ENGLISH SUMMARIES

SWOT Analysis as a technique for decision makers in the assessment of democratic practices, by Alberto Gasparini

Prediction involves a given point in future time (t_1), and the process by means of which the future time t_1 may come about, starting from the present time (t_0), lies at the heart of prediction. The author analyses what happens in that process – description of the phenomenon, identification of its causes, reconstruction of the mechanisms, strategies in which to frame the actions required for the desired change in the time t_0, assessment of the consequences and evaluation of good practices. The method to achieve the process is a blend of descriptions, causal analyses and evaluations, but above all indications to decision makers to identify the best practices – the scenario's internal and external variables and the strategies in which to frame actions. The author uses SWOT analysis to build four scenarios, each corresponding to a democratic model. When subjected to SWOT analysis, the four democratic models yield three models of democracy, each implying a type of strategy for the action of decision makers. These types are defined as: pedagogic function, synthesis of stakeholders' values and coordinated projects of discussion, decision and management.

Tasks and limits of prediction in the intelligence cycle, by Umberto Gori

This text examines the question of prediction with particular reference to international relations. Observations about the turbulent and complex nature of the present-day international system are followed by an analysis of the problems facing the prediction of a chaotic system. The discussion then turns to intelligence analysis and the tasks and limits of prediction in the intelligence cycle, and is completed with a review of the methods useful for understanding political systems and the prediction of decisions. The conclusions make brief reference to a number of new discoveries and interpretations in advanced physics to throw doubt on our ability to grasp the profound essence of reality.

Assessment and prediction. A posteriori reflections on some Delphi research projects, by Giulio Marini

Predictive analysis is proving increasingly important to applied social research carried out for the public, private and mixed sectors. Though asserting its pragmatic value as an assessment and planning tool, however, predictive analysis provides little critical access with regard to its techniques, its finalising capacity and the validity and reliability of its research results. This short paper attempts to provide *a posteriori* evaluation of about ten Delphi projects carried out between 2002 and 2006, focusing on a time-frame now partially elapsed.

Group discussion and prediction. Implications for evaluating methods, by Simone Arnaldi

In the context of panel-based methods, group discussions between experts and stakeholders are widely used in prediction to produce, collect and select the information needed for the construction of visions and images of the future and for the development of strategies and plans of action for the present. Despite the widespread use of these techniques, the literature seems to neglect possible bias that may be generated by discussion itself and that may, if not monitored, undermine their ability to make a reliable contribution to the prediction process. Referring to the use of focus groups in social research, the article attempts to outline a possible interpretative framework for the main dynamics and conditions of group discussions, in order to improve our awareness of the bias that may arise from them.

The degree of reliability of predictive models and the unity of knowledge, by Luciana Bozzo

The reliability of predictive models is assured by the ability to establish a unity of knowledge, or rather of many branches of knowledge. This is the idea that leads the author to reflect on the prediction derived first of all from the "science café", defined as "a talking shop for scholars from a range of disciplines", who represent many branches of knowledge which are in fact a complete whole – "knowledge". The background for the predictive model discussed here is territorial planning, which encompasses an instrumental-explanatory component, a predictive component and an ideal. The construction of the predictive model and the degree of its reliability are produced by the process of unifying knowledge, and this confluence derives from knowledge of geographers, biologists, chemists, engineers, architects, agronomists, sociologists and private citizens. General Urban Development Plans stand as the instrumental and predictive model in which a certain unification of knowledge – at least operational – is achieved.

Prediction as designing the future. The practical cases of Italo-Slovene cross-border cooperation and the Adriatic Euroregion, by Enrico Ferluga

The use of a questionnaire on the present and future of cross-border cooperation, based on the contribution of political, economic and cultural elites, fully achieves the planning objective of prediction. The consequent construction of predictive scenarios provides an overall vision of the system of cross-border relations at varying levels of complexity and institutionalisation, but also stands as the point at which what is considered ideal from a number of perspectives is integrated so as to generate a system of strategies and policies aimed at achieving the condition defined by prediction as "normative reality", thus indicating not only the aim but how to achieve it.

Just relaxation or high energy. New ways of experiencing holidays in Friuli Venezia Giulia, by Moreno Zago

The average length of holidays for Italians, as is the case for Europeans in general, has decreased considerably. Types of holidays have also substantially diversified. Many more holidaymakers are now interested in dimensions which go beyond simple relaxation to encompass sport, health and lightning visits. The population of Friuli Venezia Giulia is included in this trend. Using the data from field research and Time Machine simulation software, this paper analyses the many interactions and possible developments among socio-demographic, behavioural, motivational and strategic variables affecting the region's tourists.

The transformation of commuting into migration. The "demographic-social arrears", by Antonio Pacinelli

This paper presents a study on the transformation of commuting into migration to the same destination, with the aim of predicting its impact on migratory flows and the population's age structure. In banking, the concept of arrears refers to an unpaid debt, and here it is applied to the working environment, where the flow of commuters from one town is considered human capital loaned to another town and the failure of a commuter to return creates a state of "demographic-social arrears" (Pacinelli 1996). The information on commuting and migration involved in this phenomenon constitutes the basis for the calculation of a number of indicators which may be used in prediction. An experiment was carried out in the town of Bellante (Teramo), where over 50% of the population are commuters.

A virtual hospital for the healthy? Prediction, prevention and communication on health in the heart of the Mediterranean, by Ada Cattaneo

In line with the World Health Organisation, the European Union is showing increasing interest in prevention and prediction in health matters. One of the funded projects

designed to find innovative solutions is PIPS (Personalised Information Platform for Health and Life Services), run by the Scientific Institute at the Hospital of San Raffaele (Milan) in a virtual hospital for the healthy. Here, top-level expertise in the medical-technological and sociological-communicative fields creates a network of services for the remote prediction/protection of the illnesses/health of healthy and sick people alike. Intelligent medicine cabinets and trolleys are based on a communicative, relational and interactive architecture of studies on the individual and the creation of individual scenarios. The hospital exemplifies the contribution of sociology in prevention, prediction, education and treatment, putting together personalised services. The location of the hospital at the intersection of the Lisbon-Kiev and Sweden-Sicily axes bears witness to the gradual shift of the centre of gravity of health matters towards the Mediterranean.

Cultural production: predictions on the maintenance of the division between the national public and the European public, by Mariselda Tessarolo

In a world where globalisation seems to be prevailing over everything that is local, or at least national, it is becoming apparent that in entertainment and culture there are substantial non-globalised niches. The discussion is based on the acceptance of a theory advanced by Crane (1997), which contrasts the culture determined by social classes to that deriving from the sectors into which culture is divided (central, peripheral and urban). It may be postulated that strong features of "local" national character remain in the "global" culture, and that they are able to maintain a consistent vitality. This is followed by a prediction regarding the "European" characteristics of the national cultures present in Europe.

From the culture of reaction to the culture of prevention, by Maurizio Lozzi

The conflictual nature of the contemporary world is being given further momentum by the spiral of violence triggered by the pairing of terrorism and war. The need to design instruments able to prevent violent conflicts is unfortunately based more on the containment of economic costs than that of human and social costs. Yet there are no more serious problems requiring our engagement than those of the prevention of genocide, for which the Italian armed forces and NGOs are considered reliable in theatres of war. A questionnaire used in Belgrade and its surrounding area confirm how much "our way of being good people" is appreciated in the Balkans.

Governance and democracy in Europe, by Vincenzo Memoli

Current literature on democracy points to a decline in citizens' support for democracy in a number of countries in the European Union. A range of explanations have been offered, and many scholars have identified the performance of governments as the main cause of this democratic deficit. Focusing on fifteen consolidated European democracies, this paper analyses the main government policies and estimates the

effects they have on people's democratic support. The principal results highlight that between 2002 and 2005 standards of governance were in decline, and confirm that government decisions have an impact – including in the short term – on people's satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Europe.

Towards what Europe?, by Pasquale Baldocci

The author examines the question of how the future of Europe can be foreseen, whether it is moving towards integration or towards a reassertion of the national features of all EU member states. The French and Dutch rejection of the European Constitution in 2004 triggered a search for a lower-key, less political form of European integration. Possible initiatives to break out of the current state of immobility include two interconnected paths: one is a return to the functional method for horizontal integration and the other is a development and broadening of Europe's big regional areas. The need therefore arises to give people a sense of responsibility for European integration in order to convince governments to relinquish more of their sovereignty.

Reconstructing the European Union meaning and reality, by Myrianne Coen

The fall of the Berlin Wall has thrown a stark light on the loss of reference points for Europeans: those of good and evil – values, of their territory and their interests. Religion is discredited, technology has no conscience. In this context there is a reawakening of ethics. But now the question arises as to the values on which this ethics is to be based, its deep meaning. The history of our civilisation shows that such values have always been rooted in the survival of the species, which implies protection of the individual. Nowadays they are expressed in respect for human (individual) rights and the primacy given to the democratic system applied to a society conceived as a "significant space of exchange". Managing change in complete security is therefore a question of evaluating policies, taking the individual as a benchmark according to an interpretation which has the survival of the species as a temporal limit and the respective territories of individual freedom as a spatial limit. All of this has to take account of reality, assuring a dialectic management between the dynamics of what we are able to do and the meaning which tells us what it is permissible to do. Devising management structures able to reconcile security and change should thus take account of everything that is effective and ethical. Conducting a suitable policy – the necessary condition for effectiveness – entails taking account of reality as it is in such a way that it may be modified (the dynamics of the possible) while respecting others in (individual) space and time (future generations). On the basis of these criteria it is therefore a question of determining, in the light of reality and principles, the meaning that emanates from democratic decisions, of considering the significant spaces that the meaning covers and of structuring them so that they encompass mutual relations. The individual is placed in this context as a benchmark by which the planet should measure itself, and the planet in turn should be considered "for mankind", since it is mankind who gives it a meaning.