



**Evaluation of the Dissertation Thesis**  
**“Improving Strategic Foresight in Public Policymaking“**  
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The dissertation addresses the question of how to improve national strategic foresight in order to lead to more robust and informed policies. The thesis explores the combination of the Delphi method with forecasting tournaments by following two hypotheses: 1. forecasting tournaments enhance the quality of participation; and 2. improved participation can enhance foresight results. The predictions were evaluated 18 months and three years later.

**Structure of the work**

The structure of the work is hard to follow, mainly because a section on the research approach/methodology is missing. Without this section, it is difficult to see how the other parts of the work fit together.

**Continuity with existing research**

One of the main shortcomings of this dissertation is that it does not reflect the body of research on foresight in the public domain. There is no comprehensive literature review on foresight either in the public domain or in the corporate sector. While a few foresight-reports are cited, no reference is made to the state of research either in the domain of public foresight, prediction markets, or forecasting tournaments.

**Originality and contribution to academic knowledge**

The originality of the dissertation is limited as its main aim is to combine of two foresight methods. Overall, the contribution of this dissertation to academic knowledge is very limited. This is because it does not reflect academic knowledge in the field, and because the dissertation makes several claims that that are not supported by the literature.

### Comments on the content

The dissertation fails to define foresight or to even reflect on various definitions of the term, or its historical evolution. In general, foresight is described as an activity whose purpose is to describe alternative pictures of the future and foremost as an activity that is not concerned with making predictions. However, in the dissertation the term *prediction* is used in relationship to foresight. Further, the term *forecasting* is also used without differentiation from terms *foresight* and *predictions*, it seems that the three terms are used interchangeably.

Further it remains unclear on what the author is focusing on with respect to participation. Is participation meant in respect to collective intelligence, or for creating stronger engagement and commitment with foresight?

Chapter 3 (Mapping the use of participation in foresight) claims to provide an overview of 1. a process of foresight; and 2. approaches to foresight. The chapter is extremely superficial, barely citing any research on foresight processes or on the mentioned approaches. It also remains unclear how the level of participation in these methods which is claimed to be an analytical angle was analyzed in this chapter.

The process of data collection is not sufficiently detailed. Obviously, the author was involved in the data collection and the data collection appears to have been part of a government foresight project; this is stated later in the thesis. However, one would expect this to be described in more detail, and the author should be more explicit about their role in the data collection as an employee, not as a researcher. The author should also have reflected on the potential biases in this research setup.

In regard to the Delphi study, the dissertation lacks the following details: Who were the experts? How were they selected? What questions were asked? Were there any differences between the rounds of the Delphi study? It is mentioned that participants had been trained in forecasting prior to their participation in the forecasting tournament. What was this training about? How could these trainings have influenced the outcomes? These questions are not addressed in the dissertation.

In hindsight, it is questionable what the sense of the evaluation of predictions derived in foresight activities was. If one comes from the generally accepted definition that foresight is not about making predictions, this does not seem very interesting. However, this description of the data in Chapter 5.2.4 does not meet academic standards, for instance describing the groups of respondents as: "Most of them were between 30-40 years of age, academically educated researchers from a wide range of disciplines, who have not participated in the previous parts of this case study" (pp. 85-86). More precise descriptions are required.

Chapter 6 refers to the possible designs of forecasting tournaments. However, the design of forecasting tournaments was not properly introduced in the dissertation and no overview of approaches was provided.

Later chapters make claims which are based on outdated references. For example:

- Chapter 8: "Around the world, the application of foresight techniques in public decision-making processes is on the rise (Popper, 2010)." (p. 102) For a dissertation submitted in 2024 a reference from 2010 is not acceptable.
- In Chapter 8.1.3, foresight activities in the German public domain are described with an outdated reference to Cuhls (2003) which does not reflect the subsequent twenty years of development.

Throughout the dissertation, claims are made which are not supported by any references. In Chapter 8.3 (Foresight institutionalization literature), the following claim is made: "Several implications for the institutionalization of foresight emerge from the conducted systematic review of academic literature." (p. 114). This systematic literature review is not described in the dissertation and is also not visible the subsequent references.

The following research questions are stated at the beginning of the dissertation:

- Primary research question: how to improve the quality of foresight results by effectively combining some of the existing foresight methods?
- Secondary research question: how is foresight currently used in policymaking and how successful it is?

None of these questions seem to have been answered, due to fact that one needs to question these research questions themselves. They do not appear to be sufficiently well rooted in existing academic research.

### **Language and graphic level**

Language is fair. One citation (Erdmann, 2015) is missing from the list of references. Graphics usage is also fair.

Given these points, I have come to the following conclusion:

1. In his dissertation, the author has not demonstrated the ability to work independently in the field.
2. The thesis does not meet the standard requirements for dissertations in the field.