



A potential source of new thinking:  
**Theory U**

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### Otto Scharmer



- we need to extend our ways of operating to include:
  - *empathic* listening
  - *generative* listening
- means a shift from reactive responses & quick fixes on a symptoms level
- to *generative* responses that address systemic root issues



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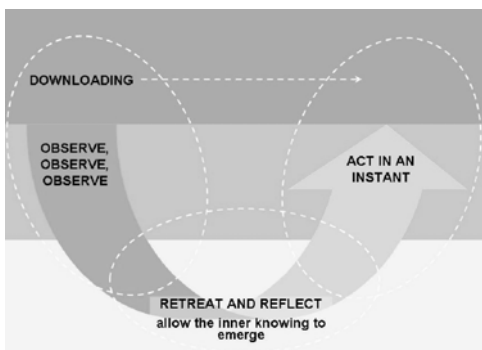
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### Three movements of the U



Source: Floyd and Hayward, 2008

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### Four types of listening

1. *downloading*
2. *factual* listening
3. *empathic* listening
4. *generative* listening



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### New Ways of Listening

- need to *stop downloading*
- start *listening*
- going to *the inner place of stillness where knowing comes to the surface*



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### What is the "U"?

- one process with 5 movements or steps
- allows us to reach *a place of inner knowing* that emerges from within
- followed by bringing forth the new
- entails *discovering the future by doing*



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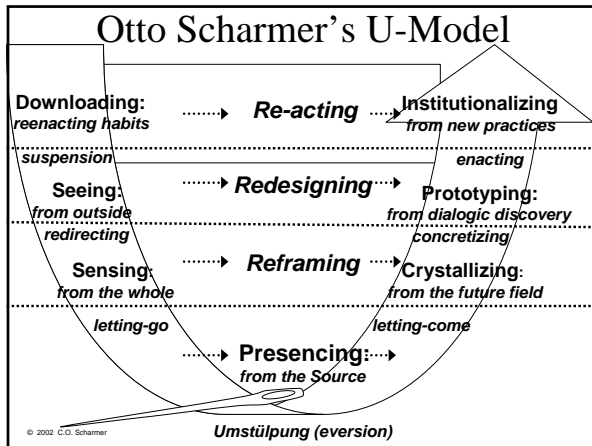
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- ### Scharmer's 5 steps
1. **Co-initiating:**  
Build commitment  
Stop and listen to others and what life calls you to do
  2. **Co-sensing:**  
Observe, observe, observe  
Go to the places of most potential  
Listen with your mind and heart wide open
  3. **Presencing:**  
Connect to the source of inspirational and common will  
Go to the place of silence  
Allow the inner knowledge to emerge
  4. **Co-creating:**  
Prototype the new in living examples to explore the future by doing
  5. **Co-evolving:**  
Embody the new in ecosystems that facilitate seeing and acting from the whole

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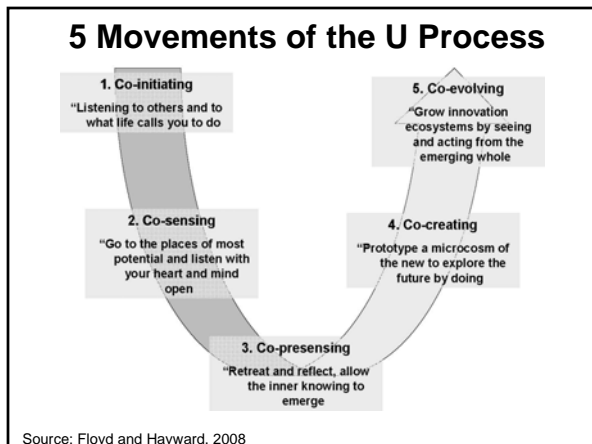
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### **Letting Go and Letting Come**

- As we drop the non-essential aspects of the self (**letting go**)
- we also open ourselves to new aspects of our highest possible future self (**letting come**)

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### **Scharmer's model connects heart and will**

*While an open **heart** allows us to see a situation from the whole, an open **will** enables us to begin to act from the emerging whole*



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### **Scharmer's intention: integration of head, heart and hand**



*... connecting to one's best future possibility and creating breakthrough ideas requires learning to access the intelligence of the heart and the hand – not just the intelligence of the head*

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## The Core of Theory U and Presence

- a profound opening of the heart
- carried into action
- the future, now accessible, can shape our present actions
- rather than have them shaped by the patterns of the past




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## Peter Senge et al. : It's not that easy!

*Nothing undermines the creative process more than the naïve belief that once the vision is clear, it's just a matter of 'implementation'.*

*...moving from concept to manifestation is the heart of creating – which literally means 'bringing into existence'.*

*And like a river's path from its source to the sea, it is anything but a straight line. Instead, creating is a sort of dance between inspiration and experimentation...*

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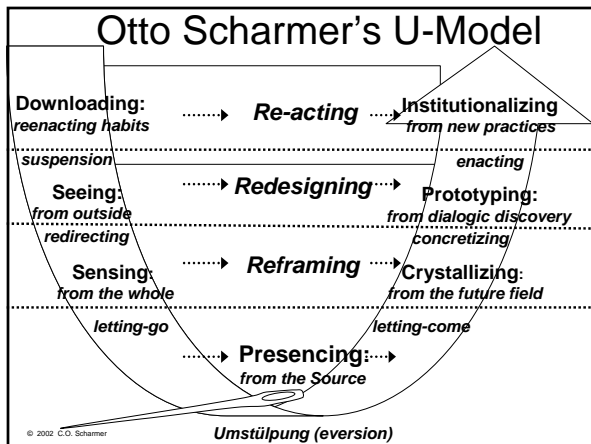
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## Josh Floyd and Peter Hayward

- Australian community development specialists
- believe *Theory U* is a powerful vision of practice
- ideally suited to attracting & engaging participation with the interior qualities needed for effective *social foresight cultivation*

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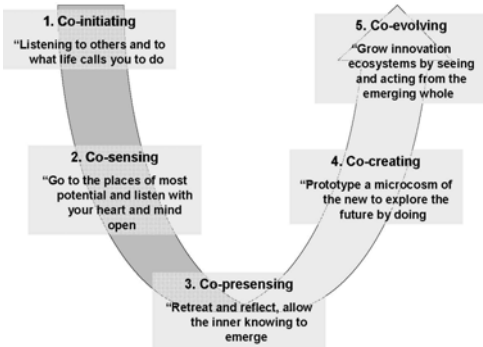
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## 5 Movements of the U Process



Source: Floyd and Hayward, 2008

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## Sources

- Scharmer, C. O. (2007) *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges: The Social Technology of Presencing*, Society for Organizational Learning, Cambridge.
- Scharmer, C.O. (n.d.) 'Addressing the Blind Spot of Our Time: An Executive Summary of the New Book by Scharmer *Theory U: Leading the Future as It Emerges*' (The Social Technology of Presencing), [www.ottoscharmer.com/publications/summaries.php](http://www.ottoscharmer.com/publications/summaries.php)
- Senge, P., Scharmer, C.O., Jaworski, J. and Flowers, B.S. (2005) *Presence: Exploring Profound Change in People, Organization, and Society*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London.
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