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FORESIGHT AS A NEW FORM OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DELIBERATE DEMOCRACY?

Key words  
Foresight, political participation, deliberate democracy, legitimation.

Abstract  
In this paper, it is discussed, what the actual participatory input of FS is and what the actual impact of this approach is with regard to policy making. Both are questions, whom all participatory approaches especially in the field of science and technology have to deal with. This paper makes the point that the democratic and participatory aspects of FS are generally overrated but that nonetheless FS has some noteworthy potential of inclusion of wider civil society if certain conditions are met. Some of these conditions are linked to the institutional arrangements of a FS context. In order to differentiate FS initiatives more precisely, the legitimacy of input, throughput and output factors are introduced and discussed.

Introduction  
The transition from the 20th to the 21st century is marked by an increase in complexity and fragmentation of modern-day societies accompanied by more and more complex patterns of interdependence. Political institutions are not able to respond adequately to these changes. Their legitimacy is eroding and we are witnessing a move toward broader societal coordination. On the level of technology development and innovation policy, this means a transition from
a science-based society trusting in the knowledge of scientific experts to
to a “post-modern” society where the blessings of science and technology are
questioned and where experts’ opinions are challenged by other experts’
opinion. At the same time, civil society is demanding to participate in the
shaping of future technologies. Several approaches like Technology Assessment
(TA) have been brought to the fore during the last three decades, mostly
dedicated to technologies that are already artifacts. Foresight (FS) takes
a different approach. It gives us a chance to ask: What technologies do we want
and how can we shape them in the most feasible and preferable way?

1. What is Foresight?

Political priority setting and strategic decision making that affect a wide set
of societal stakeholders often require unconventional approaches. To consider
a broad spectrum of new knowledge and make use of very different perspectives
in order to find the most feasible and socially sound option, today, policy
makers turn more and more to foresight (FS) as an instrument for long-term
planning and setting the stage for innovations in all kinds of political arenas: in
research and development, in societal, organisational, economic or
environmental contexts [2]. The added value of foresight is seen in the shared
goals and visions among a group of participating actors from different sectors,
the development of networks, and the combination of relevant information on
current trends and future developments with actor-based information and
attitudes. Over the last 40 to 50 years there have been different understandings
and approaches to foresight. Some scholars speak of “the three generations”,
other even of “five generations” [2]. However, even though it cannot be denied
that there are different generations of foresight given the goals, methods and
political instrumentation; these generations should not be seen consecutively,
but rather overlapping, reflexive, sometimes simultaneous.

Current use of FS predominantly represents a departure from the emphasis
on expert-based advice and the belief in the feasibility of long-term forecasting
and planning stated in early phases of foresight. In foresight processes today, the
future is not to be predicted, but to be socially constructed. Now, FS is
a process-oriented network approach involving intense interactive periods of
open reflection, consultation, discussion, leading to the joint refining of future
visions and the common ownership of strategies [3]. Foresight has generated
great interest over the recent years at EU policy level, especially for designing
the European Research Area (ERA). The European Commission consults
foresight experts on regular bases to tackle future needs and “Grand
Challenges” and for designing policies to cope with them. A High Level Expert
Group (HLEG) has defined foresight as: “a systematic, participatory, future
intelligence gathering and medium-to long-term vision-building process aimed at present-day decisions and mobilising joint actions” [9].

Several misperceptions about today’s use and functions of foresight exist in common discourse and even in scientific literature. One of these misperceptions is that foresight attempts to predict future developments [7]. This is surely not the case. In fact, one cannot even say that foresight is necessarily about anticipation of the future. It is rather about alternative futures and tackling possible policy options, alternative views and a plurality of choices. Another misperception is that FS outcomes have to represent a consensus [7, 12]. This is not necessarily the case either. Instead, FS should give minorities the option to speak out publicly and to be heard. There can be controversial discussion on topics and diverging scenarios of future developments. In fact, creativity can evolve when different or even contradictory perspectives are put to the fore. FS outputs can benefit a lot from this creativity.

There has also been some discussion on the benefit or burden of participation as part of FS. Today, for most FS practitioners participatory elements are a central feature of modern FS. However, there are some elements amongst many others which are not participative. Some FS activities involve the participation of experts, of civil society representatives, of NGOs etc. These formats usually get more public attention than the others, which use more methods of classical qualitative social science, for example desk research, expert interviews, semi-quantitative methods such as Delphi surveys, as well as quantitative methods, including modelling and simulation.

Discussion on participation and FS often gets mixed up with technology assessment (TA), especially when new and emerging technologies are concerned. Though there can be elements of TA that are integrated in FS instruments and methods and vice versa, the two approaches often have different assumptions and different objectives – and participatory elements play different roles in both.

This combination of approaches, instruments and methodologies helps FS activists to make use of collective knowledge. In a Habermassian terminology we could say that FS creates a public space where actors can be organized within an abstract framework of the long term [7].

2. Participatory aspects in FS

The gathering and condensation of collective knowledge and the tackling of alternative futures to deal with future societal challenges at various levels and in different contexts is without question a valuable asset of the FS approach. However, if foresight is used to prepare public policy decision making, it has to take a firm stand in the system of liberal democracy. Democratic legitimation of preparation of political decision making can only be maintained if the output is
justified in terms of reasons acceptable by those affected by it [5]. FS can be regarded as a deliberative arena to ensure this process, which is in the public interest, not only self-interest.

In discussing the democratic legitimation of FS and its output in preparation of political decision making we are confronted with ambivalent arguments. Reasons for FS and also for integrating participatory instruments in FS are generally symbolic, instrumental, or conceptual. Symbolic foresight activities will usually not generate new ideas or surprising outputs but are used by their owners to communicate new political strategies or to emphasize the quality of a certain relation between policy makers and other stakeholders, let’s say the public. The instrumental function of a FS exercise intends to take the results as some kind of policy advice and turn them into action. Expert participation is often a prerequisite of such foresight exercises. The conceptual function of FS is the most common one. Here, output will not be implemented into policy action directly. In this case, the process of FS is just as much important as the results, sometimes it is even more important.

A high level of participation does not generally mean that a FS activity or its outputs are more justified compared to a FS process with a low level of participatory involvement. A high number of participants does not automatically increase the importance of a FS. Other criteria are: the amount of information and the quality of information (participants are expected to come up with “new” knowledge, new information). This is a selection process by the organizers.

The increased number of FS activities in Europe and beyond that we have been witnessing over the last 20 years symbolises a social phenomenon, that Benz, Lutz, Schimank, Simonis [1] have described with “network governance”. Broadly speaking it marks the shift from government to governance. In this respect, FS can be regarded as a new form of “deliberative governance”.

3. Foresight as a new form of deliberative governance?

The reasons for network governance in various societal spheres we have been witnessing over the last 15 to 20 years are rooted in the crisis of government. It marks the increasing complexity and fragmentation of modern-day society, and, at political level, the widespread distribution of power and resources going hand in hand with the decreasing coordinating capacity of the public sector. Policy failure, structures and institutions marked by eroding legitimacy, the inadequacy in dealing with emerging challenges and opportunities have set the scene for a move toward broader societal

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1 Organizers of FS should not make false illusions for themselves or participants such as that the “future can be managed or shaped through collective action” or that this “collective action has to be actively organized and facilitated” – R. van der Helm (2007), Ten insolvable dilemmas of participation and why foresight has to deal with them. In: Vol. 9, No. 3, 2007, pp. 3–17.
coordination. In this context, features applying to network governance in general apply to foresight as a new mode of societal coordination in particular: non-hierarchical relationships between participants signify network governance as well as the blurring of distinction between different spheres of society. Informality and self-regulation become strategies to encounter the cumbersome and time-consuming tendencies of coordination through formal institutions.

No network governance is entirely free of hierarchy, however, as Scharpf [16] notes: network governance operates in the shadow of hierarchy. Even though network governance as we find it in foresight activities lacks centrist authority, this format aims at providing linkages between atomized actors, carrying on with forms of traditional governance such as hierarchy, market or association [5].

Scholars and practitioners of FS have seldom discussed the democratic legitimacy of FS. This is a substantial deficit because as the semi-quantitative analysis of more than 2000 FS exercises mapped in the European Foresight Monitoring Network (EFMN) has shown, governments are the key sponsors of FS exercises, and policy recommendations are the most common form of output2. This article tries to fill the gap, thereby identifying some of the dilemmas related to the democratic legitimacy of FS. For example, open issues of FS are still the inclusiveness of participants, organizers and programme owners, insufficient transparency of processes for outsiders (e.g. concerning the choice of instruments), the accountability of results, the representativeness of stakeholder groups and FS outputs. Knowledge is being held by carriers and knowledge relations are constrained by power relations that exist between these carriers [7].

4. Legitimacy by representation, formalisation and accountability

The critical point is not whether participation is possible or not, whether it is useful or not; rather, the critical point is “does participation matter”? And: “does participation make a difference”? To answer these questions we have to be aware that FS usually is characterized by different phases. For a better overview, we will distinguish three main phases of FS (see Fig. 1):

1. The planning and organization.
2. The execution and actual activity of FS, characterised by a high degree of interaction.
3. The handing over of policy recommendation (either to the owners/sponsors of the FS initiative or to policy actors responsible for the policy arena that was analysed within FS).

2 URL: www.efmn.info.
1. Planning and organisation is usually a process between the client and the organisation executing the FS exercise. It is a process behind closed doors, even though public procurement procedures in most democratic countries demand a formal tender procedure. In some cases, though where funding is provided from private sources or from the executing organisation itself, the situation is a bit different. This process is even much less transparent and its impact will also affect public policy making to a lesser or even to no degree. The reasons for public administrations to commission FS can be multifold. In some cases a ministry wants to assess new emerging technologies for funding priorities and looks for a broader input of knowledge than just from the usual lobby groups. In other cases, a government wants to know what societal challenges are lying ahead. FS instruments, which are used to solve these objectives, and a degree of participatory approaches, which are considered, are negotiated between client and an executing organisation. Various variables influence this decision making process, time horizon and financial budget being only two of them. In any case, decisions made in the planning phase will heavily affect the output and also the outcome and impact of the entire FS exercise.

2. The core of the FS exercise happens in phase two. Here, qualitative and quantitative instruments are combined. A high degree of interaction takes place: within the executing consortium, between the executing organisation(s) and the client, and between those two and the third parties. These third parties can be experts questioned in interviews, stakeholders taking part in scenario workshops, world cafés, open space conferences or any other interactive format (see Fig. 2). This is also the place where various kinds of knowledge resources are tapped, e.g. official documents, “grey” literature, scientific articles, the internet, conference proceedings, bibliometric material, etc. This kind of information is processed in a qualitative or quantitative way and several recursive cycles might take place to feed the knowledge into processing devices until they are filtered to a degree where original results with a relevant focus are produced.

3. At the end of a FS process, policy recommendations will be formulated. These are handed over to the policy makers responsible for the policy arena that was analysed in the FS exercise, e.g. transport or mobility. Often, the policy makers or their institution are the clients of the FS process. In this stage, the question arises, if policy makers take the outcome, the policy recommendation, into account. And if so: What do they do with them? Are the recommendations implemented in one way or another? Is anybody from the FS process involved in the implementation? Or do the recommendations serve as a pool of information to the policy makers? Or are they put in the drawer and kept there forever without any impact?
Unfortunately, little research has been done so far to assess the impact of FS outcomes and FS policy recommendations. As Keenan [3] points out, the outcome of a FS cannot be measured easily or in common evaluation criteria.

Another critical point is also when policy recommendations are formulated. As discussed above, some participants and also some scholars studying FS from the meta-perspective think that the output has to be consensual [7, 12]. But this is usually not possible and not desirable either, especially when we have a controversial issue. So, some participants will always feel marginalised and cannot identify with the outcome. More modern approaches of FS do not base the outcomes on consensus. What is more important concerning the process and the outcome is:

1) to give the plurality of views a chance to be expressed and to be heard;
2) to design several policy options, e.g. for a variety of scenarios how the future could or should evolve. This implies that the minority votes are heard and acknowledged.

For heuristic reasons we correlated the three phases recapitulated above with three dimensions (grounds) related to legitimacy: representation, formalisation and accountability and explored these further with regard to the democratic legitimacy of FS exercises from a theoretical perspective. Representation can be looked at best as an input ground to a FS exercises in phase 1, the planning and organization. Formalisation takes place most notably in the 2nd phase (execution of FS) and can be classified as the throughput grounds. Accountability is the dimension closely related to the liability of political decision making and in a FS exercise becomes relevant in phase three when policy recommendations are formulated, handed over to decision makers and the questions arise: what part of society is represented in these policy formulations, who will benefit from their implementation? These are the output grounds of legitimation of a FS process.

![Diagram of Foresight as a democratic process](image_url)

Fig. 1. Foresight as a democratic process
Source: Author.
4.1. Input – representation

The selection of a FS topic, the choice of a specific organizer involve decision for certain options and juxtaposing alternatives as indicated above. These, of course, determine how the course to the FS is going to be charted, just as much as the selection of the methodologies and the selection of participants will have a strong effect of the course and the output of the exercise.

Firstly, taking into account qualitative empirical evidence, the success of a FS exercise is mostly determined by its status and ownership, which have to be clear and transparent to the participants – and all stakeholders involved – from the beginning. Ownership is perceived as symbolic, and if the owner does not really get involved, all participants as well as organizers, will question the relevance of the exercise.

Secondly, when the selection of participants is concerned (as an element of the planning and organisation phase of FS); it is the subject of much criticism since a selection can hardly be representative of the whole society and in most cases not even of the group of people affected by the topic chosen. When certain stakeholders, experts or other “representatives” of society are invited to a FS exercise, we face the dilemma of including some while excluding others. As Tichy [18] indicated, FS has a problem related to the narrow inclusion of top-experts only, thereby generating over-optimism, overestimation etc. in the discussions and the output. Even though most FS exercises today are not limited to the inclusion of top-experts, the dilemma a excluding other parts of society cannot be solved. The discussion will always be larger than the network practically involved. One solution would be the focus on “relevant stakeholders”. We do not quite agree with Helms who states: “The paradox in this situation is that the outcomes of the project depend largely on the actors involved, whereas the control that a project-initiators has on the selection and, more importantly, on the involvement of the actors is extremely small” [7]. This does not necessarily have to be the case. Our experience is that the influence of organizers by pre-selection is considerable. Further, organizers have a lot of power when summing up the results of the FS exercises for the policy recommendations and even before when moderating the discussions. Organizers are by no means “neutral”. They have a distinct background and many want to convey specific messages with their FS exercises as well. Further, participants will be disappointed if their findings are not fairly represented in the policy recommendations. So it is up to the organizer to decide how the balance is kept.

We also have to accept the fact that FS exercises are seldom open for all. In some cases, beneficiaries of FS are included rather than others, but in some cases not even those. Often, more powerful players are included at the expenses of small, less resourceful groups. There is also the danger of partisan participation, more committed in defending their own interests, not the interests
of larger groups they are to represent. And powerful actors are more likely to shape and determine policy outputs. Empirical analysis of FS exercises has shown that socio-economic groups tend be overrepresented in FS exercises (Hanssen).

A suggested solution for dealing with the representation dilemma is the legitimation by formal procedure. We will turn to this aspect in more detail when discussing the throughput grounds of legitimation. For the input, however, formal procedures may play a role as well as the selection criteria have to be made transparent to the general public. Further, the criteria on which the decisions are made – be it selection decisions or any others – have to be accepted and made in accordance with general formal procedures guaranteeing democratic equality and accountability [5].

4.2. Throughput – formalisation of procedures

The legitimation of the actual execution of each FS exercise is based on the formalisation of procedures, even more than discussed for the input grounds. Tools belonging to these formal procedures are building blocks of the methods, which themselves are embedded in a process design with the contextual setting as an organisational tradition (for example as the Shell scenarios, [17]). There are a lot of methods available, of which a certain set is chosen to meet the specific purposes of each FS and of the objectives in focus. Not all methods are of participatory nature. Especially at the beginning of many FS activities, a lot of desk research and expert interviews are involved and these methods are almost exclusively in the hand of the organizers, sometimes influenced by the owner/sponsors. The degree and quality of participation is also quite different from method to method. A survey like Delphi, for example, takes place in a large expert community but does not involve the general public and only seldom representatives from civil society. It is also an anonymous process and does not continue the direct exchange of knowledge among participants. Methods such as scenario building, focus groups, world café, open space conference and other that rely on the engagement of a critical mass of participants, are not only output oriented but also process oriented.

With regard to the throughput grounds, FS makes decision-making procedures more transparent [6], at least with regard to the topics discussed and with regard to the discussion formats. It serves as an arena, where tacit knowledge of individuals is converted to explicit group knowledge [14] – ensuring exchange of important knowledge among the participants. And what is even more important from the organisational development perspective: stakeholders carry the newly acquired knowledge back into their home organisation and thereby diffuse the newly acquired knowledge. Ideally, this will cause mid-term to long-term changes within the organisation.
In this sense, participative formats of FS are a means of deliberation: the knowledge needed for long-term policy making in complex societies is widely distributed among a broad spectrum of actors, stakeholders, civil society etc.; and broad knowledge is required – from experts as well as from so-called laymen – if consequences of policy affect many people. Some experts of FS think that “The interactive participatory dimension to foresight methods (...) seems to be appropriate. In order to notice features that are neglected and to formulate new ideas, participants must be forced to challenge their usual way of thinking, seeing the world from other perspectives” [5]. The Freight Vision FS³ sponsored by the European Commission under FP7 is a case in point. It was commissioned in order to assess the future of freight vision transport in Europe and the need for research, technology and innovation. During a period of 18 months, several strong participatory elements were introduced, focusing on the

³ URL: www.freightvision.eu/.
long-term challenges of the next 40 years. The participatory elements of this FS exercise initiated a process of codifying formerly tacit knowledge and of mutual knowledge exchange. Further, the participants from different stakeholder groups had the chance to take new perspectives, different from their usual working contexts. Elements of the FS process inspired a network of participants with cooperative relations where hierarchy is almost non-existent and where at the end (see below, after the 4th forum) relationships are fairly even distributed [10].

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The two pictures show the network of personal relationships between participants. These are results of a personalised questionnaire passed to each person before and after each of the four forums that constituted a major element of the Freight Vision Foresight. The first forum took place in March 2009 and the last one in January 2010. Stakeholders (from various companies, research organisations, intermediate organisations etc.) are represented in black; all other project partners are marked in grey. Position in the picture and distances to each other are determined by the combination of the participant’s relationship. Two participants are positioned closer if their relationship is stronger. The shape of a node is determined by the number of inward vs. outward vectors (here: connections marked by an arrow), and by the total number of ties. So called networkers or network connectors have more outward than inward vectors (ellipse with pointed upward dimension); for “authorities” it is the contrary (ellipse pointed to the side). The calculation was made with the PAJEK software [10].
At the same time, FS is seen as a process, that helps to enhance communication between actors within a system; providing means of coordinating and generating commitment to action. Some scholars ascribe FS the function of enhancing mutual understanding and trust between actors, by creating common visions for future policy making. The idealized vision is that such prerequisites will help to make the process of implementing new policies easier. Closely connected to this ideal is apparently the notion that stakeholders from civil society and market get the opportunity to influence these processes, and thereby get the chance to develop social capital (at least for one home, one region) and participatory policy making approaches [11]. From the empirical evidence, however, such effects are not only very difficult to measure but indicators of their measuring and attempts to do so have seldom been discussed in the FS community. We have to be careful, not to over-idealize the deliberative potential of FS. In reality, some hindsight of these features might be detected but at the same time, there is also a diffuse “white noise”, sucking up many of the individual voices that were hardly recognised before a FS exercise and will be without any effect ever after.

This raises the question: what makes a policy recommendation of a FS exercise feasible for implementation. One rule that can be drawn from empirical experience, for example, is that at least one scenario created in the exercise is perceived as achievable, and as something that is grounded in the current reality, applicable to the ruling political structures. At the same time, however, visionary documents are needed, as opposed to conventional consultant reports

Fig. 4. Social Network after Forum 4
Source: Author.
in order to move beyond common thinking, and as an added value that cannot be achieved by other methods.

Notwithstanding the knowledge generation, diffusion, the mutual learning and the transparency function of FS, there are also some critical aspects calling into question the legitimacy of preparing political decision making. While it is often difficult to distinguish experts from stakeholders, there is also the aspect that views of the so called experts might be overvalued – while the insights of the non-experts risk not being heard or under communicated [5]. Against this background, there is also the danger that the opinion of experts or of a majority among the participants forms a mainstreamed discourse, thus overruling or marginalizing minority opinions. Just as experts, other “classes” of participants might have a more impressive habitus, social status or more social capital to bring into the group process and thereby influence the course and the outcome of the exercise, no matter if they are a majority or not. In this respect, the unduly impact of such personalities or subgroups might lead to “cognitive closure” and thus to the exclusion of particular points of view. As Georgiou and Keenan [3] have pointed out, some of those factors might demotivate participants and hamper the quality of the process.

Another dilemma with participation in FS might occasionally be the increased dependence on participants, e.g. their willingness/motivation to come to the events, their hidden agendas, background, knowledge/expertise, their social and communicative skills, their social and cultural capital, and other idiosyncrasies [7]. All these aspects considered, participatory processes can be regarded as contingent and vulnerable for influences that cannot always be organised.

Organizers of FS exercises often find themselves in the precarious role to motivate participants who are often sceptical of methods they are not (very) familiar with. FS is still a “peripheral” job and the only experts of FS are usually those people organising it. So for the others, this is a learning experience and not much previous knowledge or commitment can be expected from them. The organizers have to manage the illusion (as Helms points out): “one has to show enough ambition to involve (to inspire), but not too much as to disappoint (...) Nowadays, much emphasis is put on the ambition of (mutual, shared or social) learning, which tries to move away from illusionary ideas that through participation one would be able to exert more direct influence on the ways decisions are taken” [7].

4.3. Output – accountability

FS attracts theoretical and practical interest from scholars, policy makers, other stakeholders and civil society members in general, because it is a tool of strategic intelligence, and thus makes the promise of being important for the
preparation of political decision-making and policy implementation. More than in the other two phases, the output phase of each FS exercise will make a lasting impression on participants and the interested public whether or not the FS has any relevance and is legitimized. Against the background of the previous sections and discussion of representation and formalisation of procedures we can summarize that FS serves as an arena to exchange knowledge and discuss different viewpoints, to give representatives of many different societal groups (even though not all) opportunity to express their opinions and to stimulate mutual learning, thus an arena to come to better and more informed decisions in responding to the wants and needs [16] expressed by the participants.

The flip side of the coin is, however, that results of FS are not only hard to measure and difficult to communicate, in most cases they are not directly visible either. They might have indirect effects in the follow-up policies and decisions. Especially in very large exercises it is unlikely that individual participants will find their ideas reflected in the results unless a serious consensus is reached [7]. This is why most FS exercises leave the impression that the policy recommendations are hardly ever implemented. The final output of a FS exercise might lack a direct link with the actual changes. Accordingly, the accountability of the FS output and thereby the entire FS process in many cases is ambivalent.

With regard to the democratic legitimacy, the arguments presented so far give the impression that the output and outcome of FS exercises face at least two dilemmas.

1. From empirical evidence we can conclude that FS output is fed into an administrative process when turned into outcome rather than into the policy process. It is thus processed in the administrative apparatus of the political system, which operates as the delegated branch of policy. It is usually not fed into the process of policy making, e.g. to the parliamentary decision makers, who would be the legal and legitimate representatives of civil society. Thus, instead of directly affecting policy-making, FS results are administered and diluted.

2. But even if results of a FS exercise are fed into political decision making and there is a direct link to actual change, the question arises whose decisions and interests are represented, and what visions and attitudes are excluded?

According to deliberative democracy theory, democratic legitimacy does not only consist of representation, authority and accountability. It also includes structures to exchange knowledge, to discuss a broad spectrum of different opinions on pressing issues, including organised as well as not organised interests, to learn and to make these processes transparent. This structure allows for consensual decision making but also for the acknowledgement of minority opinions. It gives room for the public discussion of expert opinions to future challenges and their confrontation with laymen’s perceptions. In this sense,
Participative formats as FS serve as an addition to representative democracy. An add-on for legitimation is gained through the quality of the political processes (decision making/output) [8]. Even though this is not reaching the level of “dominion-free discourse” [4], the results of a FS exercise ideally include the plurality of opinions, channeled into factual, realistic and socially robust knowledge of an informed public, which are handed over and acknowledged in further political decision making. It is not the consensus, that makes these outcomes more legitimate, rather the fairness and openness of the FS process. The democratic function lies in the optimisation and widening of the value and vision spectrum of political decision making. Thus decision makers are being informed of the broad spectrum of perspectives on a certain thematic area, the values of the people affected by these issues – or even representatives of broader society, by expert opinions and interactions of many different stakeholders. Thus the linkage of democratically formed decision making and a (semi-) public discourse are strengthened. Similar to some approaches of Technology Assessment, the participatory aspects are considered especially in the executions phase rather than in the decision making or implementation phase.

Participative and deliberative formats as FS are not legally designed to have binding outcomes or effects on political decision making. FS results however should evoke some “resonance” by decision makers if political changes occur [8]. In this respect, FS is an important part of democratic political culture.

Participative and deliberative formats cannot bear the burden of creating consensus on policies responding to future challenges. Nor can they reduce the burden of effective political decision making in the face of increasingly complex structures and destruction of traditional boundaries. Instead they can help broaden the spectrum of political decision-making and acknowledgement of multiple visions, thereby tackling new paths of policy options. FS is thus less an arena for immediate preparation of political decision making processes but rather the stimulation of a public and transparent discourse for future policy options. Participatory formats do not necessarily need direct integration into the political decision making process in order to evoke some effects. In order to be of political relevance, the process of the FS has to be formalised, transparent and open and executed by skilled and independent organisations and commissioned by visible and committed sponsors/program owners. Last but not least, the societal and political relevance of FS is dependent on the acknowledgement of such formats by decision makers and the noticeable resonance they evoke in the (political) decision making system. FS exercises have to be taken serious by the (political) decision making system.
**Conclusion**

The article discusses today’s understanding of foresight, especially participatory foresight, as an arena of exchanging existing, often tacit knowledge and of generating new knowledge; a relatively heterarchic arena where stakeholders with different backgrounds come together to discuss and explore the challenges laying ahead for a certain case for action. It has been observed that the demand for the participatory aspects have grown as a result of the fact that people feel that their interests are not sufficiently heard. As the discussion in this paper has shown, the participatory aspects concern mostly the second part of a three-phase FS design. The conceptional first phase is handled by client and organizer and the final third phase when outputs are to be implemented is generally not participative, but up to the client, sometimes accompanied by the organizers in a follow-up activity. However, the participation should not be equaled to representation. In a broader understanding of deliberative democracy, participatory FS can be defined as an arena where socially robust knowledge [13] is produced.

The foresight format offers the chance for laymen of being accepted at the same level as other stakeholders. They all are asked to bring in their expertise of everyday life, as well as highly specialized experience into the discussion, including their values, interests and preferences. These are prerequisites for an acceptable and socially robust path [8]. In an arena of exchange between the general public, scientific, administrative and other experts, former disciplinary knowledge has to cope with the evaluation and reflection by a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

When judging if this expectation is sufficiently fulfilled, it has to be considered, that foresight is still an experiment, characterised by a search for an institutional response to the crisis of legitimate political decision making, crisis of government, crisis of representation. At the same account, FS is a response to a search for new forms and formats of dialogue between science, policy making and the public in representative liberal western democracies. To assess the effects of foresight more precisely and to support the implementation of some of the FS recommendation stemming from participant interaction, a critical mass of foresight follow-ups are needed as the most difficult aspect of FS to assess is the accountability of the process and even more: of the results.

**References**


Reviewer:
Janina JÓŹWIAK

Foresight nową formą uczestnictwa obywateli w życiu społecznym i politycznym demokracji deliberatywnej?

Słowa kluczowe
Foresight, uczestnictwo, demokracja deliberatywna, legitymizacja władzy.

Streszczenie

W artykule dyskusji poddano kwestie faktycznego zakresu zaangażowania oraz wpływu projektów foresight na proces kreowania polityki krajowej. Te zagadnienia stanowią przedmiot analiz w odniesieniu do wszystkich instrumentów wykorzystywanych w tzw. podejściu partycypacyjnym lub uczestniczącym, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem ich zastosowania do kreowania polityki naukowo-technologicznej. Autorka stawia tezę, iż ocena aspektu partycypacyjnego charakteryzującego foresight jest zawyżona, niemniej jednak metoda foresightu pozwala znacząco poszerzyć grono interesariuszy przedsięwzięcia, jeśli są spełnione określone warunki (np. instytucjonalne). Szczegółowy opis uwarunkowań zawarto w szczegółowych charakterystykach trzech głównych faz inicjatyw typu foresight.