Research Article

Political communication and the major advantages of SFM's (Systemic Foresight Methodology) application

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ABSTRACT

Foresight is an integral part of any organization that aim to maintain its resilience and long-term viability. It equips specialists with methodological tools to navigate uncertainty and design adaptive strategies. This study examines the application of the Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM) within the field of political communication, integrating it into a broader research context that enables political organizations to achieve their communication goals. It reveals how SFM contributes to the development, coordination, and legitimization of political communication strategies in complex environments. Although SFM has been predominantly applied in political and policy domains and not in communication structures, its comprehensive analysis and qualitative characteristics offer a novel trajectory for political communication research and practice. By adapting foresight principles and incorporating perspectives and functions of multiple stakeholders, SFM empowers communicators to formulate effective, future-oriented strategies. The study links the phases of SFM to the core tasks of political communication and derives a set of implementable process steps. It enhances the strategic value of political communication, reinforcing the sustainability and resilience of communication units and increasing the likelihood of achieving meaningful and durable outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

The context in which political organizations operate is becoming increasingly dynamic, competitive, and complex. In response, organizations seek to formulate innovative and effective communication strategies that enhance public awareness and engagement. However, rapid technological change, social fragmentation, and intensifying political competition present challenges that traditional approaches to organizational communication often fail to address. As the political environment grows more demanding, the necessity of developing comprehensive and adaptive political communication strategies becomes more pressing.

Despite the growing importance of foresight and systemic methodologies in policy, governance, and strategic studies, their systematic conceptualization within political communication theory remains limited. This theoretical underdevelopment generates conceptual ambiguity regarding how systemic foresight approaches may inform communication strategy, stakeholder alignment, and adaptive decision-making in political contexts. Against this background, the paper addresses the following research question: How can the Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM) be conceptually interpreted as a strategic resource for political communication in conditions of uncertainty and complexity?

This study aims to clarify how characteristics of SFM can be meaningfully incorporated into political communication. Such an integration may enable political organizations to align their communication strategies with evolving stakeholder expectations, anticipate future developments, adapt their strategic positioning, and enhance their overall responsiveness within complex political environments.

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Additionally, the paper examines foresight as a holistic framework for navigating complexity, highlighting the qualitative and systemic properties of SFM that render it particularly relevant to political communication. The analysis focuses on the functional logic of SFM, exploring how its phases and systemic orientation may inform both the internal coordination and external positioning of political organizations' communication processes. At the same time, the study critically reflects on the potential limitations and constraints inherent in applying foresight-based methodologies to communication contexts.

By linking SFM with political practice, this paper seeks to contribute to the conceptual dialogue on how political organizations can develop more resilient, adaptive, and strategically coherent communication models capable of operating under conditions of complexity and uncertainty.

This paper makes three contributions to the emerging dialogue between foresight studies and political communication research. First, it conceptually positions the Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM) within the domain of political communication, a field where SFM has received limited systematic attention. Second, it develops a structured conceptual interpretation of how SFM phases may inform communication strategy design, stakeholder alignment, and adaptive decision-making under conditions of uncertainty. Third, it clarifies the analytical and practical implications of systemic foresight for communication units operating in complex political environments, highlighting both the methodological advantages and the inherent limitations of such approaches.

This Section Covers the Definitions and the Dynamics of Foresight and Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM)

Definition of foresight

Foresight can be broadly understood as the capacity to anticipate future developments and to prepare for them effectively. It extends beyond mere prediction or forecasting, encompassing the systematic exploration of possible futures, the interpretation of emerging trends, and the formulation of strategies to manage uncertainty. Through this anticipatory approach, individuals and organizations can actively shape the futures they aspire to and respond more effectively to potential challenges.

Coates (2010) defines foresight as "an image, an insight, a picture, a concept about some future state or condition" (p. 1428). Foresight (FS) functions as a structured process that enhances communication among system stakeholders and provides the necessary tools for cooperation and preparedness for action. It promotes mutual respect and shared understanding among stakeholders by fostering the development of common political perspectives (Giesecke, 2010). However, the foresight literature does not present a fully unified understanding of the concept. Different traditions emphasize prediction, exploration, participation, or strategic learning, often leading to divergent methodological implications.

Definition of Systemic Foresight Methodology

The Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM) can be defined as "a way to cope with the complexities of the human and social systems and to develop a more tailored foresight methodology with the integration of qualitative and quantitative Foresight tools in line with the nature of situations" (Saritas, 2013, p. 84). In contrast to other foresight approaches, the main objective of SFM is to establish methodological frameworks and systemic concepts that can support the generation of forward-thinking ideas within complex social contexts. Although SFM is frequently presented as a comprehensive systemic framework, its practical interpretation often varies depending on context, institutional objectives, and underlying assumptions about uncertainty and complexity.

SFM conceives the foresight process as a "systemic inquiry," in which the structure of the system under study can only be partially defined before its implementation. This is because even the most carefully designed and examined systems may yield unforeseen outcomes when applied to dynamic social environments. From this perspective, the development of institutional foresight activities is understood as a creative and adaptive process aimed at constructing a future system capable of meeting specific objectives and standards. Consequently, the SFM simply outlines the bare minimum structural requirements necessary to achieve system goals (Saritas, 2013).

Key Differences between Foresight and Systemic Foresight Methodology

Foresight represents the more general practice of looking into the future to anticipate developments, whereas systemic foresight applies a systems-thinking perspective to this process, highlighting interconnectivity, complexity, and feedback.

While traditional foresight often focuses on identifying trends and projecting outcomes, systemic foresight seeks to understand the dynamic interactions among social, technological, economic, ecological, and political (STEEPV) factors, enabling a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of potential futures and the impact of strategic action.

In essence, systemic foresight highlights interdependence and nonlinearity by emphasizing the systemic character of change.

Table 1 illustrates the distinction between general foresight and the Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM). While foresight broadly explores multiple possible futures, SFM applies a structured systems-thinking approach that integrates interrelated social, technological, economic, ecological, and political factors to support strategic decision-making.

Table 1: The main differences between Foresight and Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM), adapted from Kapralos (2025)

Foresight	Systemic Foresight Methodology
Foresight is a broad concept.	SFM is a certain methodology or framework within the broader concept.
It entails examining several future scenarios, which may be based on artifacts, narratives, or experiences.	It recognizes the complex interactions of the Social, Technological, Economic, Ecological, Political, and Values (STEEPV) domains by using systems thinking.
By outlining several likely future directions rather than forecasting a single result, foresight facilitates the generation of fresh ideas and guides decision-making.	SFM offers an organized framework for investigating intricate relationships, resulting in a more nuanced comprehension of potential future events and facilitating more proactive and planned policymaking and action.

History and Dynamics of Foresight

The term "foresight" was first introduced in 1932 by the author H. G. Wells, who, during a BBC broadcast, advocated the establishment of "Departments and Professors of Foresight" (Wells, 1932, as cited in Kuosa, 2011). Since then, the concept has evolved substantially in its focus, especially in the 2000s, to address a wider range of social, political, and technological challenges (Saritas, 2013).

Contemporary foresight processes emphasize shaping and influencing the future through social and political engagement rather than attempting to forecast it with precision. Their advantage lies in their ability to integrate collective knowledge and generate multiple future scenarios that inform decision-making across diverse contexts and governance levels. In this sense, foresight represents an attempt to create new modes of communication and collaboration among the public, policymakers, and the scientific community within representative liberal democracies (Giesecke, 2010).

Unlike prediction, foresight does not seek to determine exact probabilities of future events. Instead, it aims to estimate plausible developments and assess their potential implications (Böttcher & Brozus, 2024). Foresight fosters a strategic understanding of the present that combines participatory engagement, coordination of institutional or national priorities, and knowledge of future opportunities (Nehme et al., 2012). In contexts of rising uncertainty, traditional strategic planning methods often lose effectiveness, while foresight-based approaches demonstrate their value by integrating adaptability and long-term vision (Canyon, 2018).

Applying foresight requires consideration of multiple qualitative and relational factors: sharing experiences, learning collectively, fostering joint commitment to key decisions, and envisioning future possibilities (Nehme et al., 2012). To unlock its transformative potential, foresight practice must engage deeply with communication and media, enhancing their role in shaping societal awareness, informing change, supporting policymaking, and enabling innovation (Ramos, 2006).

From a legal and institutional perspective, participatory and deliberative formats like FS are not designed to produce enforceable outcomes or directly determine political decisions. Rather, their influence depends on the extent to which their results resonate with decision-makers, particularly during periods of political transition (Giesecke, 2010). As Ramos (2006) notes, even when future scenarios may appear speculative, the application of robust communication strategies to foresight design is essential to ensure their practical relevance and societal impact.

Polcanova (2021) argues that systemic foresight is one of the most effective methods for identifying innovative potential, setting priorities for a country's or industry's scientific, technological, and industrial development, and aligning these with socio-economic interests.

The Triangle of Foresight, Communication, and Systems Thinking

Foresight and systems thinking

Foresight, as both a scientific and technocratic approach, is closely linked to the theory of systems thinking. Systems thinking can be understood as a comprehensive framework for managing organizational development and transformation. The founders of cybernetics described systems whose components behave in unpredictable ways, unlike mechanical systems with fixed and linear behavior. As Baumfeld et al. (2013) observe, entities such as the human body, political institutions, and belief systems exemplify complex systems, characterized by nonlinear interactions and adaptive behavior.

Furthermore, systems thinking provides the conceptual tools to distinguish between changes of high and low impact and to uncover the deeper patterns underlying complex situations. By revealing the structures and feedback loops that shape events, it helps simplify complexity and supports more informed decision-making (Jackson, 2009). According to systems thinking theory, every action and decision is interrelated and dependent on a broader network of interactions. Consequently, systems thinking enables individuals and organizations, including teams, departments, and institutions, to understand the consequences of their actions and adapt more effectively to changing environments (Hofmann & Grimm, 2021).

The Triangle Interaction

Foresight, communication, and systems theory form an interactive relationship that is fundamental to effective communication management. This triangular framework (see Figure 2) illustrates how each component reinforces the others: foresight, through the analysis of relevant data, enables informed anticipation of future developments; systems theory provides the conceptual basis for

monitoring the external environment and facilitating organizational adaptation; and communication serves as the dynamic mechanism that supports co-evolution and a smooth transition toward the future. Together, these elements contribute to the sustainability and resilience of political organizations.

At the level of political communication, the effective use of this triangular model creates the conditions for enhanced strategic coherence and greater success in achieving organizational objectives, thereby strengthening an organization's capacity to operate and endure within complex and competitive political environments. Figure 1 illustrates the triangular relationship among foresight, communication, and systems theory, highlighting their interdependence in shaping resilient and adaptive communication strategies within complex political environments.

An Analytical Description of Systemic Foresight Methodology

Defining the scope of foresight constitutes the principal aim of the introduction phase of the Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM). During this stage, key decisions are made regarding the overall scale and scope of the activity. The phase focuses on clarifying the goals and specific objectives of the foresight exercise, identifying its intended applications, and determining the potential users of its outputs. As it establishes the boundaries and parameters of the foresight process, the introduction phase is of crucial importance (Saritas & Cheah, 2020). Similarly, in the case of a communications team, its members are asked to set the main goals of a campaign before its implementation.

In this regard, SFM merely outlines the bare minimum elements needed to achieve the system's objectives. To identify the fundamental dimensions of intelligence, imagination, integration, interpretation, intervention, impact, and interaction, it proposes a learning-oriented approach grounded in systemic dialogue. These interconnected phases shape the cognitive and analytical processes of foresight practitioners and guide the formulation of objectives at each stage of the foresight activity (Saritas, 2013).

Intelligence (Scoping Phase: Surveying, Scanning, Evidence) and Imagination (Creative Phase: Concepts, Models, Scenarios, Visions)

A crucial stage within SFM is intelligence, which involves delineation through systematic measurement, scanning, and evidence gathering. Each activity begins with a comprehensive exploration and analysis of the surrounding environment to build a solid informational foundation for the foresight process (Saritas, 2013).

The creative phase of imagination synthesizes the knowledge gained during intelligence into conceptual representations of reality—through ideas, models, scenarios, and visions. These models are inevitably shaped by the subjective perspectives of the participants involved in the process. The primary objective at this stage is to develop credible and functional models that capture three essential dimensions of a system:

- Its wealth, or resource potential;
- Its capacity for monitoring and self-observation; and
- Its ability to adapt to change (Saritas, 2013).

To explore alternative futures, various analytical and creative techniques may be employed, including modeling, scenario planning, gaming, and simulation. Among these, scenario planning is particularly valuable, as it enables organizations to test their preparedness for different possible futures by developing and analyzing multiple alternative scenarios (Canyon, 2018).

This specific method can be considered suitable for political communication. When skillfully implemented, scenario planning helps to mitigate expert bias—the tendency to envision a single most likely future—and instead encourages greater flexibility and openness in decision-making.

Inter alia, it promotes a more intuitive decision-making process. While the traditional rational model assumes complete information and seeks a single optimal solution, intuitive approaches allow decision-makers to remain open to multiple pathways and adaptive solutions (Fergnani & Woeffray, 2023).
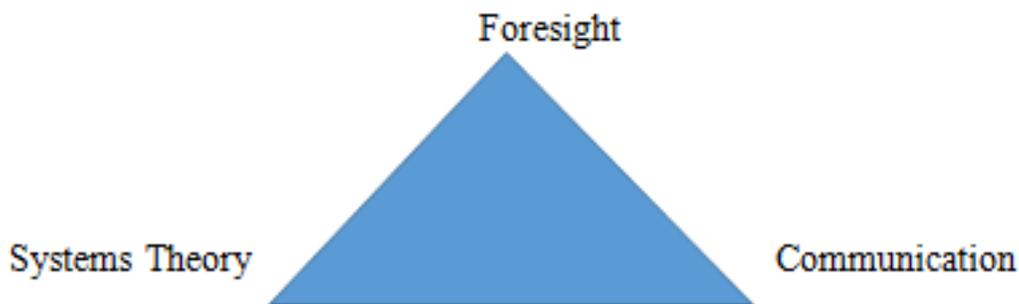

Figure 1: The triangular connection of Foresight, Systems Theory, and Communication, adapted from Kapralos (2025)

Integration (Ordering Phase: Analysis, Negotiations, Priorities) and Interpretation (Strategy Phase: Agendas, Strategies)

Following the development of multiple alternative future models during the imagination phase, the integration phase serves to analyze, compare, and prioritize these options to identify the most suitable or desirable model. This evaluative process is complex, as it requires balancing diverse worldviews, expectations, and stakeholder interests (Saritas, 2013). A range of analytical tools can support this phase, including SWOT analysis, cost-benefit-risk analysis, cross-impact analysis, multi-criteria analysis, and the Delphi method (Saritas, 2013).

Strategic foresight approaches, such as the Systemic Foresight Methodology, frequently employ these tools to construct future visions and identify emerging risks and opportunities, often with a long-term perspective spanning several decades. These methods combine formalized techniques (e.g., Delphi surveys, structured scenario building) with more qualitative or interpretive approaches such as expert assessments (Klüfers et al., 2017). Typically, a Delphi survey is used to validate scenarios developed in earlier stages of foresight by gathering expert judgments on the likelihood and timing of potential future events. The responses are then synthesized and redistributed to the same participants, allowing them to reconsider their assessments in light of collective insights (Saritas & Cheah, 2020).

The SWOT analysis, for example, can be conducted either by experts alone or in collaboration with stakeholders, enabling the consideration of multiple perspectives and objectives (Wollny & Paul, 2015).

The subsequent interpretation phase connects the preferred future vision with the present reality by translating the outcomes of previous stages into strategies, agendas, and action plans. This phase plays a pivotal role in linking foresight to implementation, thereby ensuring that insights derived from systemic inquiry are integrated into concrete programs of change (Saritas, 2013).

According to Saritas (2013), foresight activities are embedded within a broader STEEPV framework that encompasses social, technological, economic, environmental, political, and value-based systems that shape and influence one another through systemic interdependencies. Effective transformation strategies must therefore integrate several conditions: the establishment of an open learning system, continuous assessment and information processing, and a nuanced understanding of the constantly evolving external context.

Ultimately, foresight seeks to modify or strengthen one or more of these interlinked systems by integrating change across both strategic and operational dimensions by articulating vision, values, and direction, implementing supporting activities, and ensuring long-term coherence over time. In this process, human resource management also plays a key role by fostering awareness, behavioral adaptation, and the development of learning mechanisms that promote sustainable organizational evolution (Saritas, 2013).

Ordering and strategy phases can be adapted to any political communication strategy since their main objectives are the analysis of data and the external environment, the establishment of priorities and agenda creation, as well as the implementation of a specific strategy. For example, SWOT Analysis is an effective tool to enable a communication team to adequately analyze the strengths and weaknesses of a communication project, to track the opportunities that will be created by its implementation, as well as the threats that may emerge through the implementation of a communication campaign. According to Popper (2008b), SWOT analysis investigates and categorizes external factors, such as environmental changes or competitor behavior, and presents these in the context of opportunities and threats. This is utilized to explore potential strategies.

Intervention (Action Phase: Plans, Policies, Actions), Impact (Evaluation Phase), and Interaction (Participative and Interactive Phase)

The intervention phase is an essential component of every Systemic Foresight activity, as it translates strategic insights into concrete plans, policies, and actions. At this stage, strategies and measurable indicators are developed to enable timely and informed decision-making in response to rapid change, with the ultimate aim of achieving structural and behavioral transformation (Saritas, 2013). This phase seeks to dispel preconceived assumptions, simplify complexity, and address uncertainty, objectives particularly relevant to the demanding field of political communication (Canyon, 2018).

Decision-making within this framework becomes increasingly participatory and inclusive. By engaging multiple stakeholders in the development of future scenarios, foresight exercises introduce a diversity of perspectives that enhance both the quality and effectiveness of the process. As Nehme et al. (2012, p. 3) observe, participants have reported that "the process was more important than the product."

Anticipating and evaluating the impact of foresight is a vital step in the methodology. Effective impact assessment requires a well-designed communication plan, both during and after the foresight process, to ensure that results are properly interpreted, disseminated, and utilized by the intended audiences. Foresight exercises are time- and resource-intensive and often rely on public funding. Demonstrating tangible outcomes is crucial, ensuring stakeholder engagement and institutional support (Saritas, 2013).

The interaction phase ensures that stakeholders remain systematically integrated into the foresight process through participatory mechanisms that foster

long-term reflection and dialogue. This phase emphasizes efficiency, effectiveness, and social legitimacy, seeking to align foresight practices with legal, ethical, and normative frameworks that enable public and private organizations alike to contribute to improvement.

When linking the aforementioned phases to the tenets of political communication, a sequence is documented in every action. It means that after an action has been implemented, each communication team must evaluate its results to identify the scope of success and what mistakes should be avoided in the future. This assessment is directly connected to the effect of the action on the external environment and the degree to which it affected the positions of other stakeholders in the communication process.

Each SFM phase is systemically connected to the preceding and subsequent ones. Knowledge and action evolve iteratively rather than linearly, allowing guidelines, strategies, and measures developed in earlier stages to inform and refine those that follow (Saritas, 2013).

In this regard, SFM also places great importance on inclusivity and the behavioral aspects of foresight. This necessity is driven by an awareness of the constraints of foresight regarding participation, insights gained from the corporate sector about the advantages of stakeholder inclusion, and a movement toward greater inclusivity in all aspects of policy making (Saritas, 2010).

As Lamas (2024) argues, fostering continuous collaboration between policymakers and foresight experts across governmental and administrative levels contributes to resilient strategic decision-making.

A balanced and diverse set of participants representing various social, political, and behavioral domains is vital to shaping future-oriented strategies. This participatory dimension distinguishes systemic foresight from earlier, more technocratic approaches. SFM explicitly incorporates behavioral factors, recognizing their influence within both systems and foresight processes (Saritas, 2013).

Integrating SFM with quality assurance mechanisms is also essential to achieving robust and replicable results. As Olkiewicz (2018) demonstrates, the consistent application of high-quality foresight contributes to sustainable development across sectors, supporting innovation-oriented production management, effective IT security systems, sound governance, and the efficient creation and use of intellectual capital.

Within foresight studies, different conceptual orientations coexist, often reflecting distinct epistemic assumptions about uncertainty, complexity, and the nature of future knowledge. Some approaches emphasize forecasting and predictive modelling, while others prioritize exploratory scenario construction, participatory processes, or strategic learning frameworks. These variations do not merely represent methodological

preferences, but imply different understandings of how organizations interpret change, manage uncertainty, and structure decision-making. In this heterogeneous landscape, the Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM) may be understood as a systemic and integrative orientation that foregrounds relational complexity, iterative learning, and the co-evolution of actors and environments.

To sum up, developing strategic foresight requires careful attention to multiple dimensions: the scope and purpose of the activity, the expertise and experience of stakeholders, the organizational culture of decision-making, and the management style that governs implementation. Within this context, effective communication plays a decisive role in distinguishing between favorable and unfavorable outcomes (Nehme et al., 2012).

SFM and Political Communication

The Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM) can be applied across multiple areas of political practice. In this study, however, the focus is specifically placed on its application within the communication sector of political organizations. The qualitative characteristics of SFM—its holistic perspective, systemic orientation, and the direct inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in the design and implementation of foresight processes—make it particularly adequate for the complex and dynamic environment of political communication. When applied to the design of communication campaigns, SFM offers distinct advantages by fostering greater resilience, strategic depth, and effectiveness compared to other communication methods. From a theoretical standpoint, SFM does not prescribe specific outcomes; rather, it functions as an analytical and heuristic toolset that can reorganize how communication problems are framed, interpreted, and strategically navigated.

The increasing complexity of contemporary political issues and the scale of challenges at both the local and the supranational level, from global crises to the ongoing demand for sustainable, future-oriented governance, necessitate innovative approaches to political communication. Modern political organizations should possess the ability to respond comprehensively to emerging problems, with insight and strategic commitment on one hand, and with convincing, evidence-based solutions contrarily.

Within this context, the present research addresses a central question: how can SFM contribute to the development of more adaptive and effective political communication strategies to address uncertainty and complexity? Conducted amid a period of significant international challenges that demand immediate and targeted responses, this study seeks to provide a critical and reliable framework for political communication teams.

A case example of systemic foresight application in political communication

The following example conceptually illustrates how the Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM) may be interpreted within a political communication context.

The goal is to effectively address a significant communication issue for an institutional entity by implementing targeted phases of SFM. This example illustrates a methodical approach to problem management, enabling a communications team to interact with other stakeholders in the communications sector, revise its position due to documented changes, and mitigate adverse impacts on the political organization while protecting its image. The description concerns the management of a specific problem, and the findings cannot be generalized to other cases or situations.

The case concerns a communication team tasked with addressing the issue of rising migratory flows in southern Crete, Greece. It is assumed that the team operates on behalf of the Greek government, seeking to design a comprehensive communication strategy for a rapidly escalating issue with clear international implications, at a time when Greece is also entering its peak tourist season.

At the outset of the process, the team undertakes the intelligence phase, conducting a thorough scan to assess how the issue manifests and is represented in domestic and international media. This initial diagnostic stage is crucial for evaluating whether the prevailing public image undermines the country's credibility and for identifying potential medium-term reputational risks to the Greek government.

Once the issue has been fully mapped, the process advances to the imagination phase, during which the team develops a set of alternative scenarios outlining how the government could manage the communication dimension of the crisis. Based on available data, these scenarios explore potential escalation or de-escalation trajectories of migratory flows. The scenario-building process allows the team to anticipate possible developments, assess their implications, and formulate flexible responses. Importantly, the subjective insights and judgments of participants influence the overall philosophy and tone of the proposed communication plan. The ultimate objective at this stage is to establish a communication model that is both efficient and applicable, capable of supporting the team's overarching strategic goals.

Within this context, the team must identify potential risks in implementation, prepare contingency options, and determine the most effective communication channels—for example, balancing traditional and social media coverage, calibrating message frequency and reach, and ensuring meaningful interaction with public audiences. The proper combination of these elements can help foster public trust and reinforce the legitimacy of the political organization's response.

The model can enable the government, as a system, to protect and project a positive national image, adapting its strategy dynamically in response to external factors that might influence global perceptions.

During the subsequent integration phase, the team conducts an in-depth analysis and evaluation of the proposed models to select the one most suitable for achieving the desired outcomes. Given the diversity of perspectives within the group, analytical tools such as SWOT analysis can help identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with each communication approach and determine the most adaptable and effective plan.

The interpretation phase then establishes the bridge between the present situation and the desired future. In this phase, the communication strategy is refined to ensure coherence with the team's original objectives and to promote a shared understanding of long-term priorities.

The intervention phase focuses on the implementation of the strategies and policies to produce tangible structural and behavioral change. At this juncture, anticipating and maximizing the impact of foresight activities becomes crucial. Finally, during the interaction phase, stakeholders are systematically engaged with a long-term perspective. In this case, relevant actors would include domestic and international media, public audiences, European and international institutions, and countries of origin of migrants, all of which should form part of the broader stakeholder mapping.

The interaction phase emphasizes effectiveness, efficiency, and social responsibility, ensuring that communication strategies align with societal expectations and contribute to the sustainable use of available resources.

Throughout all phases, the communication team must recognize and respect the systemic interconnections that characterize SFM. Each stage informs and reinforces the next, generating iterative learning that improves decision-making and adaptation. This holistic process provides a powerful framework for managing communication crises with international resonance, such as migration, where responsiveness, credibility, and coordination are essential.

From a conceptual and illustrative standpoint, applying this methodology could yield several strategic benefits for the Greek government, including:
-Contributing to mitigating unfavorable public perceptions of Greece;

- Supporting the safeguarding of the country's international reputation and image;
- Providing a good-practice model for other European partners facing similar challenges;
- Reinforcing the Greek government's credibility within European and global forums; and
- Facilitating more trust-based interactions with key stakeholders, such as the public opinion, media, and political organizations across Europe.

To sum up, the Systemic Foresight Methodology provides political institutions with a coherent and adaptable roadmap for addressing communication challenges of regional and international significance. Its systematic application offers a comparative advantage in managing complex communication issues, enabling political organizations to analyze evolving dynamics, continuously refine their strategies, and sustain high levels of resilience, responsiveness, and credibility within the political environment.

Advantages, case examples, and challenges of the application of SFM

By integrating systems thinking and participatory foresight, SFM enables the identification of emerging opportunities and risks, informs strategic decision-making, and promotes a proactive rather than reactive orientation toward the future. It is particularly valuable in addressing complex, multi-dimensional problems that conventional linear thinking often fails to interpret correctly a challenge frequently encountered in political communication. Within this context, strategic foresight and scenario planning serve as powerful tools for simplifying complexity and guiding action (Canyon, 2018). It must be noted, though, that the realization of these advantages depends on organizational capacity, stakeholder dynamics, and overall implementation conditions.

SFM further contributes to strengthening an organization's internal and external networks by fostering collaboration, flexibility, and a shared understanding of long-term goals. It supports adaptation to changing environments and advances the pursuit of corporate sustainability (Westover, 2020).

Even in political organizations, foresight operates as a dynamic, cyclical process rather than a linear one. It provides a continuous feedback mechanism through which knowledge leads to anticipation, anticipation drives change, and change generates new learning. This continuity of foresight creates an adaptive system that evolves through successive cycles of reflection and action, adjusting its standards, directives, and objectives in response to environmental change (Saritas, 2013).

In practice, SFM enables communication practitioners to set agendas and priorities for each stage of strategic planning. For instance:
- Conducting systematic analyses of political responses, scenarios, and projections;
- Building networks, promoting information sharing, and encouraging cooperative learning;
- Establishing a foundation for strategic planning;
- Focusing on the institutional and structural dimensions of organizational systems; and
- Identifying and studying specific technological or thematic domains (Saritas, 2013).

SFM's process orientation is adaptive and conceptual, emphasizing contextual understanding over rigid technique. It makes it particularly relevant to political communication, where diversity and transparency form the basis of modern scenario-building exercises. Explicitly stating the assumptions and causal relationships between drivers enhances transparency, while the inclusion of diverse perspectives encourages experts to explore a wide range of logically consistent paths (Berkhout & Hertin, 2002).

For communication professionals, this methodological openness enables better stakeholder mapping and multi-solution thinking. By understanding each stakeholder's position within the communication environment, practitioners can anticipate interests, identify shared concerns, and design more inclusive and flexible strategies.

SFM's systemic framework equips practitioners with the conceptual tools necessary to achieve their communication objectives. Creating a systemic foresight exercise focused on a specific topic—such as migration, energy policy, or climate communication—offers several advantages.
- It promotes greater freedom in developing creative solutions;
- It allows for diverse and context-appropriate approaches; and
- It facilitates implementation, as the resulting strategies and policies are more coherent and aligned with the subject matter (Saritas, 2013).

The development of resilience through foresight initiatives also deserves special attention (Zumbrunn, 2023). Resilience represents a core target for any political organization seeking sustainability in an uncertain environment. By encouraging a forward-looking mindset, supporting strategic planning, and enhancing awareness of future risks and opportunities, foresight becomes indispensable to effective communication. It allows communicators to anticipate trends, refine messaging, and proactively address potential issues before they escalate.

Synthesizing these insights, foresight can enhance political communication in the following ways:
- Strategic Vision: Helps organizations articulate long-term objectives and align them with anticipated futures.
- Prioritization: Enables more robust planning and preparation for multiple possible outcomes.
- Contextual Awareness: Provides a framework for understanding the forces, uncertainties, and dynamics shaping future events.
- Engagement and Cooperation: Facilitates stakeholder dialogue and collaboration in shaping future trajectories.
- Adaptability: Allows organizations to adjust their communication strategies to remain effective amid change.
- Crisis Management: Anticipates potential threats, enabling communicators to act proactively rather than reactively.

Table 2 summarizes the key advantages of applying the Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM) in political communication. These qualitative features enhance the strategic capacity, adaptability, and effectiveness of communication processes in competitive environments.

Systemic Foresight and Application's Barriers

Despite these advantages, several practical and organizational barriers hinder the application of SFM. Organizational factors such as corporate culture, hierarchical structures, and institutional rigidity can impede the effective implementation of foresight initiatives. In addition, difficulties often arise in internal and external communication concerning future-oriented themes, which can restrict the dissemination and integration of foresight insights within organizations (Davis, 2008).

SFM has also been criticized for its technocratic orientation, as many of its early proponents relied heavily on the perspectives of technologically skilled experts (Saritas, 2010). This dependence might exclude broader social, cultural, and behavioral dimensions that are crucial to effective political communication.

Given the focus of this study on political communication, it becomes essential to broaden participation beyond expert and institutional circles. As Gouache (2021) notes, citizens are often excluded from shaping future agendas, even when these agendas directly affect them. In contrast, the emerging consensus within the global foresight community holds that the future cannot merely be predicted through technological means; rather, it must be co-created through the collaboration of diverse and relevant stakeholder groups.

This shift in understanding has led to the integration of organizational development practices and participatory communication frameworks into foresight methodologies (Wilhelmer & Nagel, 2013). Recognizing the behavioral and social constraints on participation, contemporary approaches increasingly emphasize the importance of designing foresight processes that actively involve citizens and interest groups. As Saritas (2010) argues, experts must focus on the behavioral dimension of foresight, acknowledging that meaningful participation, which is often limited, is essential for producing legitimate and socially grounded outcomes.

In response to increasing criticism, experts and practitioners in strategic foresight contended that its purpose is not to predict the future with precision, but rather to prepare the organization for forthcoming challenges (Vecchiato, 2015).

Foresight Application Case Examples and Challenges

Participatory foresight and policy innovation can be crucial in designing sustainable and inclusive policies. A noteworthy example of democratic innovation in decision-making is the case of Marcoussis, a small French city where local authorities applied elements of gamification to engage citizens directly in policymaking within the framework of strategic foresight initiatives (Gouache, 2021).

This project was conducted with the participation of approximately six hundred residents (out of a total population of 8,000) through twenty-five participatory events using a wide range of creative techniques, including forum-theater, philosophical discussions, a "future ideas market," and collective distillation workshops. These activities were deliberately organized in non-bureaucratic settings, such as schools and local festivals, to reach wider audiences and encourage spontaneous participation.

The Marcoussis initiative is an example of an integrative process combining participatory foresight and policy co-design. It achieved several notable outcomes: making discussions about the future accessible and engaging; extending participation beyond the "usual suspects"; enhancing enjoyment and inclusiveness through gamification; facilitating quick, low-barrier involvement (20–30 minutes per contribution); ensuring honesty and authenticity throughout the process; and maintaining respect for individual perspectives.

The Marcoussis case study reinforces the desirable participatory forms of democracy. It demonstrates how foresight methodologies can be effectively applied in local governance to cultivate civic engagement, ensure policy legitimacy, and stimulate innovative, authentic approaches to participatory foresight and agenda setting.

Table 2: SFM's advantages as a significant tool in political communication, adapted from Kapralos (2025)

1.	Facilitates the identification of potential dangers and opportunities.
2.	Supports strategic decision-making.
3.	Encourages proactive orientation.
4.	Classifies complicated issues that linear thinking frequently misdiagnoses.
5.	Simplifies complexity.
6.	Enables organizations to adapt to changes in the external environment.
7.	Empowers professionals to design and implement results-oriented communication strategies.
8.	Provides the analytical insight and capacity needed to address complex communication challenges.

In addition to the case of Marcoussis, this research identifies several other relevant examples of participatory foresight as a tool for advancing the evolution and development of local societies and organizations.

A prominent initiative in this regard is CIMULACT (Citizen and Multi-Actor Consultation on Horizon 2020), a participatory foresight project, which engaged citizens and multiple stakeholders in redefining the European Research and Innovation (R&I) agenda. The initiative has set a more socially relevant and responsible agenda, demonstrating how local citizen-visioning processes can convey societal aspirations to European governance and policymaking institutions (Rosa et al., 2021). CIMULACT exemplifies how participatory foresight can foster bottom-up engagement that shapes bold, mission-oriented policy agendas across diverse regions. The project's results emphasize the transdisciplinary, holistic, and systemic nature of citizen contributions, as well as their integration into specific cultural and social contexts, qualities that are widely recognized as essential for the success of transformative missions (Rosa et al., 2021, p. 12).

Participatory foresight has also been successfully applied in the field of migration policy. The case of Ukrainian return migration offers a compelling example. This study employed participatory foresight methods to establish a dialogue between displaced individuals and experts, thereby linking the lived experiences of migrants with perspectives. By incorporating the foresight and personal insights of displaced Ukrainians residing in Spain, researchers developed a more comprehensive, inclusive, and practical understanding of the challenges associated with migration, displacement, and return (Udovyk & M-Domènech, 2024). In this context, the participatory element ensured that the resulting scenarios were not merely theoretical constructs but rather reflected the authentic experiences and agency of those most directly affected.

Another illustrative example comes from the United States, where Scoblic (2021) documented the growing institutionalization of strategic foresight within the federal government. His study identified evidence of foresight practices across nineteen agencies[1] with particular focus on the U.S. Coast Guard's "Project Evergreen," a 23-year-old cyclical scenario-planning program. This initiative exemplifies how foresight can be embedded within long-term strategic planning structures. Scoblic's

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[1] Bureau of Prisons (Department of Justice), the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (Department of the Interior), the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Management Agency, the Forest Service (Department of Agriculture), the Government Accountability Office, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency, the National Guard Bureau, the National Intelligence Council, the Office of Management and Budget, the Office of Net Assessment, the Office of Personnel Management, the U.S Air Force, the U.S Coast Guard and the U.S Marine Corps.

analysis highlights both the potential and underutilization of foresight in the U.S. public sector and concludes by advocating for the creation of a national foresight agency reporting directly to the President.

As Galvin (2025) notes, foresight's enduring value lies in its ability to draw upon established democratic and scientific pillars, grounding future-oriented thinking in the institutional realities of political life. Similarly, Popper (2008a) argues that futurologists and foresight professionals have a responsibility to promote participatory and inclusive approaches that ensure equitable access to decision-making about the future. For SFM implementation, skills are required from the members of the political organizations. Moreover, to achieve positive results, team members must effectively cooperate.

For the effective implementation of SFM in political contexts, capacity building is indispensable. Members of political organizations must develop appropriate foresight competencies and cultivate a collaborative working culture to ensure meaningful results. Nevertheless, practical obstacles persist. When organizations act reactively or without coordination, disruptions in strategic continuity may occur. In foresight practice, Öner and Göl Beşer (2007) identified this as the "lone wolf trap"—the tendency for individuals or departments to act in isolation, leading to inconsistency in results and limited acceptance of outcomes. Likewise, stakeholder reluctance to align with agreed policies or strategies often undermines implementation (Shevchenko et al., 2017). Additional barriers include resource constraints, such as insufficient funding, staffing, or time, all of which can hinder the systematic application of foresight within corporate and governmental settings (Davis, 2008).

Conclusion

In conclusion, systemic foresight constitutes an indispensable analytical and strategic resource for political organizations seeking to ensure sustainability, adaptability, and long-term strategic coherence. By conceptually examining the relevance of the Systemic Foresight Methodology (SFM) for political communication, this paper has emphasized its systemic logic, its orientation toward complexity, and its potential role in structuring adaptive communication processes under conditions of uncertainty.

The application of SFM in political communication is particularly significant within contemporary political environments which are increasingly characterized by volatility and dynamic change. Rather than prescribing deterministic outcomes, SFM provides a systemic and heuristic framework through which communication challenges may be interpreted, strategically organized, and continuously reassessed. In this regard, SFM contributes to enhancing the informational and interpretive capacities of communication systems, enabling political organizations

to navigate uncertainty through iterative learning, stakeholder integration, and adaptive strategic alignment.

The contemporary transformation of communication environments further reinforces the analytical relevance of systemic approaches such as SFM. The shift from linear, top-down models of information dissemination toward horizontal, network-driven ecosystems introduces heightened levels of complexity, feedback sensitivity, and volatility. Within such fragmented communication landscapes, strategic effectiveness increasingly depends on anticipatory, adaptive, and system-aware logics capable of responding to dynamic interactions among actors, narratives, and institutional structures.

From a theoretical standpoint, the conceptual integration of systemic foresight within political communication studies invites a reconsideration of how communication strategies are framed, evaluated, and adapted. SFM does not determine communication outcomes; instead, it offers an analytical structure that reorganizes how communication problems, uncertainties, and stakeholder dynamics may be understood. This conceptual orientation highlights the methodological value of foresight as a mode of systemic interpretation rather than prediction.

Future research may build upon this conceptual foundation by exploring several directions, including:

- Measure the outputs of SFM phases within organizations, such as stakeholder engagement levels, scenario use, and policy influence;
- Examine the effects of SFM adoption on communication key performance indicators, including reach, salience, public trust, and crisis resilience; and
- Examine participatory foresight formats, such as deliberative processes, citizen panels, and expert-based Delphi methods.

Overall, the Systemic Foresight Methodology offers a coherent conceptual lens through which political communication may be understood as a dynamic, adaptive, and systemically embedded process. Its theoretical and practical relevance lies not in predicting political developments, but in enhancing the capacity of political organizations to interpret complexity, anticipate structural change, and organize communication strategies in ways that sustain resilience and strategic responsiveness.

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