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A Bad Year for Polls in Mexico? A Report on IFE's Fourth Seminar on Election Polls

Contributed by Alejandro Moreno and Pablo Parás

2010 was a bad year for the Mexican polling profession, according to several pollsters and academics gathered at the Fourth Seminar on Election Polls organized by the Federal Elections Institute of Mexico. This meeting took place on October 1-2 in Cocoyoc, a small resort in an ancient sugar cane hacienda located about 80 kilometers south of Mexico City. Several prominent pollsters and academics presented data, developed explanations, and raised hypothesis about why polls get it right or go wrong. The federal election authorities facilitated this discussion in a country where polling regulations at the local level tend to be restrictive to polling activities.



Hotel Hacienda Cocoyoc, in Morelos, Mexico, site of the IFE Fourth Seminar on Election Polls.

This was the fourth seminar of this type organized by IFE with the collaboration of Mexican professional organizations, such as the Mexican Association of Market and Public Opinion Research (AMAI), the Public Opinion Research Council (CIO), and the Mexican Representation of WAPOR. The first seminar took place in 2000, following a presidential

election that changed the country's political history. That year, Vicente Fox defeated the ruling party PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) that had governed for 71 continuous years. Most polls at the time did not foresee the advantage that Fox ultimately had over the PRI candidate. Another seminar was organized in 2003, after the mid-term election, when most polls accurately anticipated the PRI as the largest party in Congress and a drop in the new government party, PAN (National Action Party). The third seminar was held in 2006, when Mexicans witnessed the most highly contested presidential election so far, in which the difference between the PAN

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**64th Annual Conference
Public Opinion
and the Internet
Amsterdam,
The Netherlands**

Letter from the President

Dear WAPOR Members,

Since 1949, the Allensbach Institute has posed the following question to the German population at the end of each year: "Is it with hopes or with fears that you view the coming year?" This was actually intended to be a fun question without any deeper meaning. It is used for the New Year's cards that the Institute sends out to its friends and clients every year. A nice little news flash from the world of public opinion research: "X percent of the Germans view the coming year with hopes—we hope you are also included among this group and wish you all the best..."



Thomas Petersen
President

In the late 1970s, thirty years after the first New Year's cards were sent out, the economist Karl Steinbuch contacted the Allensbach Institute and informed the astounded researchers that their playful New Year's question was hardly as innocuous as it seemed. "Did you know," he asked, "that the responses to this question can be used to forecast the rate of economic growth in the coming year more precisely than the elaborate reports drafted by the economic research institutes?" He was right. Although the question makes no mention of the economy whatsoever, it does seem to capture some essential aspect of economic life, confirming the famous remark by the great German economist Ludwig Erhard, who was West Germany's longstanding minister for economics and later chancellor: i.e. 50 percent of the economy is psychology. Today, 56 percent of the German population views the coming years with hopes, which is the highest percentage obtained in the past ten years and a sure sign that the German economy will continue to recover from the economic crisis that has gripped the world over the past few years.

So why am I writing all of this (which you can, by the way, read about in much greater detail in Elisabeth Noelle Neumann's article, "The Public as Prophet," which was published in the first volume of IJPOR in 1989)? Because now, at the end of my term as president, I would really like to ask our WAPOR members whether they view the upcoming years for our association with hopes or with fears. I myself am actually quite confident in this regard, even though I cannot claim that everything we attempted to do in the past two years was crowned with success.

Two years ago, for example, when I began my term as WAPOR president, I immediately agreed with Tom Smith, who was president-elect at the time, that the primary goal of both of our terms in office should be increasing the number of WAPOR members. In early spring 2008, I wrote a letter to all WAPOR members asking them to send me the names of potential new members, so that I could contact them. I received about 150 names and addresses, sent out a corresponding number of letters inviting these people to join WAPOR—and in the end, when this elaborate campaign came to a close, the number of WAPOR members had actually declined slightly.

Today, the situation has improved somewhat: As of late 2010, we have 491 members, up from 469 in late 2008. Of course, that is not exactly a quantum leap—so I fear I must leave Tom Smith with a lot of cleaning up to do in this regard.

Nevertheless, I am convinced that together with the WAPOR Council, we have succeeded in the past two years in making several decisions that will be important for our association's future development and which could also ultimately help to boost WAPOR membership. In this respect, I am particularly hopeful when it comes to the decision to change the scheduling of our annual conferences, which have traditionally alternated between locations in North America and Europe: in the year 2012, the WAPOR conference will be held in Hong Kong, and thus for the first time in Asia.

In the last newsletter, I reported on the outbreak of "November fever" at WAPOR, with an unusually large number of decisions waiting to be made by the end of the year. Some of the decisions had already been made at that point in time, others were still up in the air. Now, I am pleased to provide you with the second installment on that report. First of all, I can inform you that as of January 1, 2011, WAPOR not only has Tom

(President continued on page 3)

(President from page 2)

Smith as its new president, it also has a new president-elect, who will hold the office of president in 2013-2014: Alejandro Moreno of the Department of Political Science at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México. Alejandro is already a long-time member of the WAPOR Council, where he currently holds the position of Publications Chair. I had the great fortune to spend a good deal of time with Alejandro in Mexico during the course of this past year. The eruption of the Icelandic volcano, which prevented me from returning to Germany from the WAPOR conference in Mexico for more than a week, actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Thanks to Alejandro's efforts, I had an opportunity not only to get to know his family, but also to marvel at his impressive array of activities in the field of survey research, in the press and in academic life. I can thus already say with certainty that Tom Smith's successor will also be an extremely competent, personable, and dynamic president.

Another post on the WAPOR Council that will be refilled as of January 1, 2011 is that of the Professional Standards Chair. I hope you will forgive me for being especially happy to announce that this position will be assumed by my colleague at the Allensbach Institutue, Anne Niedermann. At the same time, I should emphasize that I myself was not involved in her nomination for the position. All WAPOR elections are governed by the Election Committee under the direction of WAPOR's Past President, which in this case was Mike Traugott. It is a longstanding tradition at WAPOR that the current president keeps his or her distance from these elections and does not nominate any candidates, or at least that is how I handled the matter. Therefore, it was not me but other colleagues at WAPOR who recognized Anne Niedermann's impeccable qualifications and thus nominated her for the position. She has been an active member of the German market research institutes' ethics council for many years and there are probably few other researchers who have more experience in the area of professional ethics in survey research than she does. So, I am not only pleased to see that my colleague and friend is joining the Council, but also to know that WAPOR has gained an excellent specialist in this area.

Possibly an even more momentous decision, in my view, concerns the reorganization of the editorial structure of the *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, which has now been successfully completed, thus ensuring that the editorial process can be continued reliably on a long-term basis. This reorganization accompanied my entire presidency and turned out to be extremely complicated. I am convinced, however, that we have now found an excellent solution. Wolfgang Donsbach, whose work has decisively shaped the *Journal* ever since its inception in the year 1989, decided to relinquish his position as editor-in-chief at the turn of the year. Now, he will become chairman of the newly established "International Advisory Board," a group of outstanding researchers who will contribute to the *Journal* in an advisory capacity. We are still in the process of recruiting the members of the Advisory Board. Researchers who have already agreed to join the board include Sir Robert Worcester, who has especially close ties to the *Journal* in his capacity as co-founder and former president of WAPOR, and Max McCombs, who is also a former president of WAPOR.

We have already succeeded in winning over four outstanding researchers as new editors: Claes de Vreese (University of Amsterdam), Yariv Tsfati (University of Haifa) and Kate Kenski (University of Arizona). They will be joined in a few months by Michael Elasmr (Boston University). Claes de Vreese will take on the position of editor-in-chief during the course of 2011. I am also very pleased to report that another editor has already agreed to take on the position of editor-in-chief when Claes' term is finished in the year 2014—barring, of course, any unforeseen events in the time between now and then. For us, this puts our long-term planning on a more secure footing and we can rest assured that the *Journal* is now in the best possible hands for the next six years.

I am thus convinced that there is good reason to view WAPOR's future with hopes. And I hope and believe I am not alone in that. Who knows? Perhaps the same finding that applies to the German economy will also apply to WAPOR. Could it be that WAPOR is also heading towards an upswing?

Best wishes and many thanks for all of your kind support over the past two years!

Best regards,



Thomas Petersen

(Seminar continued from page 1)

candidate and the leftist coalition candidate was only about half percent of the national vote, with the PRI following in a distant third.



From left to right: Arturo Sánchez, IFE Councilor, Leonardo Valdés, IFE President Councilor, Michael Traugott, WAPOR Past President, and Adrián Villegas, AMAI official.

Two different election processes were discussed at the 2010 IFE seminar. One was the 2009 mid-term election, when the PRI had, once again, the best performance among all three major parties; the other was a series of state-level gubernatorial races that took place in 2010. The 2009 election did not pose real questions to polls, but the 2010 state contests were particularly difficult for the polling profession, as many of the pre-election polls were wrong about who would win, and some that were right on the winner had very large discrepancies between their pre-election estimates and the elections results. According to some of the professionals present at the Cocoyoc conference, one factor that contributed to the polls' inaccuracy was the formation of "ideologically unnatural" coalitions by the parties from left and right (PRD and PAN) facing the PRI. Others argued that in political environments where the PRI has been dominant, as it was the case of the country as a whole some years ago, voters tend to hide their real preferences to pollsters; nonetheless, some academics argued that Mexican voters are really sincere and some methodologies (such as the use a secret-ballot method) are out dated and useless. No major agreements were reached about why polls went wrong in 2010.

Michael Traugott (below with Leonardo Valdés, IFE President Councilor,) a past WAPOR president who attended the meeting, encouraged Mexican pollsters and academics to systematize pre-election polling information in order to develop hypotheses on the basis of past experiences. Then he called for the formation of a committee that could organize and design a major study in the 2012 presidential election that allows the profession to test such hypothesis. This proposal was welcomed by both the election authorities and the professional associations, who agreed to take steps in that direction.

In addition to the problems that pre-election polls have had to accurately project the election results, other important topics were also addressed in this seminar, including the threats that push polls represent to



actual polling, and the restrictions that local legislation impose on pollsters. Given the importance of polls in a democratic society, IFE representatives emphasized their interest in making conditions more favorable to them, both by facilitating the exchange of ideas among pollsters, by suggesting local election authorities to relax local restrictions and by offering adequate election information to the polling professionals, such as election cartography. In the weeks after this seminar, IFE representatives have met with the polling community to follow up on Traugott's proposal for 2012, but that is a topic we shall report on another occasion.



From left to right: Rafael Giménez, Office of the Presidency of Mexico, Patricia Moy, WAPOR, and Edmundo Jacobo, IFE Executive Secretary.

Some of the participants at the IFE seminar in Cocoyoc, Mexico*

Election Authorities:

Leonardo Valdés, IFE President Councilor
Arturo Sánchez, IFE Councilor
Benito Nacif, IFE Councilor
Francisco Guerrero, IFE Councilor
Edmundo Jacobo, IFE Executive Secretary
Arminda Balbuena, IFE Director of the Center for Democratic Development
Jesús Alberto Leopoldo Lara, President Councilor, Coahuila State Elections Institute
César Gustavo Ramos Castro, President Councilor, Guerrero State Elections Institute

Professional Associations:

Adrián Villegas, Mexican Association of Market and Public Opinion Research, AMAI
Alex Garnica, AMAI
Francisco Abundis, AMAI

Daniel Lund, Public Opinion Research Council, CIO
Ricardo de la Peña, CIO

Michael Traugott, past WAPOR president
Patricia Moy, WAPOR Chair of Standards Committee
Pablo Parás, WAPOR national representative
Alejandro Moreno, WAPOR Chair of Publications Committee

Government:

Rafael Giménez, Office of the Presidency
Lorena Becerra, Office of the Presidency
Gustavo Meixueiro, Center for Public Opinion and Social Studies, Mexican Chamber of Deputies

Companies:

Ulises Beltrán, BGC y Asociados
Edmundo Berumen, Berumen y Asociados and AMAI
Federico Berrueto, Gabinete de Comunicación Estratégica
Jorge Buendía, Buendía Laredo y Asociados
Alejandro Mendoza Blanco, Mendoza Blanco y Asociados
Olivia Pérez, BGC y Asociados
Roberto Trad, Cuarto de Guerra

Academics:

Javier Aparicio, CIDE
Rosario Aguilar, CIDE
Federico Estévez, ITAM
José Ramón Gil, CIDE
Eric Magar, ITAM

*Based on the final program



Note from Mexico Representative



Photo courtesy of PRI.org

Our colleague Daniel Lund, President of Grupo MUND, passed away on Saturday, November 13th. Dr. Lund attended school in California and New Haven, and he lived in Mexico for over 20 years, where he was General Director of MORI Mexico and CEO of MUNDAMERICAS, a consulting firm with offices in Mexico City and Boston. In addition to his multiple polling works and political consulting, Dr. Lund regularly distributed a Report on Opinion and Politics by e-mail. He is survived by his wife, María Cristina Montaña, and his children, Marcelo, Camilo y Mara.

Conferences of Other Associations

Note: Previously this feature appeared in the IJPOR, however, due to space constraints in the journal, we will run the calendar in the WAPOR newsletter .

2011

February 27-March 1, 2011
Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI)
First International Conference on Survey Research
Doha, Qatar
<http://www.qu.edu/qa/sesri/conference.php>

March 24-27, 2011
International Workshop on Comparative Survey Design and Implementation (CSDI)
2011 CSDI Workshop
London, England
<http://csdiworkshop.org>

March 31-April 3, 2011
Midwest Political Science Association
69th Annual Conference
Chicago, IL, USA
<http://www.mpsanet.org>

May 12-15, 2011
American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)
66th Annual Conference
Phoenix, AZ, USA
<http://aapor.org>

May 26-30, 2011
International Communication Association (ICA)
61st Annual Conference
Boston, MA, USA
<http://www.icahdq.org/conferences/2010/>

June 30-July 1, 2011
Understanding Society/BHPS Conference
University of Essex, Colchester, UK
<http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/>

July 18-22, 2011
Fourth Conference of the European Survey Research Association (ESRA)
Lausanne, Switzerland
<http://surveymethodology.eu/conferences/>

2012

October 31-November 3, 2012
American Statistical Association
International Conference on Methods for Surveying and Enumerating Hard-to-Reach Populations
H2R/2012
New Orleans, LA, USA
<http://www.amstat.org/meetings/h2r/2012>

*Please let us know about your organization's upcoming event(s).
We would be happy to publish them in upcoming issues of the newsletter. Thank you!*

***Transnational Connections-Challenges and Opportunities
 in Communication and Public Opinion Research
 Segovia, Spain
 March 17-18, 2011***

REGISTRATION FORM

Please return by fax or email:

WAPOR Secretariat
 UNL Gallup Research Center
 201 N Thirteenth Street
 Lincoln, NE 68588-0242
 USA

renae@wapor.org

Fax: 001 (402) 472-7727

Name:.....

Organization-Institute:

Street Address:.....City.....Zip Code.....

Country:

Telephone: Fax: E-mail:

Conference Registration

Conference fee includes sessions, all materials for the conference, the welcome cocktail, all coffee breaks between sessions, all lunches as well as a bus transportation from Madrid to Segovia (on March 17th at 8am) and from Segovia to Madrid on March 19th in the morning). It does not include additional meals. Registration for non-members includes a one-year membership to WAPOR for 2011. To avoid a late registration fee (see below), attendees should submit their registration forms *by March 1*.

	by March 1	after March 1
Member	\$170	\$195
Non-Member	\$270	\$295
Student Member	\$100	\$125
Student Non-Member	\$150	\$175

Cost for conference registration: \$_____

Method of payment:

() MC/VISA: _____ EXP: _____ CSC: _____

Signature _____

() Check enclosed in USD

"Journey of Students and Young Researchers in Public Opinion"

The program is set for upcoming Congress, see more
<http://www.waporbh.ufmg.br/pt/abstracts.php>

Belo Horizonte, Brazil

The next Latin American Congress...

We are happy to accept the registration of listeners for the event. Listeners are considered undergraduate students and graduate students, teachers and professionals as well as the general public, who did not present papers at this congress. To join the conference as a listener, you must register by filling out the online form. You will receive an email confirming your participation.



Co-sponsored by POP and UFMG.

"WAPOR Congress, Belo Horizonte Brazil will manage the importance and challenges of public opinion and democracy, in its interface with communication policy and new technology and it will involve Latin American, European and American researchers."



Cost for WAPOR Members: \$170
Cost for Student Members: \$35
Cost for Non-Members: \$210
Cost for Student Non-Members: \$50

The program will include:

- AT1-Methodology and investigation in public opinion
- AT2-Public opinion and new technologies
- AT3-Public opinion and media
- AT4-Public opinion, campaign and vote
- AT5-Parties, political representation and public opinion
- AT6-Social capital, citizenship and World Values survey
- AT7-Public opinion and political participation
- AT8-Public opinion, political culture and democracy

Contact:

Helcimara de Souza Telles, Congress Chair

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais - UFMG

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In Memoriam

Former WAPOR member **Karlheinz Reif**, political scientist: born Bergzabern (Germany) 3 June 1943; 1966 Resident Assistant, Menlo College, Menlo Park, Cal., USA; 1967 Academic Tutor, Free University Berlin; 1968-74 Research Assistant, University of Mannheim; 1974-1984 Assistant Professor, *ibid.*; 1978-1979 Chargé de Recherches, CEVIPOF, *Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques* Paris; 1983 *Privat-dozent* of Political Science at Mannheim; 1983-1985 Visiting Professor at the universities of Edinburgh and Duisburg and the EUI in Florence; 1985-1986 Professor of Political Science, University of Bamberg; 1986-1996 Head of Unit "Surveys, Research, Analyses", Commission of the EC (DGX.B-SRA), Brussels; 1996-2005 Special Adviser to the Commission of the EC, *ibid.*

Karlheinz Reif made a significant and lasting impact both in academia and politics. In academia, his profession was political science, and more specifically a political science that is empirical-analytical by orientation and comparative by design. In politics, he ran over a decade the *Eurobarometers* – the most important Europe-wide comparative survey instrument – and contributed to the further development of this tool for another decade. Talking about politics, Karlheinz Reif was a true supporter of European integration – a European federalist to be more precise – and he was a conservative member of the social-democratic family of parties in Europe. He passed away in Brussels (Belgium) 19 December 2010.

The WAPOR Newsletter is published by the
World Association for Public Opinion Research

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Calendar

2011

March 1, 2011

Abstracts submission deadline:
WAPOR 64th Annual Conference
"Public Opinion and the Internet"
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

March 17-18, 2011

WAPOR Region Seminar
"Transnational Connections-Challenges and Opportunities in Communication for Public Opinion Research"
Segovia, Spain
See page 7 for more information

May 4-6, 2011

IV Latin American Congress of Public Opinion
"Journey of Students and Young Researchers in Public Opinion"
Belo Horizonte, Brazil
See page 8 for more information

September 21-23, 2011

WAPOR 64th Annual Conference
"Public Opinion and the Internet"
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
See the following page for more information

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- Do you have an idea for an article in the newsletter?
 - Is there an event happening in your part of the world?
 - Are you interested in organizing a conference?
 - Do you have photos you'd like to contribute?
 - Do you have ideas on how to improve the website or newsletter?

If so, please contact the WAPOR office by sending an email to renae@wapor.org or to Alejandro Moreno (Publications Chair) at Alejandro.Moreno@reforma.com.

Let us know your upcoming events.

*Please note, the deadline date for the
1st quarter newsletter is
March 15, 2011*



**WAPOR 64th Annual Conference:
Call for Papers**

Public Opinion and the Internet

**September 21-23, 2011
Amsterdam, The Netherlands**

**The Amsterdam School of Communication Research &
Graduate School of Communication
University of Amsterdam**

Organizers: Peter Neijens & Claes de Vreese

The World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) will hold its 64th annual conference September 21-23, 2011 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, one of the most exciting cities in the world. The theme of this conference emphasizes how the Internet provides challenges and opportunities for public opinion scholars and how the internet is changing (the study of) public opinion. The Internet has become a platform for the expression and representation of public opinion, a factor in public opinion formation, and is also used to collect public opinion data. The Netherlands is home to several pollsters using Internet panels and this topic will be devoted extra attention at the conference. Moreover, conference sessions will focus on changing public opinion as well as challenges to survey research. We welcome research that deals with the conference theme as well as other longstanding WAPOR topics of research, including:

- New Forms of Journalism and Citizen Opinion Expressions
- New Media, Fragmented Audiences, Participating Audiences
- Public Opinion on Social, Political, and Economic Issues
- Media Effects, Agenda Setting, Framing and Priming
- Political Entertainment
- Deliberation
- Social Influence
- Public Opinion Theory
- Web Surveys and Access Panels
- Mixed-Mode Studies
- Questionnaire Design
- Sampling, Response Rates and Non-Response
- Cross-National Research
- Panel Studies

WAPOR seeks to bring together scholars with a historical, sociological, economic, and political or communication science background who would like to present and discuss original research papers. Of course, the role of methodology in survey research is of key significance as well. We welcome academics and practitioners who emphasize the more practical aspects of the field.

Proposals

Two different types of proposals can be submitted:

- 1) **Regular research paper:** This should include a general description of the research paper (research topic, specific research questions or hypotheses, methods and results, as applicable) as well as full contact information (mailing address, e-mail address and telephone number) for each (co-)author or participant on a separate sheet of paper. Maximum length: 750 words. The papers will be allocated to paper presentation sessions or a poster/interactive session, pending the fit of the papers.
- 2) **Panel proposals:** This should include an overview of the panel (listing all papers, authors, titles and contact information of all presenters). In addition it should list a short (100 word) summary of the different contributions. There is a maximum of 5 papers for a panel. Finally a written commitment of being present at the conference should be included from at least one author of each paper. Maximum length: 1000 words.

ALL PROPOSALS should follow APA guidelines for manuscripts and should be submitted to wapor2011@uva.nl **no later than 1 March 2011.**

Deadlines:

Abstract submission: 1 March 2011

Notification of conference decision: 1 April 2011

Paper submission: 1 August 2011

Final registration: 1 September 2011

More information about location and hotels to be announced shortly.

Queries should be directed to conference chairs Peter Neijens and Claes de Vreese (wapor2011@uva.nl) or to WAPOR Executive Coordinator Renae Reis (renae@wapor.org).