

The Possible Relevance of Scenario Planning in High-Turbulence Environments: *(A Case Study of Venezuela)*

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Summary:

Futures and scenario planning have proven useful in complex change situations, one of the better known examples being South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy. Incorporating principles of grounded theory research (distilling theory from empirical evidence), Martin investigated current conditions in Venezuela with the goal of determining the potential for national scenario planning. His key conclusion is that throughout 2004 and 2005, Venezuela existed in a state of the most extreme form of turbulence, characterized by a "freezing" stalemate, polarisation and dogmatism. Theory suggests that when such conditions exist, public and private sector leaders across the spectrum would need to actively engage in dialogue that helps individuals understand and appreciate alternative viewpoints.

Recommendations:

Martin proposes a number of options available to Venezuela, as well as other entities and organisations that operate in conditions of simultaneous turbulence and stalemate. These options are useful to the private and public sectors, non-profits, and NGOs (non-governmental organisations), and include:

The Will to Listen: This is a top priority and fundamental requirement for scenario planning. It entails moving beyond each side debating and trying to make its case to welcome the creative process and new possibilities.

Convening Power: This is another phrase for the type of leadership with the authority and or influence to bring parties to the table. Often, this convening power comes in the form of one voice such as the recent example of Nelson Mandela in South Africa. Whether an individual or group, the convening power must be able to start, lead and protect the process.

Time & Resources: As in any major change initiative, time and resources create an environment conducive to finishing what is started.

Technical Competence: Such situations call for special skills to organise and manage the process, quite often the engagement of outside and objective resources recognized for their ability to lead high-level scenario planning.

Alignment of business and project objectives: Differences between time frames and business objectives were found to create ongoing practical reasons for project failures.

Visual Summary: A diagram of Martin's research process and recommended next steps follows.

