

Main message:

The quality of the results produced by a person and by a system (group, institutional, corporate, regional, state, world) depends on the level of consciousness from which the person and the individuals of the system operate. Therefore, we have to reset and upgrade our entire 'operating system'. The final goal of the authors is to encourage a new generation of leaders that foster a profound economic and social transformation from the connection with our most authentic Being/Self, with nature and with each other.

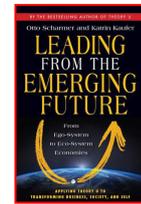
SUMMARY

Scharmer and Kaufer start from the realization of how the current situation can be framed in three big divides: ecological (separation / disconnection between our being and nature), social (separation / disconnection of our individual being and others) and cultural-spiritual (separation / disconnection between our (ordinary) being/self and our Being/Self (in the sense of our maximum possibility)). The authors invite us to contemplate and understand these gaps as the visible part (tip) of an iceberg (three in reality, one for each gap) in which the non-visible part (90%) hides mental structures and models, as well as patterns of behavior both individual and collective, which are responsible for creating different crises and unwanted results.

Likewise, they present 8 significant structural disconnects that characterize our time:

1. the ecological disconnect: we consume resources at 1.5 times the regeneration capacity of planet Earth;
2. the disconnect of income and wealth: the richest 1% of the world population owns more than the remaining 90%;
3. the financial disconnect: the decoupling of the financial economy from the real economy;
4. the disconnect of technology: responding to problems with quick technical solutions that treat symptoms rather than root causes;
5. the disconnect of leadership: leaders who are not in contact with the people affected and who work through institutional silos creating results that nobody wants;
6. the disconnect of consumerism: material consumption that does not lead to an increase in health and well-being;
7. the disconnect of governance: the current coordination mechanisms depend on market-based competition and are unable to solve the most pressing problems of our time, the crisis of the common goods; and
8. the disconnect of property: traditional property rights regimes contribute to the excessive use of scarce resources.

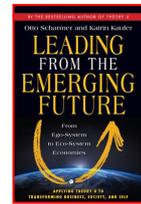
"Leading from the emerging future" has an eminently applied and illustrative approach. It translates Theory U into an accessible and practical guide for the development of a global citizenship and a new economic and social paradigm. In fact, the book has a



second subtitle "applying Theory U to the transformation of business, society and the self". It does not stop too much in the conceptual framework of Theory U (see note at the end), although Theory U is present permanently throughout the text. We could even say that it is a testimony of the experience of the authors during their twenty years of research and analysis of multiple leaders and transformation processes. During this time and in these cases, they have worked with different groups and institutions that have developed systemic strategies to face problems and critical situations.

Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer argue that our society is in a state of disruption, from the old mentality of a civilization that maximizes the "I" to a new consciousness, a deeper human consciousness of "who we really are and that we want to be like a society". "The structure of our conscience and our attention determines the path along which each process advances" whether personal, group, institutional or global. "Effective leadership", they argue, "will force us to think from a systemic perspective". We live in an era of social, ecological and spiritual turmoil in which old patterns of thought are no longer effective. The authors propose a "journey" from the "I" to the "We" in which we should be the leaders of the transition from an ego-system to an eco-system model (generation of progress and well-being for all groups of a system and for the whole system, instead of for each of the groups individually and without considering the system as an indissoluble set). This movement has three facets. The first one refers to the self. The second one is related to the others. And the third one is related to the system as a whole. To lead from the emerging future, Scharmer and Kaufer suggest that leaders must *let go of* the past to learn and connect with the possibilities of the future. This process is called 'presencing', which is "a mixed word that combines 'sensing' (feeling the future possibility) and 'presence' (the state of being in the present moment). It means to detect / feel and update "the highest future possibility - act from the presence of what is willing to emerge".

Actually, the message of the book may not be considered as new. What is new is the way in which the authors structure and elaborate the message, as well as the methodology to reach a new way of thinking, acting and being both individually and collectively. The framework and methodology proposed by Theory U is in fact an aggregate of different disciplines of knowledge (economy and systemic thinking), of methods of (self) knowledge such as mindfulness, as well as models of ideation and intervention such as design-thinking and rapid prototyping. The great success of the authors is precisely the integration of all this in a sequence that starts from individuals and from the global to the transformation of the whole system and the production of results that we really want as a society. We are faced with a 'social technology' and a form of 'global intervention based on individual conscience' through multiple tools that the authors and their colleagues at the *Presencing* Institute have been developing. These tools are not exposed in the book, but they are fully detailed on the *Presencing* Institute website (<https://www.presencing.org/#/resource/tools>).

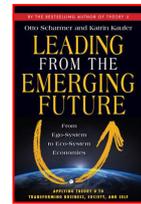


HOW THE BOOK IS STRUCTURED

After an extensive introduction in which the authors expose the starting point and the fundamental premises on which they are going to trace their exposition, focusing on the principles of 'presencing', the book advances following the outline of the U through 8 chapters:

- The first four chapters invite us to descend the left line ...
 - ... from the visible symptoms of the current disruptive moment ...
 - ... going through an analysis of systemic disconnects and their manifestation in different geographical areas of the planet ...
 - ... making a thorough analysis of the history of economic thought and the history of the economy and how these can be reconstructed as the 'incarnation' of an evolutionary consciousness, through four levels: a level 1.0, which would be the traditional consciousness centered in the state and a kind of feudalism; a level 2.0, which would be ego-systemic awareness, connected with the birth of private property and entrepreneurial activity; a level 3.0, which would be a socio-economic awareness of interest groups, in which different stakeholders negotiate with each other, join together and include the interests of the other groups in their way of doing business; and a level 4.0 in which stakeholders operate with an eco-systemic awareness, self-transformation and transformation from and on the whole system. All that has been said is a simplification of what is schematically summarized in a complex 'matrix of economic evolution', one of the greatest conceptual contributions of this book. Each element is analyzed with exhaustive detail and its evolution in the five stadiums ...
 - ... until we reach the *Source* that allows us to connect the intention with the conscience.
- The next four chapters take us on the right, ascending part of the U ...
 - ... from a personal revolution that transcends the 'I' to the 'we', taking full consciousness of oneself and of the whole, practicing active and generative listening (Listening 4.0), and deploying our Being/Self through 12 principles and practices¹ ...
 - ... going through a relational revolution from 'ego' to 'eco': instead of simply seeing others, we need to learn how to see ourselves through the eyes of others and the whole system ...
 - ... seeking an institutional revolution, which is described by what the authors call the 'institutional inversion', a scheme that designs the evolutionary path of key institutions and social systems from a level 1.0 to a level 4.0. Through numerous examples of institutional changes to which the authors have personally attended, we are shown that the transformational experiences needed in education, health, finance, government, NGOs are not really very different from each other, keeping

¹ It would be very long only to mention these twelve principles and practices.



in common the rupture of institutional silos and the cultivation of co-creation fields to share the intention, the awareness and the action between the different actors of each system ...

- ... and finally, the authors show some of the steps that, along with their colleagues mainly from the academic field, are giving to make possible that emerging future that we can co-create. They declare their intention to build a 'holding-space' and 'capacities' that allow (1) to apply advanced scientific methods to (2) the shift of societies towards a 4.0 level while (3) they seek an evolutionary movement of an ego-systemic to eco-systemic consciousness both individually and collectively. The *Presencing Institute* and the *U.Lab* online course are two of those initiatives that foster the global transformation that they hope to contribute to.

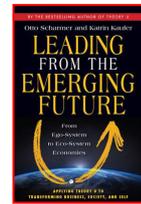
The book is well structured, and it builds its logic in a repetitive and progressive way. However, it is not an easy read. The authors are based on a wide range of disciplinary fields (economics, sociology, some psychology, design, systems thinking, etc.). They build their argument on Theory U, profusely exposed in the book by Otto Scharmer under the same title, and also on the "systemic thinking" of his MIT colleague Peter Senge. They also make considerable use of ideas taken from oriental philosophies (Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism), phenomenology and cognitive sciences (especially integrating thoughts of the neurobiologist Francisco Varela). Partly as a consequence of these oriental and metaphysical influences, sometimes they use a theoretical and imprecise language, perhaps vague, which the reader must be accustomed to, as it is the repeated idea that "there is a better future that wants to emerge". Sometimes, the text becomes densely analytical, as is the case of the longest chapter (chapter 3), which extends for 73 pages, on economic thought and in which the complex "matrix of economic evolution" is developed.

All the chapters are closed with a set of questions that the reader must work in the form of a personal diary or in group conversations. In this way, the reader is helped to process the content of the book and to become an actor of the profound and global change proposed by the authors.

APPLICATION

One of the great virtues that emerge from Theory U is its immense application potential. The book 'Leading from the emerging future' contains numerous examples of projects in which the general principles presented have been applied or are being applied. In particular, chapter 7, after a brief introduction on the 'institutional inversion' that implies the application of Theory U on diverse entities and sectors, develops from the exhibition of several concrete cases of institutional transformation in key sectors like the government, health, education, corporations, NGOs and banking². Table 9 of this

² As mentioned in note 1, the mere mention of the examples would be very extensive.



chapter contains a diagram of how the mentioned social sectors evolve in parallel from level 1.0 to level 4.0.

The proposal of 'Leading from the emerging future', the general principles of Theory U and 'presencing' are universal. The examples shown in the book correspond to cases located throughout the planet and in multiple sectors. Precisely one of the areas in which the principles of 'Leading from the emerging future' can be better applied is the university, promoting a transition from a university driven by academic factors to a university oriented to social and global challenges, committed to its immediate environment while operating on a global scale; a university anchored in its territory as a 'hub' of local and international agents, in short a *civic university*, in the words of Prof. John Goodard of the University of Newcastle. Like any process of transformation of institutions as complex and with as much history as universities, a set of profound changes is required in the way of thinking, in the way of acting and in the way of being, both of the people and of the different operating and government structures that compose it. Theory U, exposed with such clarity and richness of nuances through numerous examples in 'Leading from the emerging future', offers a framework and methodology loaded with immense possibilities to propitiate that new university that our society needs.

ANNEX

THEORY U

"Leading from the emerging future" translates Theory U into an accessible and practical guide for the development of a global citizenship and a new economic and social paradigm. In fact, the book has a second subtitle "applying Theory U to the transformation of business, society and the self".

What is Theory U? Basically, it can be understood from a triple perspective:

"A conceptual framework (1)", a language, to talk about and understand our deepest levels of experience. As such, it introduces the variable "consciousness" in the field of management and social sciences and allows visualizing the transformation processes in all its complexity.

"A methodology (2)", a set of tools, that allows individuals and groups at different scales to operate from deeper levels of consciousness in an effective way and guide the transformation processes along a path that integrates different stages and key moments that allow the highest among all future possibilities to emerge.

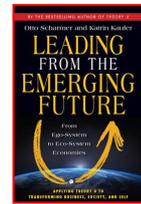
"A phenomenon (3)", a social movement, a way of being, that connects us with the most authentic aspects of our individual and social essence, with the *Source*, and thus act collectively from there.

In summary, we could say that Theory U is *an original approach to understand (1) how we can achieve (2) personal and social transformation as individuals and collectives and deploy the best we can be (3).*

The 'U' refers to or, rather, draws, from a given point and time, a process in which:

- i) we liberate ourselves from and unlearn premises, beliefs, prejudices and past behaviors (*suspension, letting go*),
- ii) we take our attention inwards and towards the deepest part of the being, to find and connect with the source from which the best possible future can emerge (*connection with the whole, 'presencing'*), and
- iii) we begin to "act in an instant" and collectively create that future, experimenting and testing the new ways of being that we have intuited through a joint learning (*crystallization and prototyping*), until we consolidate the process and co-evolve towards a new and better collective reality (*institutionalization and operation from the whole*).

In short, the image of the 'U' portrays the form of a 'journey' that is both linear (in the sense of having a directionality) and re-revolutionary (in the sense of transcending the habitual patterns of thought and action).

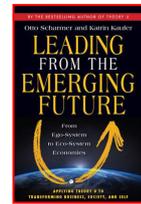


Theory U adopts a systemic perspective that considers four different levels of aggregation of social systems that Otto Scharmer classifies as micro (individual), meso (group), macro (institutional) and world (global). In turn, it considers each of these levels from different stages of consciousness: 1.0 (habitual-traditional awareness, the universe as my mental projection, always operating from the past), 2.0 (ego-systemic awareness, subject-object consciousness, the world as a set of things separated from me), 3.0 (awareness of interest groups, the universe as a set of relationships with which I can connect), and 4.0 (eco-systemic awareness, the universe as a field that feels and it sees itself, and evolves and emerges, through me: I am an instrument, a channel, of transformative changes that transcend me). In this way the so-called "matrix of social evolution" is formed, which combines the levels of social aggregation with the levels of consciousness, giving rise to an evolutionary unfolding for each level of different states of attention and listening, of conversation and collective creativity, of institutional organization, and global social and economic structuring.

PRESENCING PRINCIPLES

These are the 8 principles of 'presencing' with which to foster a new emerging future that updates our highest aspirations and undoes the systemic disconnects:

1. Energy follows attention: therefore, we must raise our attention from what we try to avoid towards what we want to make reality.
2. Follow the three movements of the U: Observe, observe, observe; Retreat and reflect, allow internal knowledge to emerge "how can we become part of the history of the future instead of clinging to the history of the past?"; act in an instant, explore the future by doing.
3. Go to the edges of being, activating three key instruments: **open mind** to suspend old thoughts and habits; **open heart** to empathize and see reality through the eyes of others; **open will** to have the courage to let go and allow the new to emerge.
4. Go through the 'eye of the needle': take away all the 'luggage we carry on our backs' and face the two essential questions of our 'journey': "Who is my **Self** (my most genuine future possibility)?" and "What is my **Work** (vital purpose to which I am called)?"
5. Transform the three enemies: three barriers that prevent us from moving forward, though being aware of the whole process: the **voice of doubt and judgment** (which imprison our open mind); the **voice of cynicism** (which shrinks our open heart); the **voice of fear** (which frightens our open will).
6. Always start by 'paying attention to the crack': be attentive to the fissures and disruptions for which we feel the past fading away and perceive the future wanting to sprout; the future is shown to us earlier in our feelings and in our hands rather than in abstract thoughts; you have to be ready to act and experiment.
7. Create and maintain the necessary holding space to transform the conversation from debate to dialogue and collective creativity: high-level conversations require high-quality containers and spaces that support them.



8. Strengthen the sources of 'presencing' to avoid the destructive dynamics of 'absencing': 'absencing' is the opposite of 'presencing', it is to cling to the idea that there is a single truth and vision instead of operating with a mind open, it is to cling to 'we versus 'them' instead of operating with an open heart, it is to remain frozen within a rigid identity that prevents us from operating with an open will. We call fundamentalists the social systems that work under these three premises of 'absencing'. Social reality continually emerges from the interaction of these two forces: the field of 'presencing' that allows us to co-create from a deep level of humanity and intention, and the field of 'absencing', which, through our points blinded by unconsciousness, it traps us in patterns of destruction and self-destruction.