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**Week 6 reflection: Projections and forecasts**

According to Klosterman et al. (2018), there are differences between projections and forecasts. Projections present a hypothetical statement (“what if”) about the future based on their underlying assumptions. Therefore, if the assumptions were incorrect, the resulting statement about the future could be faulty. While projections do not include any judgments but rather provide hypothetical scenarios, forecasts make a statement based on judgment and estimations that an analyst has on a topic and issue. A researcher would select the most likely scenario given the currently available information, and therefore, it would require more responsibilities in making forecasts than making projections.

In my research context of urban vacancy and neighborhood health, I do not think that projecting and forecasting are my roles in that I am not a forecaster or an analyst, or a planner; however, it can still provide useful knowledge and perspectives for my research background. As a step, a projection can be made at first to explore possible scenarios based on assumptions about the neighborhood change in the future (e.g., migration, fertility, mortality rates). More data regarding urban vacancy rates and crime rates can help me address Chicago’s health issues and future implications as well. A forecast will be made through such trend analyses and scenario-building processes. The purpose of making forecasts may vary by researchers and the types of the study, from a mere description of the situation to providing sources for better decision making but also would be associated with engaging key stakeholders and the public in your research. To do so, a forecast is not only about presenting information but also a conscious act of letting others know that the topics matter. For example, in the context of climate change research, a researcher may have several possible hypothetical scenarios based on the present information on anthropogenic activities (projections). The researcher may consciously choose the worst scenario to emphasize the negative impact of climate on human beings and to promote pro-environmental behaviors (forecasts), which may not be the most scientific way to choose the scenario but could be effective for convincing others. Nevertheless, simply presenting the facts would not be compelling enough for influencing others, and thus selecting the right visual materials for communicating would be essential.

Reference:

Klosterman, R. E., Brooks, K., Drucker, J., Feser, E., & Renski, H. (2018). Trend projection methods. In *Planning Support Methods: Urban and Regional Analysis and Projection* (pp. 35–59). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.