

The relationship of WisdomThinking® to Scharmer's "Theory U"

We have been asked about this relationship so often that we have jokingly wanted to christen the concern-oriented approach of WisdomThinking® "Theory A". But that would perhaps put it more in parallel than help to differentiate it. Because there are both, similarities and - fundamental - differences, which - without a separate presentation of "Theory U" - shall be briefly outlined here.

What is similar in both approaches is that they try to leave the common mindsets behind and bring in new perspectives. In doing so, they gain orientation from a variety of forces, including those that have an effect but are nevertheless often not accepted because they elude scientific-logical verification but may well be accessible to subjective-intuitive perception. The "Theory U" formalizes the process of perception by the U-progression and at the crucial turning point by the idea of "presencing", i.e. the attempt to perceive a future that is beginning to form.

WisdomThinking® also gives perceptual support through the Navigator, but formalizes less in the process. Thus, there is no "decisive" perception here, the order of perception in the field of action is not a question of correctness but of personal expediency, and overall the user is free to decide how thoroughly and comprehensively he explores the field, not to mention that he is completely free as to which orientation of action he derives from it.

Of the other many differences, only a few are singled out below. Theory U" deals specifically with change, WisdomThinking® with social action in general. The "Theory U" works rather with introspection, even if this is to be directed via Presencing on the open future. Figuratively, "Theory U" tends to go into a pit (the deepest point of the U), while WisdomThinking® tends to stand on its toes to have the whole field in view and to be able to perceive all contextual forces, no matter how visible or invisible they are.

The biggest difference, however, is that "Theory U" is still ultimately a goal-oriented approach that (albeit through "presencing") ultimately defines a desired state that the doer should be "attracted" to. In contrast, WisdomThinking® does exactly without this target state, but lets a rough development direction suffice, which is tried out step by step and only in the course of running through the "experience" of permanent feedback from the context field experiences concretization. WisdomThinking® has - unlike all goal concepts - no difficulties at all with the openness of the process, the processing of the unpredictable, since the way forms anyway only in the going.

In other words: "Theory U" is still looking for the way from (a given) A to (a to be found) B. WisdomThinking®, on the other hand, enables the user to find the appropriate (coherent) Bs for the changing context at any time. Especially for organizations this means that a fundamental flexibility guided by the common organizational concern emerges rather than an endless chaining of change processes. Instead of having to work one's way out of A again and again with a lot of effort and

having to bend the circumstances to B (and then from B to C etc.), WisdomThinking® achieves a sustainable flexibility through the power of the concern, which makes necessary or desired adjustments comparatively easy. Thus WisdomThinking® fits ideally to the high demands on the mutability of an open, complex knowledge economy and society, while "Theory U" ultimately still adheres to the paradigm of stable routine phases, typical for the industrialization phase of the last centuries.

Both approaches ignore the system differentiations of orthodox systems theory, but "Theory U" seems to negate rather than embrace these differences as WisdomThinking® does, which indeed accepts system effects as a kind of relevant effects. According to a critique by S. Kühl, "Theory U" is just a typical management concept in a new guise, trying the impossible to be a panacea for all problems, claiming to change everything and everyone at the same time. This would make it fundamentally different from WisdomThinking®, which does not promise a result, but offers support to find one's own way to pursue a (common) concern.