Slide 1

society for SoL organizational learning

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If you work for a SoL corporate member (Boeing or UTC) and would like web access: please add your name to SoL's mailing list, and then send me an e-mail. We'll change your access to that of a full member, and let your company contact know.

If you are a not a member and would like to join, you can become a Connections member for $125/year. If you sign up before 4/15, you will receive a free copy of the revised edition of *The Fifth Discipline*.

https://www.solonline.org/reflections/register/

Slide 2

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In2In Thinking Conference

April 2, 2006

Learning from and for the Future - What is our next GIANT Leap?

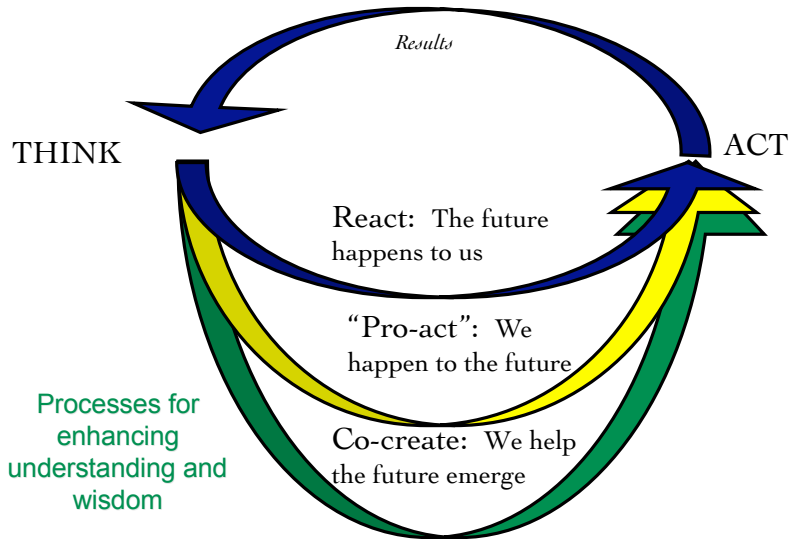*"We are not what we know but what we are willing to learn."*

Mary Catherine Bateson

Agenda

1. Situations that require a fresh perspective and new action
2. A little about me and SoL
3. What is learning from the future?
4. Examples of current action research
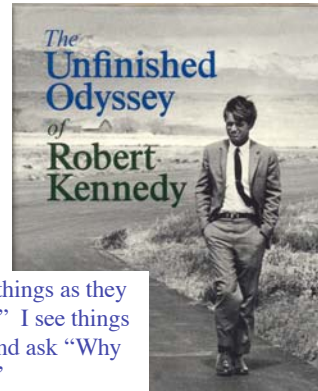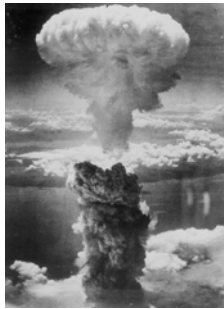5. Practices that integrate past, present and future

Levels of Learning & Change
and our relationship to the future

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Results

THINK

ACT

React: The future happens to us

"Pro-act": We happen to the future

Processes for enhancing understanding and wisdom

Co-create: We help the future emerge

With inspiration from Dana Meadows

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We each have our own inspirations about the power and possibility in learning from the future

The Unfinished Odyssey of Robert Kennedy

"Some people see things as they are and ask "Why?" I see things as they could be and ask "Why not?""
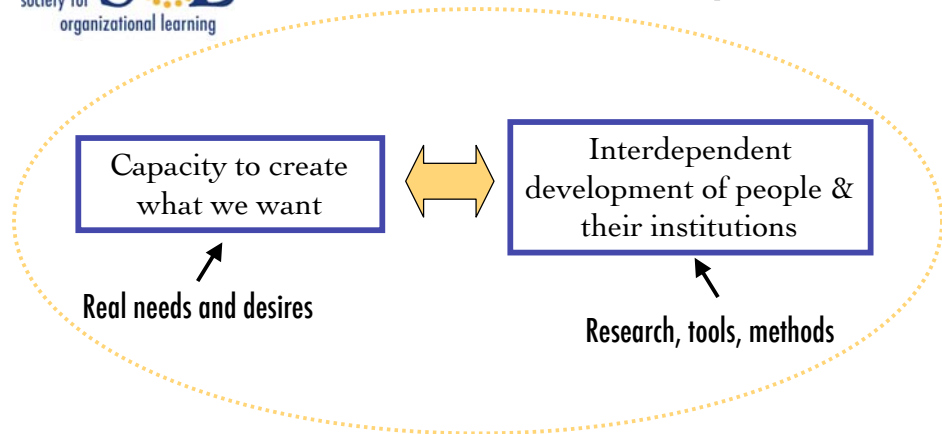
How do we hear the possibility of the future in the present?

What's SoL?

- Former research center at MIT
- Now a not-for-profit member-governed intentional global APPLIED learning community with over 35 projects, interest groups and local communities
- SoL connects corporations and organizations, consultants and researchers to create knowledge about fundamental innovation and change by engaging in collaborative action inquiry projects that generate real business **results**, new **intellectual capital** and on-going personal and professional **networks**.
- To build theory, tools and methods in support of

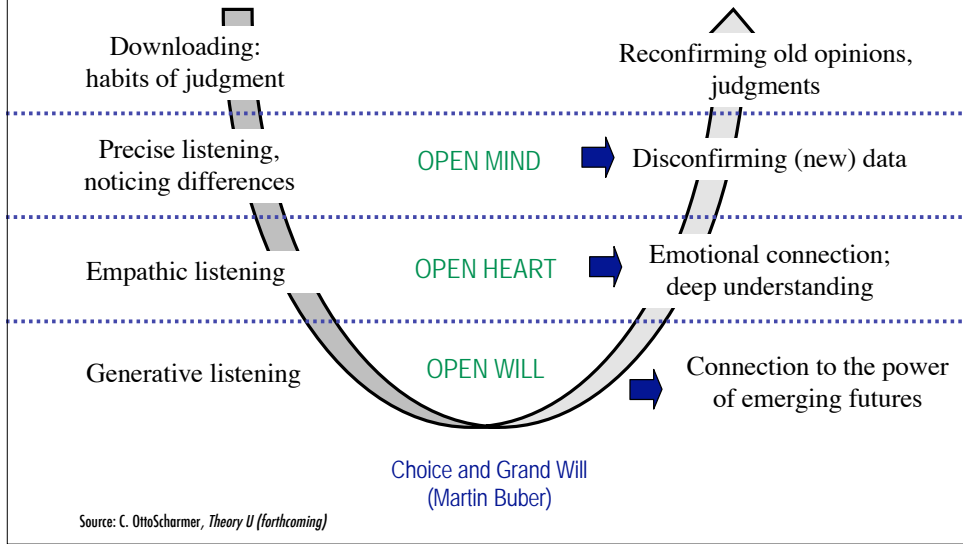 the interdependent development of people, their institutions and society.

Why SoL?

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| Capacity to create what we want | ⟷ | Interdependent development of people & their institutions |

Real needs and desires

Research, tools, methods

To have the "space" to create together that which we cannot create alone.

Our assumptions

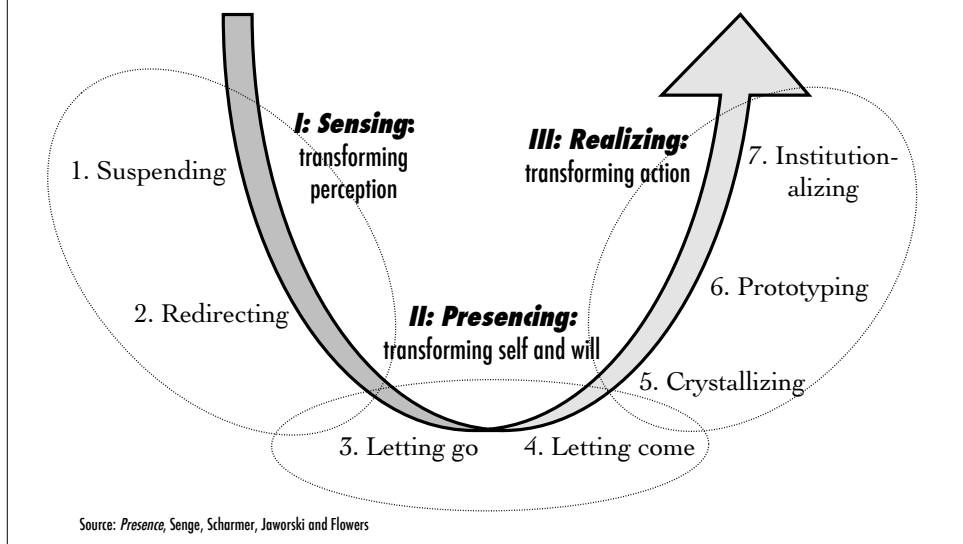**society for SoL organizational learning**

1. Some ways of thinking about things are more powerful than others; action and results are evidence of our thinking. (The "ring of steel" - see Thomas Crum http://www.aikiworks.com)

2. While thinking affects action, action also affects thinking. (Fake it till you make it.)

3. The impact of our thinking and interaction is unprecedented; there are enormous consequences of mindless mistakes. (We need to create safe practice spaces.)

4. We can improve our decisions by improving the quality of our thinking.

Theory U - Three levels of learning

Downloading:
habits of judgment

Precise listening,
noticing differences

OPEN MIND

Empathic listening

OPEN HEART

Generative listening

OPEN WILL

Reconfirming old opinions,
judgments

Disconfirming (new) data

Emotional connection;
deep understanding

Connection to the power
of emerging futures

Choice and Grand Will
(Martin Buber)

Source: C. OttoScharmer, *Theory U (forthcoming)*

**The U-Process:
3 Spaces; 7 Capacities**

I: Sensing:
transforming
perception

III: Realizing:
transforming action

1. Suspending

7. Institution-
alizing

2. Redirecting

II: Presencing:
transforming self and will

6. Prototyping

5. Crystallizing

3. Letting go   4. Letting come

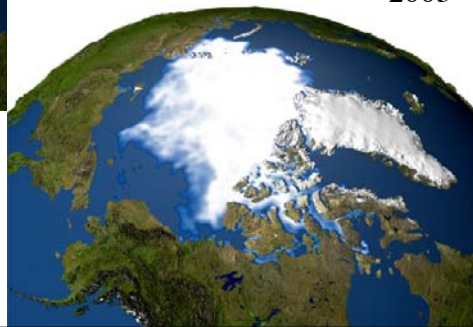Source: *Presence*, Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers

Opportunities for Applying
Theory U - The Physical World

2003

1979

Opportunities for Applying
Theory U - The Social World

- Some 1.1 billion people are either affected by conflicts or at extremely high risk of being so in the foreseeable future. Factors that that influence conflict occurrence are poverty, weak governance, natural resource dependence, youth unemployment, small arms proliferation. The World Bank - Global Economy: Conflict & Development online seminar

- Arms traffickers enjoy impunity as all UN arms embargoes in last decade are 'systematically violated'. *Oxfam Press Release 16 March 2006*

- As the oldest baby-boomers begin retiring in the next several years, the implications for the workforce could be enormous; by 2030, 1 in 5 Americans will be a senior citizen; 70 million people will be over 65 years old. *http://www.longtermcareinsurance.org/*

The Millennium Development Goals -
freeing the entire human race from want
(UN Resolution - September 2000)

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Develop global partnerships for development

Examples of cross-organizational SoL Projects*

- Sustainable development in China
- Cross-sector collaboration for sustainable food supplies
- Intelligent materials pooling for elimination of heavy metals to meet EU end of life product requirements
- Generative dialogue to build democracies (in conjunction with the UNDP)
- Development of a local business leadership community to support shared leadership in addressing regional issues in the Persian Gulf

*There are about 30 local SoL communities or project groups in addition to the founding community.

Examples:
Learning from the Future

1. New views about learning from the past.
    –   Example: "Forward" Action Reviews vs. after action reviews (or post-mortems)
2. Imagining possible futures.
    –   Examples: Scenario Planning, Management Flight Simulators, Generative Dialogue
3. Holding the space for the future to emerge.
    –   Examples: Leadership Laboratories, "improv" and "jazz" as metaphor
4. Conserving/building the network of relationships

Creating together that which we cannot create alone …