Foresight in South Africa

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1 Introduction

There are two objectives in the context of foresight in South Africa discussed in this contribution. Firstly, we want to provide the reader with a broad insight into the processes we are involved with in the country and secondly to share some of the results from our survey of twelve sectors. The change in government and the reality of our democratization process has bought on new challenges and imperatives. The previous Government had three major priorities within the context of Science and Technology:

1. Military dominance in the sub-continent
2. Energy self-sufficiency and
3. National food security

This can be seen by the budgeted amounts over the last twenty years. The three areas received more than 30 times the budget of the rest of the system. The present Government has adopted the framework of a National system of Innovation on which to base its Science and Technology policy. This was presented to the South African Parliament in 1996. The priority for the system was

→ to increase the competitiveness of the country and

→ to improve the quality of life of the people.

These two objectives were to be realised within the context of collaboration across the system, i.e. Academy, Industry and Government. The innovation System was considered to be made of up of individual points that were constantly influenced by other components of the system. Innovation was an iterative process and not linear.

Simultaneous with the changes in South Africa world trade has also undergone a major change. We no longer have the protectionist trade regiments we had in the 70’s and 80’s. The new busy words are liberalization and WTO agreements. The South African economy was extremely protected during the years of isolation and today they have been thrown open to the forces of competition and partnerships.
In South Africa we adopted a mixture of Foresight methodologies. We picked up a fair amount for the United Kingdom and complemented it with the Delphi survey. The study included Macrosenarios, which was fairly novel for any Foresighting process. The Macrosenarios were to form a common platform of understanding for the 12 different sectors. The sectors studied were

- Financial services
- Health
- Youth
- Manufacturing
- Biodiversity
- Safety and Security
- ICT
- Tourism
- Mining
- Agriculture

We conducted local and international scans and subjected the details to a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity and Threats). The analysis was used to identify the statements that were sent out in a Delphi survey. The survey results were further analyzed to provide us with strategic insight into the challenges facing South Africa.

2 Macrosenarios

The Macrosenario tool was an extremely powerful and important method to build consensus in a divided society. It is also valuable in providing people a common platform from which to look at the future. In developing countries this is also important since the future is highly unpredictable.

Four scenarios were developed characterising the road to 2020. The scenario called the *Frozen Revolution* highlights the effect of the non-implementation of government policy towards socio-economic upliftment that leaves the masses dissatisfied and key players fragmented and individually focused. The next scenario the *Innovation Hub* describes how South Africa's comparatively developed infrastructure creates opportunities for strategic regional development. The next scenario called the *Global Home* is about government embracing global liberalisation and facilitating private sector empowerment to respond global market forces, in line with global trends and opportunities. The other scenario called *Our Way is the Way* depicts South Africa's perceived ability to challenge the conventional route to globalisation by rallying developing countries support for the