

THE WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

Presents the

2012 Helen Dinerman Award

to

Dr. Hans Mathias Kepplinger

The World Association for Public Opinion Research presents its 2012 Helen Dinerman Award to Dr. Hans Mathias Kepplinger, professor emeritus at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, for his pioneering work on linking public opinion research with media content analysis.

Firmly entrenched in the triangle of theory, empirical measurement, and societal relevance, the research of Hans Mathias Kepplinger has been published in about 30 books and more than 300 articles, many of them in peer-reviewed international journals. Kepplinger's work not only adopted theories from communication, but also identified interdisciplinary linkages to psychology, sociology, political science and economics. The methodological designs of his studies were highly sophisticated while at the same time valid and reliable, be it in experiments on media effects, journalists' news decision, or people's risk perception; in content analyses on the coverage of politics, science and technology; or in surveys of all of these fields. With his studies and his theoretical contributions, Kepplinger has advanced not only our understanding of the underlying processes in public communication, but also the visibility of German communication research on the international stage.

Hans Mathias Kepplinger has inspired, conducted, and analyzed dozens of public opinion surveys. But his use of surveys has never been restricted to descriptive assessments. He has used survey methodology as an analytical tool for a much wider endeavor – to understand the factors influencing the dynamics in reality perception. Toward this end, he has – more than most other scholars in the world – combined survey data with media content analyses. Knowing that reality perception in most cases is not a short-term process, Kepplinger took a long view, with his research spanning several decades. Convinced that the ultimate goal of journalism is to depict reality as accurately as possible, Kepplinger looked, wherever possible, for real-world indicators and related them to media coverage and public opinion.

One of his first studies of this kind, published in 1989 under the programmatic title "Artificial Horizons," examined the impact of media coverage of technology and the environment on public opinion. This study showed that trends in media coverage of the environment over a period of twenty years ran counter to objective criteria for the state of the environment in Germany – but nevertheless shaped public opinion. In his 1998 book, *The deconstruction of politics in information society*, he showed how decades of activities and achievements in German parliament were distorted by media coverage and consequently eroded public perceptions of political figures, parties, and politics in general. Since the 1990s, Kepplinger has studied public scandals, how they evolve and how they end. His analyses throughout all these bodies of research exemplify rigorous research in studying the theory, substance, and nature of public opinion processes.

The World Association for Public Opinion Research honors Hans Mathias Kepplinger's outstanding contributions to our understanding of the dynamics of public opinion with the 2012 Helen Dinerman Award.



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