

Week 6 Reflection

Prompt

- How do the differences between forecasts and projections matter?
- What are the implications of these differences for your own areas of focus or study?
- Based upon your area of study or specialization, what types of information help you to assess the accuracy or certainty of a forecast?

Reflection

There is a distinct difference between forecasts and projections. Projections are conditional statements that mainly rely on existing trends – they do not include an assessment of underlying assumptions. Forecasts, on the other hand, *do* include an assessment of underlying assumptions and help us define future scenarios. This difference matters because projections tend to be more heavily relied on despite being less accurate, due to their simplicity and professional appearance. Yet, forecasts can often help us better plan for the future by challenging us to explore more possibilities.

For my own area of study, I think the difference between projections and forecasts is very important. When I think of a projection, I think of a chart that shows exponential growth. I've seen several cities optimistically plan to accommodate growth, and then their population stagnates, or the economy plummets and they lose people and jobs. From a preservation planning perspective, I think there's an argument to be made that by accepting and understanding growth is a finite thing, we can better utilize historic resources. So, by developing forecasts that suggests there won't be unlimited growth over the next 30 years, maybe there will be less haphazard development and more intentional thinking behind how to utilize space and existing infrastructure.

In my previous planning classes, I found that information about migration patterns and economic trends are most useful for assessing the accuracy or certainty of a forecast. Still, I think there are other factors and sources of information that feel nearly impossible to include in a forecast, though that may simply be because we failed to consider them. After having experienced the current pandemic, I think public health and climate trends/risks are two other sources of information that should be included in any forecast about a place or population.