**21-24, “No Accountability without Transparency and Consistency: Redistricting-by-Formula in Mexico”**

Reviewer 1  
This manuscript analyzes Mexico’s redistricting process as a case study to refine theories of electoral management bodies. By focusing on the phase in which political parties interact with the administrative agencies that carry out redistricting to gauge the degree to which the process meets democratic standards of transparency and consistency. With unique access to the internal data generated by a computational redistricting algorithm, as well as changes made by a panel, they find several instances in which the process falls short of this standard.

The analysis was expertly carried out and the data is quite elucidating. Furthermore, the manuscript is quite novel in analyzing a mode of democratic institution—administrative redistricting bodies—that until now has been neglected outside the US case.

The article is somewhat unorthodox for a general subfield journal in that it forefronts the Mexican case with little attempt to generalize. Nonetheless, I think that the contribution is substantial enough to merit consideration for publication based on the fascinating data and the careful work operationalizing this byzantine—yet very important—process.

That said, I would have preferred to see the “theory” section (section 3) before the nitty gritty about Mexico’s redistricting process (section 2). And I think that the theory should be somewhat expanded and more closely linked to observable implications.

I’m not convinced that “accountability” is the relevant concept for evaluation. Nor is it clear that “transparency” and “consistency” are the composite traits that produce accountability. (Drawing on the canonical definition by Schedler, accountability requires answerability and sanctions.)

But furthermore, I think that what’s being somewhat confused in this metric of evaluation is the process vs the results. That is, a system can be transparent and consistent while also still being very biased. (The redistricting process leading to gerrymandering in many US states comes to mind.) In such cases, the principal of equal representation is arguably compromised, but not the “accountability” under your definition. Is this correct? To which of these issues does “election integrity” (your other big concept) belong?

The lede is buried. Page 6: “Our detailed analysis of the two previous redistricting rounds using new data reveals that the *Technical Committee* has deviated from its rules to select scenarios that score worse than the algorithmically generated first scenario, suggesting strongly the presence of political manipulation of Mexico’s redistricting process.”

Figure 2a is quite difficult to interpret. What are the units on the Y-axis of these two panels? And how can we tell which plan was eventually adopted?

Reviewer 2  
**Positive comments**

* This paper makes an important empirical contribution due to its use of previously unavailable data.
* The hypotheses are clear and the methodology seems sound.
* The paper is well written in terms of organization, clarity of expression, and flow of thought.

**Suggestions for improvement**

* I’d like to see the authors make some effort to situate their theoretical contribution within a broader cross-national perspective. They point out that there are three basic types of electoral management bodies (EMBs): independent, partisan, and mixed (p. 1). They argue that Mexico’s EMB provides a unique example of a mixed system, and this brings some benefits to a purely independent one. However, to better appreciate these findings, it would be good to know just How unique Mexico’s system is? How many countries use independent, partisan, and mixed system? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? You make the case that Mexico’s mixed system could be a good solution for the pathologies of the U.S. partisan system, but how many other countries have partisan systems that could also stand to benefit from a similar reform? I think discussing these issues briefly in the introduction and conclusion of the paper would improve the manuscript.
* The last sentence of the paper on page 32. You write, “More importantly, perhaps, is that our understanding of these policy-specific interactions contribute to clarifying how Mozaffar and Schedler’s (2002: 14-17) six basic dimensions of electoral governance operate in practice.” I would briefly explain how your findings clarify Mazaffar and Schedler’s six basic dimensions of electoral governance. Only some very familiar with the electoral governance literature would understand this reference, and you might want to make the contribution of your research more immediately accessible to scholars who lack this background.
* The manuscript comes with 12 pages of appendices. The editors will have to give consideration to how to handle that information.

**Typos**

* Third sentence on page 21. Change 2107 to 2017.
* Page 24, first sentence of last paragraph. Grammatically incorrect.
* Page 27. Change “excerpt” to “expert.”