განიხილოს რამდენად გამართლებულია მშპ-ს კრიტიკოსთა არგუმენტები სხვა სტატისტიკური ინსტრუმენტებით მისი ჩანაცვლების თაობაზე.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: *ეროვნული ანგარიშები, მშპ, „მშპ-აზროვნება, დიდი გამოგონება, თანმიმდევრულობა.*