

**“Are you the white man from Steadman?! Your work is very good!”¹
A Reply to Thomas P. Wolf**

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Abstract

Opinion polls during the Kenya’s 2013 general elections were highly disputed by academics, politicians and the general public that they were biased. This was despite the enactment of the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 which meant to regulate standards by pollsters. Related to the above, I interrogated the polling industry focusing on the Ipsos Synovate. I noted that sampling, question design, and reporting were flawed. As a reaction, Thomas Wolf insists that Ipsos’ polls have always been scientific and error-free. It is not surprising that Wolf cobbles falsehood and forces it down on the reader in the most unpalatable style with jumbled phrases and incongruent expressions that even affront research. His claims are incoherent and not evidence based. Unfortunately, while his response does nothing to dispel these criticisms, it multiplies the problems that my article raises.

Introduction

In November 2013 I published an article titled “Poll-pollution”?: *The politics of numbers in the 2013 elections in Kenya.*² This work evaluates the polling industry in Kenya particularly the Ipsos Synovate. Since this article is at the centre of my current exchanges with Thomas Wolf, it is imperative that our readers revisit it in order to follow the thrust of this debate in its context. Notwithstanding the criticism against it, the “Poll-pollution” has been a breakthrough in interrogating opinion polls in Kenya at least from a scholarly point of view. It examines the polling industry focusing on sampling, question design and reporting. Prior to that, there were scant scholarly works that assessed and revealed the problems of pre-election polls in Kenya. Instead, polls were simply criticised on newspapers. In spite of the enactment of the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 in

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Kenya which sets requirements for evaluating polls and subsequently a penalty to pollsters in case they do not abide by the set standards, there has not been any scrutiny to assess polls. The *"Poll-pollution"* was therefore motivated to engage pollsters in order to improve the industry for the sake of democracy. As a reaction to my original article, Wolf maintains that it is full of omissions, falsehood and errors. I have carefully considered his rebuttal only to find out that it does not say much about the technical questions raised; instead he insists that Synovate's polls were scientific and free from errors. Since Wolf is a consultant of these polls through the Ipsos, no wonder he has dual roles of defending his "job" and the Ipsos. Yet, his reaction further questions himself on whether he really possesses the basic skills and training on research methodology. In this article, I therefore respond to some of his questions which have been raised, illustrating his limited expertise in the area of research methodology.

Wolf's Framework of Thought

In order to understand Wolf's rebuttal there is a pressing need to locate it within his framework of analysis. Though Wolf has not stated it overtly, his conversation with an attendant at a petrol station in Nairobi on 10 February 2009 reveals this framework. Table 1 reproduces their conversation in which an "evaluator" of Ipsos' works "a petrol station attendant" is represented by "A" and Thomas Wolf by "Q."

Table 1: Conversation between Thomas Wolf and a Petrol Station attendant

A: Are you the white man from Steadman?! Your work is very good!
Q: Yes I am. But why do you say that?
A: I think you must be very close to God!
Q: Why do you say that?
A: Because you tell us Kenyans something, and then we find out it is true!
Q: I don't think that's because we're close to God; it's only because we're close to Kenyans, because whatever we say, we find that out from Kenyans.

Source: Wolf (2009: 293)

The above text is instructive in three aspects. One is that it presents an old colonial mentality of a subject towards a colonial master. It seems to me that the colonial master presents a superior mind of knowledge. As can be seen, the "white man from Steadman" does not refute the glorification of colour in which during the heydays of colonial rule it was pyramidal in nature. At the

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apex there were Europeans, followed by Asians at the middle and the Africans at the base reflecting inferior beings. The “Whiteman” in this text therefore presents the best reasoned mind and whatever comes from him is unquestionable. It is for that reason the “Whiteman” was thought to be “close to God”. Fanon (1986:36) puts that “From black to white is the course of mutation. One is white as one is rich, as one is beautiful, as one is intelligent.” Wolf does not seem to reject this mentality. Indeed, he is “intelligent.” His rebuttal which I am about to engage is entirely founded on this framework of thinking that the “Whiteman from Steadman” knows everything. Is this true? In his seminal work *“Being White, Being Good”* Applebaum (2010:39) asks three fundamental questions: “What do white people know; what do they not know; and how can they know?” This article reveals the ignorance of Wolf on scientific research and his attempt to deceive his audience. By so doing, it challenges Wolf’s dominant view that the “Whiteman from Steadman” knows everything.

The second aspect is that Wolf is only looking forward to hear *“Your work is very good!”* This is not a surprise to me. In his rebuttal, Wolf presents himself as a “former academic” i.e. a Lecturer at the Department of Government, University of Nairobi, 1988-94. Universities are known as cites for debates and science. Hence, it is the culture of academic institutions and academics to get criticisms of their works. This implies that they are used to reviews, evaluation and assessments of their works. I am happy to hear that Wolf calls himself a “former academic” which is indeed true. This is so because he ceased to be an academic in 1994 and shifted to business. As such, he is nowadays business-oriented. It is a well-known fact that in a business, a seller always struggles to market his products for profit maximization. Yet, since some sellers are not trustworthy and would like to distort the market by selling defective products, different governments in the world have introduced laws, bureaus of standards as well as fair competition institutions to regulate business. The introduction of the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 in Kenya was a specific attempt by the government to ensure quality control of polls. As we shall see later, Wolf sells his labour to the Ipsos as a consultant. This means that he will use every means possible to defend his products even though they lack quality. As one reads his rebuttal, Wolf does not want to hear anything related to weaknesses of his polls. It is important for readers to note that I am not responding to an academician but rather to a “former academic” who is now a typical “businessman” in which “profit” is his underlying principle.

Notwithstanding, his current designation, I hope this time around he may learn something from my reply.

The third aspect from the above text is that the “Whiteman from Steadman” does not state the method by which his findings are based. He simply tells the “evaluator” that whatever they say is obtained from Kenyans. In that manner, he shies away from “science” which in his rebuttal he claims to be an “expert” and a “former academic.” The big emphasis here is the “context” from which his findings are derived i.e. the Kenyans. Unfortunately, in his rebuttal, as I shall explain in due course, he dismisses this fact saying that it is tangential. Therefore, one wonders whether Wolf is a “fortune teller” or an analyst. This article addresses most of the issues raised by Wolf. In order to bring forward a fruitful debate, my approach is to sub-divide this article into four broad sections. They include the title, framework for analysis, methodology and specific issues of concern by Wolf. In most cases, my evidence is drawn from the Ipsos’ polls posted on its website.

Title: What is at Stake?

Wolf criticizes about four separate issues with regard to the title of my article: that I did not acknowledge copying his sub-title “poll-ution 2009:290;” that the article was restricted to only a single survey “research” company Ipsos with the aim of undermining its credibility; that the title of the article is at variant with the content i.e. it says nothing about the “actual politics of this election”; and that there is no evidence that I attempted to conduct interviews with political actors or media professionals or executives who published/broadcast/sponsored/interpreted many of them. In order to do justice I address each issue separately.

“Poll-pollution”: a copyright of Wolf or a “bizarre yin-yang”?

Wolf alleges that he is the holder of copyright of a phrase “poll-pollution” in his work titled “*Poll poison’?: Politicians and polling in the 2007 Kenya election*” and that I used it in my article without acknowledgement. This is absolutely nonsense, falsehood, academic bankruptcy and “pollution” to say the least. I have to state that Wolf’s sub-title (see Wolf, 2009: 290) simply reads “Poll-ution” while mine is “poll-pollution.” The two phrases are not the same in terms of both wordings and meaning. I coined “poll-pollution” to describe polls which are sub-standard in terms of their scientific methodology and output. The source of poor quality of such polls is either by default or design. A typical example of such polls includes those conducted by the Synovate which were the subject matter in my original article. Thus, Wolf’s “poll-

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ution” was not in any case geared to question the quality of the polling industry in Kenya which is his job and his means of survival. That is how Thomas Wolf has always been. For example, he was one of those who were bitter with the introduction of the regulatory law on polls i.e. the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 which meant to oversee the quality of the polling industry. He thought that the law could limit him deceiving Kenyans and thereby jeopardising his means of earning his bread and butter.

Yet, on another note, legally a title or sub-title (of a book, article, poem, etc) such as “pollution” or “poll-ution” is not a copyrightable work. This is a well settled position of law around the world. For example in the US case of *Glaser v. St. Elmo, C.C.*, 175 F. 276 the court held “The chief similarity between the two works is identity of title, but it is well settled that the copyright of a book or play does not give the copyright owner the exclusive right to the use of the title.” This is similar to the UK case of *Dicks v. Yates (1881)*, 18 Ch. D. 76 where the court ruled that “as a rule a title does not involve literary composition, and is not sufficiently substantial to justify a claim to protection.” In UK a title may only be protected where it is an original creative work [see *Weldon v. Dicks (1878)*, 10 Ch. D. 247]. In the present unfounded complaint by Wolf this is not the case though. This is simply because “pollution” is a term of art in disciplines like geography and environment and merely an English language vocabulary. It existed before Wolf’s article. Thus, by picking it for his sub-title and certainly by separating “poll” from “ution” using a hyphen does not amount to originality and creativity worth to enjoy copyright protection. Wolf’s claim is totally misplaced as he was the one to acknowledge from geographers or writers of English dictionaries for the use of the term “poll-ution.” In any case, Wolf is ignorant of copyright laws and in this particular case the Kenyan Copyright Act of 2001 which does not recognise this kind of right. Initially, I thought that being “close to God” Wolf would be “genius” and understand easily the discourse of copyright law; to the contrary he is merely a man of deceptions. Indeed, he admitted himself that he is a “former academic.”

Why Synovate?

Wolf laments that I restricted myself to study a single survey “research” company namely Ipsos and almost say nothing about electoral politics. He further claims that my article “aims to undermine the credibility of the voter-intention survey work of this one company (which also has a country-office in his own country, Tanzania), which in itself is quite distinct from his

purported subject matter i.e. election politics” (Wolf, 2014: 201). This is a strange concern by someone who claims to be a research expert. Methodologically, research may be conducted as a single case or a comparative study. In the former, Burnham et al (2008: 63) put that “case studies are an extremely popular form of research design and are widely used throughout the social sciences. Case studies enable researchers to focus on a single individual, group, community, event, policy area or institution, and study in-depth, perhaps over an extended period of time.” On the other hand, in comparative research the interest of a researcher is to find out variables which explain occurrences or non-occurrences of social phenomena in the cases under study. Shortly, it requires a big-N and generalisation is possible (Przeworski and Teune, 1970). My article selected Synovate for the study as a single case in order to understand the polling industry in Kenya. I stated clearly:

The purpose of this article is therefore to evaluate opinion polls in Kenya in order to understand the extent to which they provide quality and accurate polling outcome. In order to allow an in-depth analysis, only one pollster, the Ipsos Synovate, is taken for that purpose. This choice is by no means random. However, it is based on the fact that the pollster is one of the oldest, the most popular and leading companies in Kenya. It is hoped that the observations made by this work will be useful to the entire polling industry in Kenya in the course of improving their working to assure scientific and credible polling outcomes for the benefit of democracy (Makulilo, 2013: 6).

I further put that “Pre-election opinion polls, if conducted scientifically and impartially, are essential in projecting voting intentions of the electorate in a democratic polity” (Makulilo, 2013: 1). How can Wolf argue like a layman that I wrote my article to undermine Ipsos? It is also important to note that my choice did not mean that the rest of the pollsters were doing better. That is why I clearly highlighted the problems of polls in Kenya (see Makulilo, 2013:5-6). Moreover, the fact that Kenya enacted the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 is a testimony that there is a problem of polls including the ones conducted by the Ipsos. Being business oriented, Wolf is worried about marketing his defective products. Thanks to the “*Poll-pollution*” which exposed the weaknesses of Ipsos’ polls. To the contrary, he would have made good business had he been open minded to learn new approaches and skills of doing opinion polls.

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When is Politics “actual” and when is not?

Wolf questions my article that it does not say anything about “actual politics” of the 2013 elections in Kenya. This query is unfounded, hollow and shallow. The fundamental question would then be: what is politics? And perhaps a funny question by Wolf: when is politics “actual”? While there is a well-established body of literature attempting to define politics (see for example Lasswell 1958; Duverger 1964; Almond 1966; Dahl 1970; Easton 1969; Almond and Powell 1966; Nnoli 1986; Heywood 2000), I have never come across to such a description as when politics is “actual” or when it is not. Unfortunately, he failed to provide the attributes of his “actual politics.” Let me restate the title of my article: “Poll-“pollution”?: *The politics of numbers in the 2013 elections in Kenya*. The “politics of numbers” in my article simply means that some pollsters violate principles of science in conducting polls. Instead they manipulate scientific methods and poll results in favour of some political actors so that they could win elections. Hence, it is this which I refer to as politics as opposed to science. My article has comprehensively exposed flaws in conducting opinion polls by the Ipsos. In 2007, it was again the problem with Ipsos, formerly Steadman. For example, Kiage and Owino (2010: 263) noted:

Other weaknesses observed was when Steadman unilaterally changed its polling methodology in an attempt to suit certain political groups. This happened midstream in the run up to the 2007 general elections when they argued that one method was favouring a certain political party, hence had to change its sampling strategy. Because opinion polls are so valuable in democracies, those who conduct and report them must be consistent, transparent and accurate.

My article evaluated three specific issues: the sampling, question design, and reporting by the Ipsos. The idea was to assess the extent to which Ipsos abided by scientific principles as well as the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012. So which “actual politics” did Wolf want me to study? I find his concern forming a completely “new topic” in the discipline of Political Science into which he may wish to venture.

Thinking in a box: Beyond Interviews?

Wolf complains that my article was not informed by interviews from pollsters and politicians. He finds this as an omission. This point raises further doubts on whether Wolf really acquired the basic training of research methodology. Wolf must understand that there are many considerations as

to the choice of methods of data collection. The most important ones include the purpose of the research, the ontological and epistemological questions, as well as the context of the study. I focused on evaluation of the polling industry specifically on sampling, question design, and reporting. The issue of my interest was to find out the extent to which Ipsos upheld the scientific standards in doing its polls particularly in the above mentioned areas of research. This kind of evaluation does not necessarily require interviews. In my view, a desk research was adequate to understand the quality of the polls. This is because the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 requires pollsters to publish all information related to the focus of my article i.e. sampling, question design, and reporting. Although one may tend to sympathise with Wolf's suggestion that it would still be useful to interview Synovate "experts", I was reluctant due to my past experience with the company in 2011 in Dar es Salaam. I sent my questionnaire to the firm but it was not filled. I called its staff several times it did not work. Finally I visited its office and its "experts" were not ready to respond to my questions. I was only able to obtain a press release which was essentially a defence of the firm of its "quality" polls against claims of poor standards from different stakeholders (Makulilo, 2013). Since Wolf is not reliable, documents could provide an appropriate source which makes it easier for people to access on Ipsos' website for verification and evaluation. Moreover, newspapers were used to get the perception of some candidates for the 2013 elections. Most of them complained of the polling industry in Kenya including the Synovate.

Yet, Wolf further laments that in my "*Poll-pollution*" I relied solely on newspapers as a source of information about the 2013 elections in Kenya. Again this is an unfounded claim. In the "*Poll-pollution*" I only cited about 3 newspapers. My position is that few newspapers can be used where necessary despite their limitations especially on bias. Surprisingly, in his work titled "*International Justice Vs. Public Opinion*" which is about the 2013 elections in Kenya, Wolf's reference list contains sixty (60) newspapers and fifteen (15) published works. I am wondering, why does he complain about the use of newspapers in research and particularly in my article? Much as I am aware that newspapers have their own limitations, bias being one of them, can Wolf tell us the extent to which his piece is objective with about 80% of newspapers as his references? In his rebuttal, Wolf has again cited newspapers just like what I have done. Thus, with about 80% of references in his "*International Justice Vs. Public Opinion*", Wolf could be considered as a newspaper reporter and not an academician. He runs away from reading books and journal articles which is the core of an intellectual business. So it is

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erroneous to claim that newspapers formed the “only grounding” of my reality about the 2013 elections (Wolf, 2014: 201).

Blowing his own Trumpet: IPSOS “smart” Record

Wolf simplistically does a matching item exercise between the Ipsos polls and the official election results for the 2013 elections (Table 1) and what he calls the past records (2009-2013) in figure 1. Wolf starts by lamenting that my use of Ipsos final (February) 2013 survey was either incorrect or incomplete and therefore confusing. I do not know exactly why he made this regrettable statement: was it based on ignorance or was it simply raised as propaganda? Let me quote what I stated:

In its 15 March 2013 Post-Election Analysis, Synovate made reference to its “final poll released on 22 February 2013” and claimed to have projected close to the electoral outcome. To be sure, Synovate projected the victory of 44.82% for Uhuru Kenyata while the actual IEBC results were 50.07%. This is a variance of 5.25% (higher than margin of error). For Raila Odinga it projected 44.36% against 43.31% of actual votes by the IEBC results, making a variance of -1.05% (within margin of error). For other presidential candidates, it projected within margin of error in comparison to the IEBC results (Makulilo, 2013: 22).

Mr. “Former Academic Sir” how is the above paragraph different from what you presented in table 1 titled “IPSOS’ Final (February) Results vs. the Official Kenya 2013 Election Results”? Or do you simply want to please your Master i.e. Synovate so as to secure your job? By the way, Wolf has given a good piece of advice that I was supposed to interview Ipsos, or politicians and himself in order to improve my article. But he makes the same mistake. I thought he would have sought some clarification from the author of “poll-pollution” about its content. If Wolf does not understand this simple paragraph, is it possible to follow the “poll-pollution”?

Yet, based on records in his both table 1 and figure 1, he insists that Ipsos’ polls are accurate, reliable and credible. This is doubtful. It has to be understood that one can still get it right in a matching item exercise; or it is possible to rig a poll and equalize the figures. The major concern of the “poll-pollution” is the process i.e. how polls are conducted. Hence the focus was on sampling, question design and reporting. Wolf has to tell his audience more about the process than the results of the polls. That is the basis of science.

On another account, Wolf has been so selective in bringing out what he calls “past records.” Since Ipsos is one and that it is found in several countries worldwide, it was imperative that Wolf gives the trends on different places. For example, in the 2010 general elections in Tanzania, Ipsos projected voter turnout of 83% but the actual rate was 42%. Yet, while it projected the president of the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) to get 63%, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) obtained 61%. As I noted elsewhere (Makulilo, 2012) the sample was only taken from Tanzania Mainland hence ignoring the Zanzibar part of the URT. Wolf, knowing this fact quite well, shies away from reporting this “good” past record. The point I raised in the “Poll-pollution” was that matching opinion poll results and final electoral votes is not so important since even “sangomas” i.e. fortune tellers may apparently do that. The issue is the scientific process which leads to the final poll results.

Wolf’s Methodology: The “last Kicks of a Dying Horse!”

Let me start by commenting on both tables 3 and 4. First of all, Wolf admits that the source of my information was Ipsos’ Website (Wolf, 2014: 205). This is quite right. In Kenya, the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 regulates the publication of results of an electoral opinion poll during an electoral period. Ipsos which conducted and subsequently published poll results had to abide by this law. I have to mention that my article was also informed by Ipsos’ polls which were published on its Website up to 15 March 2013. In Wolf’s rebuttal, table 3 therefore provides information on dates for polls which were conducted and released in February 2013. On the other hand, table 4 includes those polls which were conducted in January and February 2013. I have to confirm that I used all these polls (for example, see Makulilo, 2013: 17-8) except the ones which were released on 28 January and 4 February 2013. These were not published on the Ipsos’ website. I also revisited the company’s website on 20 September 2014 and they were not yet published. Wolf might have “cooked” the two polls as an afterthought to argue his own case. Nonetheless, it has not helped him at all.

In my original article I stated that “since the official nomination was over on 18 January 2013, Synovate conducted only four (4) polls in February 2013. Interestingly, all polls were conducted in a period of hardly a week’s time. This in itself is an anomaly” (Makulilo, 2013: 15). My question was based on the interval a poll can be undertaken. I used the Gallup Company to argue my case i.e. it conducts 2-3 nationwide polls in a month. This was the question. Wolf has refrained from commenting on my point. It is also

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interesting to note that in its poll conducted between 10 and 16 November 2012 and released on 20 November 2012 Ipsos made a position with regard to “regular polling.” The company stated “Ipsos Synovate’s commitment is that we will continue providing opinion poll results every 4-6 weeks in the run up to the election.”³ However, as he tries to defend himself as to why Ipsos published one poll in separate dates, Wolf states “But the reasons why the 22 February survey included a section on the (first) presidential debate should be applauded, not criticized...asking such questions after a substantial period of time had elapsed, would together improve the reliability of the results obtained as compared with the initial, ‘day-after’ (as noted, CATI) poll” (Wolf, 2014: 206). Wolf himself insists that “a substantial period of time” is important between one poll and another for improving reliability of results and for comparison purposes. Moreover, he stresses the importance of time to allow voters follow campaign issues and make up their choices. Likewise, it allows candidates to mobilise voters (Wolf, 2009: 289). One wonders, why did Ipsos and their expert “Mr. Former Academic” reject to allow “a substantial period of time” among its polls in February 2013 where only “four” polls were conducted in a week’s time? It is this which I termed Ipsos as a “weather forecaster” (Makulilo, 2013: 1).

Besides, Wolf posits that “the other CATI poll, released on 13 February, was based on the first of two presidential debates (involving all eight candidates). The sampling universe was (as noted above) limited to those contacted who claimed to have ‘followed’ the debate, whether on radio or television. Its results are thus *not at all comparable to any of the other polls in this (or in the author’s) table* (and should thus have never been included in his Table, though perhaps mentioned separately)” (see Wolf, 2014: 206). I fail to understand the memory capacity of the “former academic.” Wolf states that he published one poll into separate dates in order to achieve “*reliability*” and “*comparison*” (Wolf, 2014: 206). Surprisingly, he defeats his own position by stating that comparison of the CATI poll of 13 February 2013 to other polls was not possible at all. What I find funny about Wolf is the fact that he provides advice which he himself does not want to follow, that is, CATI poll of 13 February 2013 “should thus have never been included in his Table, though perhaps mentioned separately” (Wolf, 2014: 206). While Wolf criticizes my inclusion of CATI poll of 13 February 2013 in table 3, he has four CATI polls of 21 and 28 January 2013 as well as 4 and 13 February 2013 in his table 4. Unlike Wolf, what I wanted to capture was not the type of methodology used namely face-to-face household or CATI, but rather how many polls were conducted in a week’s time. So, his criticism is unfounded.

I was similarly shocked to hear from Wolf that Synovate reported some research findings in “pieces.” Is this practice proper? Had it been a newspaper, it could be right. Normally, in a newspaper, it is stated in advance that the story will continue in the following issues. In the case of Synovate it was not. One, it is the requirement of the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 in Kenya to report the findings of a poll as a whole and not otherwise. The content of the report is well prescribed by the law. So, why did Synovate decide to cut the findings into pieces like meat? Very strange, the firm did not state in the first place that what were released were only partial findings. The same practice happened in the 2010 elections in Tanzania where the firm failed to appreciate that Tanzania is a United Republic and that one cannot project the intention of voters on the President of the United Republic by sampling from Tanzania Mainland alone. Wolf does not want to admit this omission.

On the contrary, Wolf has shifted the debate “that I do not understand the differences between CATI and face-to-face” methodology. He states “Much of his apparent confusion about the results of the surveys stems from his failure to identify the contrasting methodologies associated with each one: face-to-face/household surveys, as opposed to CATI (mobile phone) ones” (Wolf, 2014: 204). *Face-to-face* and CATI (mobile phones) survey constitute very elementary knowledge about research. I covered them quite well in the “*Poll-pollution*” (see Makulilo, 2013:10-11). How can a “mature” and “former academic” pick lines selectively? He may also wish to read my other piece titled “*The Dark Side of Opinion Polls in Tanzania 1992-2010*” (Makulilo, 2011).

IPSOS’ surveys: the end justifies the means?

In my article I noted that in 13 February 2013 poll, Ipsos sampled 51% females and 49% males. This gender proportionality changed in the 18 February 2013 with 54% females and 46% males, a difference of 8%. In the 22 February poll Ipsos reversed the proportionality when it sampled 46% females and 54% males. I raised a question as to how arbitrary Synovate had been in sampling. There were no explanations for this change. Taking into account that all the February polls were just carried out within a week’s time, it raises doubt as to how and why Synovate kept on changing this gender proportionality. I questioned whether or not the Synovate was really aware of the context within which it operated. We know that sampling benchmark (the universe) should either be population census or registered voters. Yet, in Kenya, population is distributed in such a way that women constitute the majority i.e.19, 408,031 (equivalent to 50.3%) out of the total population of

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38,588,611. In contrast, men constitute 19,180, 580 (equivalent to 49.7%) of the total population (Republic of Kenya, 2009). On the other hand, the total number of registered voters stood at 12,469,408 in 2009. The proportionality of this figure by gender shows that males were 6,390,373 (equivalent to 51.2%) and females 6,079,035 (equivalent to 48.8%).⁴

In his rebuttal Wolf states that:

Finally, regarding the 'shifting' gender balance shown on several of these survey media-releases, the author is correct to note that "women are slightly the majority population in Kenya" (p. 20). However, he fails to recognize that the gender distribution we obtained in our final survey (54% male) is probably a more accurate reflection of the electoral reality, given what is known about the higher rate of voter registration/voter turnout among men (in Kenya, at least; for example, in Ipsos' June, 2013/post-election survey, 4% more men than women reported having voted in the election). Prior to that, whatever gender ratio was obtained in terms of respondent-capture, the raw data were weighted to bring them into line with the 51%-49% female/male ratio known to be the (census) reality.

The question which he avoids to answer is what was the basis of his sample? However, to Wolf, as he states in the above paragraph, he was not sure if Ipsos' samples were drawn from population census, registered voters or voter turnout as was determined by Ipsos' opinion poll of June 2013. I have read the Ipsos' June 2013 survey report (the survey that was conducted between 23 and 30 June 2013) and there is no data or question related to voter turnout. Yet, we know that gender is predetermined in sampling and in any case cannot be fixed or rather verified using the June 2013 survey (the survey which was about three months after the 4 March 2013 general elections). This is akin to putting the cart before the horse and expecting it to pull it.

If Wolf states that "gender distribution we obtained in our final survey (54% male) is probably a more accurate reflection of the electoral reality" does it mean that prior to the 22 Feb 2013 poll (i.e. what Wolf refers to as the final poll), all samples did not capture the "accurate reflection of the electoral reality" in Kenya? I revisited a couple of Ipsos' polls from January to February 2013 in order to expose how Wolf is trying to deceive the readers on this matter. As can be seen, table 2 indicates that all January and February 2013 polls were drawn from the registered voters as opposed to the "census"

reality. Hence, by sampling 51% females against 49% males, Ipsos was indeed contrary to what Wolf calls “electoral reality”. This is because men are slightly the majority in the IEBC register. Yet, the 18 February 2013 poll brings more confusion as Ipsos sampled 54% females and 46% males from the universe of registered voters. How can Wolf react to this gross error? Even the gap between the proportionality of males and females in the last poll (in February 2013 before the general elections) which according to Wolf sampled 54% males against 46% females is not a true reflection of voters registered in the IEBC i.e. 51.2% males against 48.8% females. That being said, I still maintain that Wolf does not possess the basic skills of research.

Table 2: Sampling by Gender

Poll release date	M	F	Universe
21 Jan 2013	49%	51%	Claimed registered voters likely to vote/adults, aged 18+ living in rural and urban areas
25 Jan	49%	51%	Kenyan adults, aged 18+ living in urban and rural areas; to the contrary, the sample was drawn from registered voters (see page 5 of the Ipsos’ report) ⁵
13 Feb 2013	49%	51%	Claimed registered voters intending to vote who watched or listened to the presidential debate living in urban and rural areas in Kenya
18 Feb 2013	46%	54%	Claimed registered voters likely to vote/adults, aged 18+ living in rural and urban areas
22 Feb 2013	54%	46%	Claimed registered voters living in urban and rural areas in Kenya according to IEBC data

Source: Ipsos January and February 2013 Polls.

Yet, Wolf ignorantly asks “do men and women vote differently” at least in Kenya or Tanzania? I am not sure if this “former academic” has really updated his memory by reading new literature on electoral politics. There is abundant literature which suggests that they do vote differently (Seltzer, et. al. 1997; Dolan, 2004; Black and Lynda, 2004). Likewise in Tanzania, there are studies and literature which suggest that men and women vote differently (Meena 2003; Mgasas, 2011; TCD, 2013; TGNP and LHRC, 2014). Without a

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survey of literature on voting behaviour from a gender perspective, Wolf simply finds the gender dimension in voting as “trivial irrelevance.” If that is the case, why did he include it in his “sample structure statistics”? Worse still, there is nowhere in Ipsos’ polls Wolf does a cross-tabulation of a gender variable to appreciate the variability of voting behaviour in Kenya. I suspect that his position is informed by patriarchal domination whose roots are founded in “Wolf’s framework of thought” I discussed earlier in this article. My advice to Wolf is that he has to read beyond his unreliable opinion polls.

Related to the above is the issue of a sample size. I cast doubt on the authenticity of samples by the Synovate in the “*poll-pollution*” (see Makulilo, 2013: 19) that it seems “Synovate simply picked the size of its samples arbitrarily.” For example, in the 25 January 2013 poll, the pollster sampled 5,895 registered voters from 28 counties. Interestingly, it admitted that “the sample was not large enough to generate statistical validity for enough counties to ensure the 25% and > requirement in at least half of the 47 counties has been met.”⁶ The question which I found problematic was the size of the sample and the issue of making inferences. If Synovate considered this sample to be small, why then did it sample only 2,500 respondents in 35 counties in its 18 February 2013 poll and did not complain about generating statistical validity? I have to add that what I found strange was the fact that such 35 counties were not even mentioned by names in the polling report. The serious fault appeared in the 24 February 2013 poll which stated the sample size of 5,971 of registered voters but did not state whether these were drawn from counties or regions. Again, the 13 February 2013 poll had the sample size of only 1,074 of registered voters drawn from the eight regions of Kenya representing the total number of registered voters of 14,337,399. What I specifically raised about the sample size is: what informed the variation of sample sizes over time? And whether or not with such variation of samples it is possible to capture trends and comparisons. Wolf asks questions for himself since I didn’t question the “right size” of a sample.

Similarly, I questioned the unit of analysis in the Ipsos’ polls. While some polls based on counties, others focused on provinces as their unit of analysis. For example the 13 February 2013 poll was based on provinces as its unit of analysis. In contrast the 18 and 22 February 2013 polls were premised on counties. Still, other polls like that of 24 February 2013 did not show even the unit of analysis. Surprisingly, Synovate used the findings from these different polls to do a comparative observation. Related to that, the demographic profiles were problematic across polls. In some polls, like that

of 24 February, 2013 such a profile was not found. This makes it difficult to ascertain in the first place whether the poll was authentic.

Contrary to what I queried about the sample sizes and their respective unit of analysis, Wolf has introduced a new topic concerning representativeness of Ipsos' sampling frames. Interestingly, instead of telling his readers what Ipsos does in sampling, he has simply stated that Ipsos' methodology "is exactly the same as employed in the Afrobarometer surveys" (Wolf, 2014: 208). This is not true at all. Afrobarometer does not conduct opinion polls in the first place. It has to be stated that Afrobarometer surveys are conducted in 35 African countries and are repeated on a regular cycle using a standard set of questions. This allows for a systematic comparison of countries. Results are shared with decision makers, policy advocates, civic educators, journalists, researchers, donors and investors, as well as average Africans who wish to become more informed and active citizens.⁷ Samples are designed to generate a sample that is a representative cross-section of all citizens of voting age in a given country. However, as a standard practice, Afrobarometer excludes people living in institutionalized settings, such as students in dormitories, patients in hospitals, and persons in prisons or nursing homes. In addition, it occasionally excludes people living in areas determined to be inaccessible due to conflict or insecurity. Any such exclusion is stated in the Technical Information Report that accompanies each data set.⁸ Furthermore, Afrobarometer normally states limitations of its surveys. For example, in the Afrobarometer working paper No. 33 of 2004 titled "A New Dawn? Popular optimism in Kenya after the transition" in which Thomas Wolf was one of the research team behind this survey, the constraints of this survey were clearly stated from page 6 to 7. This is quite different from Ipsos which claims its polls to be scientific and free from errors.

Hence, Wolf's claim that I do not understand sampling is baseless. I would like to invite him to read the "poll-pollution" under the sub-heading "framework for analysis" where I treat several variables that may undermine the quality of a poll. The first factor I considered in that section was sampling. I covered almost all topics related to sampling: representativeness, inference, bias, generalization, and sample size. He may as well wish to consult my other work on polls of which he is quite aware as he was able to cite it (Makulilo, 2012). I also made a clear statement that "occasionally, with a defective sample, a pollster can happen to project close to the actual reality" (Makulilo, 2013:8).

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Moreover, Wolf posits that my article entails serious omissions and factual errors with regard to US polls particularly in predicting Truman's victory over Dewey in 1948 and Obama in 2008. I stated "the most spectacular failure by pollsters to project electoral outcomes was in 1948 when they considered that the Republican Thomas Dewey would beat the incumbent Democratic president Harry Truman. More recently, polls got it wrong in the 2008 election when they predicted that Barack Obama would defeat Hillary Clinton in the New Hampshire Democratic primary" (Walker, 2006; Biemer, 2010; Hillygus, 2011; Young, 1966; Crespi, 1988; Jackman, 2005). I went further to show poll failures in Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania and Zanzibar. This was just an over view on some poll failures worldwide and it formed the introductory part of my article (Makulilo, 2013:1-6). Then, using the sub-title "framework for analysis" (Makulilo 2013: 6-11), I surveyed general factors which are likely to undermine the accuracy of polls. These include: failure to sample scientifically; question design; the context from which a sample is drawn; honest of answers by respondents of which pollsters have no control over; expertise of a pollster; poll timing; and voter turnout [note that Wolf has called these factors as tangential issues and irrelevant (Wolf, 2014: 208)]. As one can note, these include both those, which pollsters have control over and those which they do not. My approach was that since my article was a case study, I thought it would be important to do a quick survey of polls elsewhere before conducting an in-depth study of the Ipsos. Wolf admits that US pollsters I cited really failed. He gave one reason that the pollsters in the US did not employ scientific random sampling of the voting population. This is indeed one of the possible reasons my article discussed. It was surely the first possible explanation for poll failure. I have to say that it could be improper for me to detail failures of all examples of pollsters I listed in the US and Africa since this was a single case study. So, I thank Wolf for elaborating my point a bit more. I hope readers will now understand better that failures by pollsters may be due to poor expertise or factors beyond them.

Wolf also challenges the idea of "unique methodologies" (Wolf, 2014: 208). I guess he did not understand this point. I simply meant that not all types of research will use the same methodologies. Each one has its own specific methodology depending on time and space. Atieno-Odhiambo (as quoted in Wolf 2009: 282) notes:-

In considering them, however, it is necessary to note the particular context of the 2007 election, starting with the fact that it was the

country's most competitive contest by far. In contrast to the 1992 and 1997 elections, for example, there were only two main candidates, representing the most deeply rooted divide in Kenyan public life: that between the Kikuyu and the Luo.

Again, Wolf has questioned my statement "Normally, pollsters refrain from admitting limitations of their methodology and polling outcome" (Makulilo, 2013: 2). Wolf has taken this statement selectively. I went further stating that "In most cases they do not even state the non-probability sampling factors and the extent to which they affect the quality of the polling outcome." I have to admit that I did not have a data base as a justification to my position. But my statement was founded on the statement that "But the truth is that most of today's polls claiming to measure the public's preferences on policy matters or presidential candidates produce distorted and even false readings of public opinion that damage the democratic process"(Moore, 2008:102). In turn, pollsters have always defended their "science". While occasionally such defence has been legitimate, in most cases, it is extremely weak (Makulilo, 2013). Based on that, I gave several examples of such pollsters in Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, US and Zanzibar. Let me restate one specific example from Tanzania.

To be sure, the Synovate, for example was spotted in the 2010 elections in Tanzania. The pollster demonstrated a very poor understanding of the political system in Tanzania thereby culminating into a disaster. While Tanzania is a United Republic made of Tanzania Mainland (then Tanganyika) and Zanzibar, the pollster proceeded to sample only from Tanzania Mainland and projected for the post of the president of the United Republic. Similarly, it projected a voter turnout of 83% which was very far from the actual low voter turnout of 42.8% (Synovate, 2010; NEC, 2011). Despite some of the cited fault-lines, Synovate without any regret insisted that its findings were scientific. To be precise it stated:

As a company we are not affiliated to any political organisation and have no partisan interests in the politics. This company has its own procedures of engaging the Media. Our work, process and procedure are open to scrutiny and we invite any interested people/institutions to audit our work. This company is ISO 90012000 certified and we endeavour to maintain these standards in all operations. Our Opinion Polls are a professional undertaking that must meet these very high internationally acceptable standards.⁹

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So Wolf did not bring forward this discussion. The credibility of Ipsos was seriously questioned to the extent that their staff were running away from the press and researchers.

Factual Omissions: Wolf's self-defeating claims

I noted in my work that Ipsos failed to include Zanzibar in its poll during the 2010 general elections in Tanzania. Wolf maintains that this is incorrect. He states "According to Synovate's Country Manager at the time: What we refused to do was to divulge the findings for Zanzibar and Pemba. This is because of the stance of the Zanzibar government on [the] publishing of polls" (Wolf, 2014: 209). I have to state emphatically that Wolf is a liar. Zanzibar allows researchers provided that they abide by the rules and regulations of conducting research. In fact the Zanzibar government requires that once one is done with his or her research then a copy of the report must be submitted there in order to inform policy making and improvement of the people of Zanzibar. Even REDET which Wolf cites in his work did publish its findings prior to 2010 general elections. In any case, while it is possible not to disclose some findings for some reasons, that must be stated. This was not done by Synovate.

Without doubt, Synovate conducted its survey between 5 and 16 September 2010. In its questionnaire as well as its report prepared for the press on 10 October 2010, the company stated "the study covered 21 regions of Tanzania mainland, 63 districts and several wards."¹⁰ The company sampled 2000 Tanzanians aged 18 years old and above based on the 2002 population Census. Zanzibar was not mentioned here. Moreover, I visited Synovate office on 26 June 2011 to interview its staff. Mr. Ernest Sifuel, one of Ipsos officials took me to Mr. Aggrey Oriwo who was then the Country Manager for Synovate in Tanzania.¹¹ But he resisted welcoming me. Mr. Sifuel advised me to send him my questionnaire and that he would come back to me. Despite several visits to its office and communication via e-mail¹² and telephone, Synovate declined to cooperate. I should however know that Mr. Sifuel gave me a report on Media Monitoring for the 2010 elections and a press release (dated 20.9.2010) which Ipsos issued to media to defend its credibility following accusation from Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) that the pollster is pro-CCM. So, I advise Wolf to read the Ipsos' report, Zanzibar regulations on conducting research and combine it with his interview with the former manager in Tanzania. This will assist him understand the reality of the matter.

Related to the above, Wolf maintains that I trashed the polls conducted by Research and Education for Democracy in Tanzania (REDET) when he puts “he then surprisingly states that the ruling party was confidentially ‘fed’ the results of two polls conducted in Zanzibar...enabling it to ‘strategize its campaigns at the expense of the opposition” (Wolf, 2014: 212-3). Wolf has deliberately done misrepresentation. For avoidance of doubt let me quote what I wrote:

In Zanzibar, the Research and Education for Democracy in Tanzania (REDET) conducted two polls in relation to the 2010 elections but failed to publish its findings. Surprisingly, there were no reasons advanced to that effect. It was considered that the ruling party was fed by the findings of such polls and could therefore strategize its campaigns at the expense of the opposition. This allegation to some extent discredited the pollster (Makulilo, 2012).

The point I made was straightforward that REDET did not publish findings of its two polls in Zanzibar without giving any reasons. This is not acceptable in research. The failure to publish such polls raised doubts in a sense that the ruling party would have benefited out of these polls against the opposition. I put it plainly that this was a mere “allegation” which to some extent discredited the pollster. For instance, Prof. Peter Maina of the School of Law, University of Dar es Salaam contended that the polls were questionable and unrealistic (*This Day*, 12.10.2010). Similarly, opposition parties dismissed the polls claiming that they were strategically designed to favour CCM. The former Civic United Front (CUF) Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Joram Bashange described REDET polls as “a sham” (*The Citizen*, 9.10.2010) while the former Tanzania Labour Party (TLP) Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Hamad Tao was so detailed by positing that his party did not agree with the way the institution conducted its surveys, and described its report as “debatable.” He further alleged that while it could be true that Mr. Kikwete was at the forefront of the polls, the margin of his lead in REDET’s report was “outrageous.” Mr. Tao contended, “my worry is that this misleading survey can change voters’ perception; people might start thinking that opposition parties are too weak to win any seat, and thus decide to vote for CCM” (*The Citizen*, 9.10.2010).

Wolf raises the question that if “polls have a truth benchmark that is, election results obtained from a free and fair election” why didn’t I study the freeness and fairness of elections in Kenya? More so, Wolf notes that I once stated

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“what is challenging is the fact that while polls are fundamentally based on probability sampling the [Tanzanian] electoral field is systematically skewed to favour the ruling party” (Makulilo, 2012:53). Notwithstanding, the focus of the “*poll-pollution*” was simply to interrogate sampling, question design and reporting by pollsters. Hence, the issue of studying whether or not elections in Kenya were free and fair was beyond the ambit of my article. Wolf should therefore not impose new goals to my article and proceed to lament that I did not address them.

I also do not understand Wolf’s claim that I have no evidence to substantiate the statement that “poll findings are in themselves significant to influence the actual voting as well as voter turnout” i.e. (the bandwagon effect). I have to admit that I extracted this position from the literature (Riuta, 2007; Yeshanew, 2004; Marsh, 1985) as shown in my “*Poll-pollution*” (see Makulilo, 2013: 3). Therefore polls are not mere political gimmicks since they influence the timing, strategy, course of election campaigns and the results (Snock and Loosveldt, 2010; Althaus, 1996; Crewe, 1992). So, what kind of authorities or evidence should I produce to support the above position? Does Wolf want me to cite unreliable Ipsos’ polls to argue my case? Let me reproduce what Ipsos said with regard to the “bandwagon effect”. In its 15 March 2013 analysis report titled “4 March IEBC election results *vis a vis* IPSOS Synovate February SPEC poll”, the company concluded:

A modest bandwagon effect also appeared to have been at work. Whereas the six “minor” candidates received about 8% of the “votes” in IPSOS Synovate’s February poll, the IEBC’s results gave them only 5.64% - a “loss” of nearly 2.5%...Based on regional analysis, it can be assumed that more than half of these “lost” votes were switched to Kenyatta (p. 2).

From the above paragraph it is clear that Ipsos concluded that “bandwagon effect” worked positively for Kenyatta given the fact that he won a slim victory. Can Wolf legitimately refute the above paragraph from Ipsos’ report of which he himself was its author?

Wolf states that the exit polls conducted during both the 2007 and 2013 elections, the results of each largely confirm Steadman’s/ Ipsos’ final voter intention polls. Specifically for the 2013 elections, Wolf quotes (Ferree at. al, 2014:15) that “overall, we estimate that Odinga took around 45.3% of the vote and Kenyatta 45.6%, a statistical tie” (see Wolf, 2014: 210). In the first place let

me maintain that the above quoted statement as well as the cited figures and its citation are “cooked.” They do not appear at all in Ferree et al’s work. Wolf must have fabricated them to suit his ill intention. This is indeed an act of academic dishonesty. To be sure, Ferree et al, (2014: 164) were responding to the question: “Do the exit poll results confirm the IEBC counts?” One of their observations was that:

First, the two leading candidates, Odinga and Kenyatta, are statistically tied in the exit poll, with Odinga garnering 40.9% of the vote to Kenyatta’s 40.6%. These results are consistent with the final Ipsos pre-election tracking poll implemented ten days before the election, which also showed a statistical tie with Kenyatta’s at 44.8% and Odinga’s at 44.4% (p. 164).

As can be observed, the only similarity between the exit poll and Ipsos is found on the phrase “statistical tie”. However, the figures are different by almost 5% and that in the exit poll at least Odinga was slightly ahead of Kenyatta. But they went a bit far to ask another question: “What explains the difference between the exit and Ipsos polls from the IEBC count?” (Ferree et al, 2014: 165). Here is where Wolf did not want to disclose. Let me revisit their explanations. According to the Ipsos’ post March 2013 election analysis¹³ titled “4 March IEBC election results *vis a vis* IPSO Synovate February SPEC poll: Voter turnout Explains (nearly all) the Difference” there are three factors which explain this difference namely (a) higher voter turnout (88%) in Jubilee strongholds gave Uhuru Kenyatta a clear advantage over his main rival, Raila Odinga where voter turnout stood at 84% (b) a modest bandwagon effect also appeared to have been in favour of Kenyatta and (c) voter registration was higher in Jubilee strongholds than in the CORD strongholds by 247,811. To the contrary, the exit poll found that all these factors do not explain the difference between the exit and Ipsos polls from the IEBC results. To be certain, Ferree et al, (2014: 165) posit that:

Could last minute swings in the share of votes for the third through sixth place finishers to Kenyatta have pushed him over the 50% threshold? It is extremely unlikely: the sum of all the presidential candidates besides Odinga who lost votes moving from the Ipsos poll to the IEBC tally only produces 2.8%. This implies that about half of the 5.27 percentage point increase Kenyatta received when moving from the Ipsos poll to the IEBC count would have had to have come from Odinga supporters - the most unlikely group to switch their votes.

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Moreover, because the exit poll interviews people directly after they voted, it should capture all last minute swings in support. In sum, registration, turnout, and shifts in candidate preference do not seem to explain the difference between the exit poll and the IEBC results.

The cited paragraph speaks it all that registration, turnout, and the bandwagon effect are unable to explain the difference between the exit and Ipsos polls from the IEBC results. This observation negates the Ipsos' explanations. Further, "exit poll data also reveal irregularities in the electoral process, including some evidence of inflated vote totals benefitting the Jubilee coalition and illegal administrative activities. The data, while not definitive, are highly suggestive of a deeply flawed electoral process and challenge claims that Kenyatta won a majority in the first round" (Ferree et al, 2014: 153). So, can Wolf still conclude that the exit poll confirmed or rather validated the Ipsos' poll? This is strange.

Wolf complains that I omitted some text from Cheeseman and hence causing distortion. For clarity let me restate what I wrote. In Kenya, opinion polls came in a full swing after the introduction of multiparty system in 1991. The most leading pollsters in Kenya include the Ipso Synovate, Infotrak, and Strategic Africa. These have involved themselves in projecting the outcome of every election. It has to be noted that their projections have always met with protests from political parties, academics and the general public. For example, with reference to the 2007 elections, Cheeseman (2008: 168-9) notes:-

These polls, conducted by companies including the Steadman Group, Infotrak Harris, Consumer Insight, and Strategic Research, were painstakingly pored over by voter and aspiring politicians alike. The opinion polls themselves became the subject of great controversy and disagreement¹⁴...These misleading polls contributed to the disappointment and outrage at the declaration of a Kibaki victory in pro-Odinga areas.¹⁵

What Wolf is trying to imply here is that the omitted text was in favour of Steadman (now Ipsos) against the other two poll firms. In order to understand his concern it is imperative that I take in the omitted text i.e. "Significantly, while polls conducted by Steadman and Consumer Insight matched many observers' assessment that the election was too close to call,

polls by Strategic Research and Infotrak Harris using smaller and more tightly clustered samples consistently gave Odinga a sizeable majority.”¹⁶

I have to admit that I misquoted Cheeseman since that text did not wholly belong to him. The omitted text was cited by Cheeseman from the *Sunday Nation* as shown in end note No. 13 (Cheeseman, 2008: 181). From the quoted paragraph, there is no doubt that Cheeseman believed that opinion polls in connection to the 2007 elections in Kenya were “the subject of great controversy and disagreement.” This is despite the fact that Cheeseman “inserted” a statement from the *Sunday Nation*, that “Significantly...polls conducted by Steadman and Consumer Insight matched many observers’ assessment that the election was too close to call.” Cheeseman did not specify who these “observers” were and possibly how did they come to that conclusion. Wolf seems to be so fascinated by this statement which is the essence of “*are you the white man from Steadman? Your work is very good!*” He thinks that this endorsement from a newspaper (note that somewhere he criticised my article for citing newspapers as he considered them coming from self-serving politicians) would have boosted his business in the Ipsos. Wolf is of the view that the negative appraisal of the “Strategic Research and Infotrak Harris” would reduce competition on his part as his motive is always profit maximization. To the contrary, it was observed in the very same election that Steadman (now Ipsos) underperformed just like other pollsters. In their book chapter titled “*History, Politics and Science of Opinion Polls in Kenya*” Kiage and Owino (2010: 263) noted: “Other weaknesses observed was when Steadman unilaterally changed its polling methodology in an attempt to suit certain political groups. This happened midstream in the run up to the 2007 general elections when they argued that one method was favouring a certain political party, hence had to change its sampling strategy.” How can Wolf react to this observation by these two scholars? I was surprised to see Wolf’s attempt to use Cheeseman to protect his ignorance and errors when he stated that Cheeseman always uses Ipsos’ polls when writing in the *Star*. Rather than relying on Wolf, I hope Cheeseman may wish and he is kindly invited to comment on the quality of Ipsos’ polls.

Wolf’s misrepresentation of Self: What a mess!

Wolf quotes my article selectively and poses an irrelevant question: that “the author twice suggests that Ipsos’ voter intention results ‘might’ have been falsified ‘in favour of ‘one candidate especially in relation to the question posed on several surveys as to whether any respondents had recently

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changed their voting intentions (p. 16) but fails to indicate which that candidate was, or how the company could have gained by so doing" (Wolf, 2014: 213). He goes further to ask: "if there was any truth to this, how would (all) 'politicians, academics and the general public' discredited the polls as partisan?" I fail to understand how Wolf, despite being "close to God" could not understand my point; or is it because he is a "former academic?" Let me restate what I wrote:

Poll 1 namely "*Political Barometer Survey: Post-Presidential Debate Poll*" revealed that the overall candidate who performed the best was Uhuru Kenyatta with 37%. This was followed by Raila Odinga with 23%, Peter Keneth 15% and Martha Karua 8%. The rest of the candidates performed below 4%. Surprisingly, Synovate undertook another poll on the same presidential debate as Poll 4 namely "*Presidential Debate Opinion Poll aired on 11th February 2013*". The poll was released just one day before the second presidential debate on 25 February 2013. I suggest that the timing of this poll was by design in favour of one candidate. In order to argue this case I examine one question which was asked by Synovate in poll 1, poll 3 as well as the 21 January 2013 poll (Makulilo, 2013: 15-6).

This question was about the change of voters' preferences over time. In the January poll Synovate asked "Over the last 2 months, have you changed your choice of presidential candidate?" The pollster observed that 92% respondents said "No" while the remaining 8% respondents said "Yes". This could mean that voting patterns in Kenya are relatively stable.

In contrast, in Poll 1 (that of 13 February 2013) Synovate asked "Did the debate on Monday evening change your mind on whom you will vote for as president?" The pollster noted a significant change. To be sure it found that only Uhuru Kenyatta made a remarkable increase from 36.9% before changing mind to 39.8% after changing mind. Raila Odinga dropped from 35.3% before changing mind to 33.1% after changing mind. This means that the previous gap between these two candidates increased from 1.6% to 6.7%. Surprisingly, poll 3 (that of 22 February 2013) asked the same question as that of the 21 January 2013 poll "Over the last 2 months, have you changed your choice of presidential candidate?" The pollster noted a very slight change hence confirming the claim that Kenyans are founded upon strong social cleavages that are relatively resistant to abrupt changes. The same observation was made by Ferree, et al (2014). To be sure, 93% respondents

replied “No” and 7% held an affirmative answer. In a total of more than four months, there was only 1 respondent who “changed his or her mind with respect to the presidential candidate.” Now, if Poll 1 was taken in between the 21 January and the 22 February 2013 polls, how could it be possible to warrant a significant change while it was an inclusive of the January and February polls? It can therefore be submitted that the “24 February 2013 poll” (Poll 4) was undertaken as a continuation of manufacturing data in favour of one candidate against another. The above discussion shows clearly that the Ipsos’ poll was in favour of Kenyatta. Moreover, I have never stated in my article that “all politicians, academics and the general public have discredited the polls as partisan.” That is why I only cited some specific protests against polls in Kenya and stated “The above quotations are just few examples among the protests against polls in Kenya” (Makulilo, 2013: 6). For that matter, an addition of “all” by Wolf was rather motivated to deceive readers in order to serve his face and win their sympathy.

Another issue which I raised was about the question wordings. The design of questions by the Synovate was highly problematic to the extent that it asked and reported what it did not measure. For a detailed analysis of this point (see Makulilo, 2013: 17-8). However, to keep the readers understand the problems of Ipsos’ question design; I reproduce a table which covers one question. This question was about preferences of presidential candidates and/or running mates. Table 3 below presents four different types of questions but purporting to ask and measure the same thing.

Table 3: Ipsos Synovate Survey: Question Design Variations

Poll Release Date	Question Wording
22 Feb. 2013	Apart from President Kibaki, if presidential elections were held now, whom would you vote for if that person was a candidate?
18 Feb. 2013	Which of the following pair of candidates for president and deputy president/ running-mate are you going to vote for in the next general election?
13 Feb. 2013	Who are you going to vote for as the fourth president of Kenya?
25 Jan. 2013	Apart from President Kibaki, if presidential elections were held now, whom would you vote for if that person was a candidate?
21 Jan. 2013	Apart from President Kibaki, whom would you

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	vote for as president of Kenya at the next general elections?
14 Dec. 2012	Apart from President Kibaki, if presidential elections were held now, whom would you vote for if that person was a candidate?
20 Nov. 2012	Apart from President Kibaki, if presidential elections were held now, whom would you vote for if that person was a candidate?

Source: Extracted from Ipsos Synovate Polls 2012 and 2013.

Although there is no specific rule on how to design questions, it is mandatory that questions are first and foremost impartial. Scholars agree that they should not be too general or insufficiently specific; use the simplest language in line with the intended respondents; avoid prejudicial language; avoid ambiguity; eliminate vague words; avoid leading questions; ensure that respondents have the minimum knowledge to answer questions; do not presume that respondents follow the patterns of behaviour you wish to know about; avoid hypothetical questions; avoid personal questions; and do not assume respondents are liars (May, 2006; Zaller and Feldman, 1992; Achen, 1975; Young, 1992). Questions can be designed in such a way that they seek objective information or simply opinion (Makulilo, 2013: 9). The questions given in table 3 depart significantly from the above standards.¹⁷

I also asked whether Ipsos dealt with any question with regard to voter turnout. Wolf argues that it did in its questionnaires. However this is doubtful given the fact that the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 in Kenya requires questions to be published. I have to confirm that Ipsos’ reports do not contain this question. More so, Synovate admitted this fact in its 25 January 2013 poll stating that “Together with such other unknown factors as turn-out rates in various parts of the country on Election Day, there is no solid basis for predicting the actual outcome as of now.” The same statement was repeated in Ipsos’ post March 2013 election analysis¹⁸ titled “4 March IEBC election results *vis a vis* Ipsos Synovate February SPEC poll: Voter turnout Explains (nearly all) the Difference (p.1).” So, how can Wolf claim that this question was found in their questionnaires? It is illogical to refrain from reporting a factor which Ipsos thought it explained “nearly all the difference” between the IEBC election results and Ipsos’ SPEC poll. How then could Synovate project its polls “accurately” in the absence of voter turnout rates in its polls? In the last general elections of 2010 in Tanzania,

Synovate projected the voter turnout rate of 83% contrary to the actual voter turnout of about 42%.

Yet, on another account, Wolf dismissed the terms “predicting” and “projecting” electoral results which are well established in the literature of opinion poll and public opinion (e.g. see May, 2006; Achen, 1975; Hillygus, 2011; Jackman, 2005). He argues that such terms connote “fortune-telling” which is a “non-scientific guess-work” (Wolf, 2014: 214). To the contrary Ipsos uses the same formulation “Together with such other unknown factors as turn-out rates in various parts of the country on Election Day, there is no solid basis for predicting the actual outcome as of now.”¹⁹ For avoidance of doubt Wolf cited the same quotation but rather emphatically “indeed, as we stated in our Press Release that accompanied the 25 January media briefing, ‘together with such other unknown factors as turn-out rates in various parts of the country on Election Day, there is no solid basis for predicting the actual outcome as of now’” (Wolf, 2014: 214). By including the phrase “predicting the actual outcome” in Ipsos’ polls, Wolf confirms beyond doubt that Ipsos is a “fortune-teller” which is an embodiment of “non-scientific guess-work.” Wolf insisted that a distinction should be made between “social science” and “fortune-telling.”

In its 15 March 2013 Post-Election Analysis, Synovate made reference to its “final poll released on 22 February 2013” and claimed to have projected close to the electoral outcome. It projected the victory of 44.82% for Uhuru Kenyatta while the actual IEBC results were 50.07%. This is a variance of 5.25% (higher than the margin of error set at +/-1.27 at 95% confidence level). For Raila Odinga it projected 44.36% against 43.31% of actual votes by the IEBC results, making a variance of -1.05% (within the margin of error set at +/-1.27 at 95% confidence level). For other presidential candidates, it projected within the margin of error in comparison to the IEBC results. Synovate further claimed to have projected close to the electoral outcome with a high level of precision at the county level i.e. 91% correct with regards to Kenyatta’s counties and 88% correct with regards to Odinga’s counties.²⁰ Notwithstanding, going by the 22 February poll, Synovate claimed that even though the projection of Uhuru Kenyatta was higher than the margin of error, it was correct to indicate that Uhuru would be ahead of Odinga. This was despite the fact that the 22 February poll insisted that no one would win the required votes in the first round. Hence, it emphasised on the run-off elections in which Raila Odinga would have 29% and Uhuru Kenyatta 12% among those who did not support either Odinga or Uhuru in the first round.

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This would mean by logic that in the run-off elections, Raila Odinga would have become the leading candidate in the Synovate poll. That means Raila was popular among those who were still undecided. Surprisingly, in its 15 March 2013 Post-Election Analysis, Synovate did not discuss about the issue of “run-off elections” and insisted that it was correct to project Uhuru as the likely winner.

I also raised the question on cross-tabulating responses according to demographic characteristics. I said that this was missing in most of Synovate’s polls making it difficult to understand which age groups supported which party or candidates more than others. It was also not possible to ascertain which group according to gender supported which policy, candidate or party (Makulilo, 2013: 21). I further stated very specifically that the IPSOS’s poll which was conducted between 15 and 19 February 2013 and released on 24 February 2013 was seriously flawed since it lacked the demographic profile of the sampled population raising doubt if it was really conducted or simply fabricated in the pollster’s office (Makulilo, 2013: 16). To my surprise Wolf (2014: 17) has raised a funny issue on the failure to release data in relation to ethnicity i.e. it may be because of a policy of a firm. While this may be true to some firms, in Kenya almost all firms do indicate the degree of ethnicity and political support including the IPSOS as I have already discussed in this article. Wolf himself cannot explain the Kenyan politics without touching the ethnic issue (see Wolf, 2009; 2013). So which policy issue is he referring? More so, Wolf admits that IPSOS does sell such data with ethnic breakdown. One wonders, what is the motive behind this practice? To be sure he states:

Yet if the author had asked (if he does not know already) he would have been told that such detailed findings (in terms of religion, employment status, education level, and gender, etc., as well as ethnic identity) are available for purchase by anyone, because all the relevant data are collected and available – at a cost. If he (or his academic institution) lacked the required funds, he may deserve some sympathy, and one hopes that in future if he wishes to interrogate such survey results he will be able to source the necessary funding (Wolf, 2014: 17).

The question I raised was quite simple, that while some of the IPSOS’ polls had demographic profiles, others did not. In Kenya, the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 requires among other things that a pollster or any person that publishes the results of an electoral opinion poll

during election period and any other person who transmits those results to the public within twenty four hours after they are first transmitted to the public must provide information related to the population from which the sample of respondents was drawn; and the educational levels of the participants. So, my point was that by avoiding publishing demographic profiles it was not only difficult to understand IPSOS' polls but also the company violated the law. Surprisingly, Wolf due to the fact that he is money oriented, he plays down this important point and raises funny argument that I was supposed to purchase such information; and that I did not do it because I (or my academic institution) did not have funds. Unfortunately, he has not provided a proof of a bank statement to qualify his claim. By the way, who can purchase defective products?

“Crossing the floor”: Is IPSOS a Master of All, One or None?

In order to understand the above subject matter, it is imperative to resolve this question: What is Ipsos? The paragraph below provides detailed description:-

Ipsos is an innovative, entrepreneurial, client-focused organization, providing research services to clients on a global basis...Ipsos is proud to be the only global market research company that is still controlled and operated by market researchers...We aim to remain the natural home for intellectually curious and passionate researchers...We explore market potential and market trends. We test products and advertising. We help our clients build long term relationships with customers. We study audiences and their perceptions of various media. We measure public opinion trends around the globe.²¹

The next question is that: is market research the same as political research? Wolf acknowledges the fact that market research and political/election surveys are two distinct fields. Certainly, he contends “One critical and glaring conclusion that must be drawn from this article is that the author lacks the most basic appreciation of the motivation of survey firms – at least those (such as IPSOS) whose main business is private sector market research – which enter the field of political/election surveys, including those that capture voter-intentions. This is to prove their worth by doing scientific, credible work, and thereby (hopefully) gaining more business from clients of whatever sort” (Wolf, 2014: 218). First of all, I entirely agree with his observation that market research and political surveys are different. The two

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are founded on different philosophical outlook. To be sure, political research revolves around the issue of “power.” In their book, *Research Methods in Politics*, Peter Burnham, et. al. (2008:1) state that “politics is about power. Studying the distribution and exercise of power is, however, far from straightforward.” In contrast, market research is rooted on business in which the laws of demand and supply as well as profit maximization are its grand principles. For that case, research methods and the execution of research in the two fields are quite different.

Yet, on the second account, I am wondering when Wolf claims that Ipsos has crossed and expanded its boundaries to include political research. By so doing Ipsos gains more clients and hence profit. To my surprise, Wolf does not discuss the issue of expertise. Who knows, next time Ipsos might expand to other fields such as economics, history, fine and performing arts so long as business potentials exist. This is too dangerous. As I argued elsewhere (see Makulilo, 2011; 2012) political science is not a field of every opinion. In that line, political research is not conducted just as marketers do in order to attract more “clients”. It is against that backdrop I argued in the “*poll-pollution*” that lack of or insufficient competence of expertise in political science was one among the causes which made Ipsos underperform in its 2013 opinion polls. Moreover, Wolf argues that any employee who is caught attempting to “rig” polls in Ipsos or other polling companies is immediately terminated his or her employment. He insists that rigging is almost impossible by pollsters. Going by my reply, and the kind of falsehood exposed, which taken together amount to “rigging” I am waiting to see if Wolf will be the first to be terminated from his employment.

Compensating Researchers: “More Holes than Cheese”!

How much researchers are paid in a scientific project has a bearing on both the quality of researchers a company can have in terms of competent skills and the research output itself. Ipsos being a market research run for profit maximization knows this fact very well. Surprisingly, researchers complain to have been seriously underpaid by the Ipsos. I had the opportunity to interview three research assistants between 8 June and 10 August 2014 in Dar es Salaam who worked in the project titled “*Tanzania Media Survey – TAMPS 2012*” Survey No. 170214. They said that during training before fieldwork they were paid 2,000 Tanzanian Shillings (Tsh/=), equivalent to 1 Euro. There were no any refreshments during the training. That means every trainee had to carry his or her own money to “subsidize” the company. The situation became worse during the fieldwork whereby researchers who were

posted to Dar es Salaam were paid 3,000 Tsh/= (equivalent to 1.5 Euro) for transport for one day and a fee of 10,000 Tsh/= (equivalent to 5 Euros). While the money for transport was available before fieldwork, fee was supposed to be collected after the entire work was completed. Interestingly, they complained that it took up to 9 months to get paid the fees. Those who were posted upcountry received 27,000 Tsh/= (equivalent to 13 Euros) to cover for meals, accommodation and transport which is very far below from the Tanzania's government rates ranging between 65,000Tsh/= and 80,000Tsh/= (i.e. between 30 and 40 Euros) for meals and accommodation only. They then received 10,000 Tsh/= as fee per day. When asked how they managed collecting data with that budget, they simply said it was their secret. But one disclosed that they usually filled in the questionnaires in hotels or under trees. I further asked, "Didn't it affect the quality of research?" They said that they did not care since the little they were paid was equivalent to what they were exactly doing. Moreover, I had the opportunity to see the questionnaire for that particular research. It had 35 pages and about 80 questions. Each research assistant was supposed to fill 5 questionnaires per day. Certainly, data collection has implications to quality of research output. This is despite claims by the Ipsos that it controls the quality of its research. I suggest that future research undertakings would take this as an area of study since motivating researchers is critical to the quality of output.

Conclusion

The study of opinion poll is not a field for everyone. This is true as Wolf once held that "there will always be a clear distinction between science and fortune-telling." In Kenya, the Publication of Electoral Opinion Polls Act No. 39 of 2012 was one of the mechanisms to ensure opinion polls are scientific and credible. Unfortunately, after the 2013 elections, there has not been any scrutiny by the government of Kenya in order to ascertain the extent to which polls complied with the law. Similarly, in the past, scholars did not have keen interests to evaluate the polling industry. The only kind of evaluation was that mainly done on newspapers by politicians, academics, citizens, and practitioners, which was not systematic and comprehensive. This practice has made pollsters to think that their works are always scientific and hence the popular saying "*your work is very good!*" Thanks for the coming of the "*poll-pollution*" which interrogated pollsters from a scholarly point of view, thereby opening up for a debate. Being unhappy with the "*poll-pollution*" Wolf wrote a rebuttal as a reaction, something which is welcomed in academics. This is notwithstanding the fact that Wolf

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admitted himself that he is a “former academic.” What is very clear throughout Wolf’s rebuttal is that it is based on propaganda and deception. That means whenever Wolf tried to raise an issue; the same resulted into “multiple lies” hence validating the “poll-pollution.” Yet, to the positive side, his rebuttal further questions Wolf’s expertise on opinion polls. I hope that my exchanges with him will attract more scholars to research and engage the polling industry for the benefit of democracy in Kenya and beyond. While Wolf may still use my reply to improve his “science” on opinion polls for the benefit of Ipsos and his “stomach”, I cordially invite him to react to my reply. That being said, the debate is not closed.

Notes

1. Taken from Thomas P. Wolf (2009): “Poll poison’?: Politicians and polling in the 2007 Kenya election”, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 27 (3): 279-304 p. 293.
2. African Review Vol. 40, No. 2, 2013: 1-32.
3. See Ipsos’ report, 20 November, 2012, p. 8.
4. Kenya Facts and figures 2012: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/9\)%20Kenya%20facts%20and%20figures%202012.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/9)%20Kenya%20facts%20and%20figures%202012.pdf) (accessed: September 20, 2014).
5. In its press release of 25 January 2013 “Presidential race too close to call-an inevitable runoff?” the Ipsos stated “This survey was conducted countrywide between 12th-20th January 2013 using a face to face methodology. The survey polled 5,895 registered voters living in 47 counties in both rural and urban areas. The sample was distributed across the various counties proportionate to the population of registered voters in the counties.
6. Ipsos Synovate 25 January 2013, p. 37.
7. <http://www.afrobarometer.org/> (accessed: September 10, 2014).

8. <http://www.afrobarometer.org/survey-and-methods/sampling-principles> (accessed: September 5, 2014).
9. See Aggrey Oriwo "Synovate Tanzania Press Release 20.9.2010" Dar es Salaam.
10. Synovate Quarter III - 2010 Opinion Polls (Date: 10.10.2010).
11. He is currently the Country Manager for Ipsos in Kenya.
12. E-mail to Mr. Ernest Sifuel via ernest.sifuel@synovate.com on 26 June 2011. He responded that the company is working on it and he would come back to me as soon as possible.
13. 15 March 2013 analysis report.
14. Cheeseman, 2008 p. 168.
15. Cheeseman, 2008 p. 169.
16. *Sunday Nation* "Raila in 10-point Lead" 15 December 2007.
17. See Makulilo (2013:17-8) for a detailed discussion of each question given in table 3.
18. Ipsos Synovate "Post-Election Analysis" 15 March 2013.
19. Ipsos Synovate 25 January 2013 Poll, p. 39.
20. Ipsos Synovate "Post-Election Analysis" 15 March 2013.
21. <http://www.ipsos.com/> (accessed: September 18, 2014).

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