

Beyond The Map And The Territory

Relational dynamics, processes of collective transformation, „we-space“ – a comparison of integral maps and the territories that go with them.

By Anne Caspari and Mushin Schilling¹

“AQAL is a map of samsara, a map of the prison, but if you’re going to make a prison break, you need a good map.”²

Despite the many efforts in the last few years around the much vaunted ‘we-space’³, only meager work and reflection has been done in Integral Theory circles on the dynamics of relationships and communities. Much of what does exist concerns integrating social and sociological hypotheses into an overall framework or refining theoretical and meta-theoretical knowledge creation. When it comes to actual phenomenological research into a relatively new phenomenon, though, the field is still wide open. So when we start to connect meta-theory with the practical application of group-dynamic processes and their emergent characteristics to gaining new insight - for “insighting” - and to finding new processes and products - for “prototyping” - things can get really exciting.

Scharmer, Senge, Jaworski and Flowers have already done a wonderful job of describing such collective change processes in groups of different composition, size, and topical direction in their book “Presence” (2004). What they described, and what Scharmer later developed into the U-Process, could be considered a good foundation upon which to map transformative processes, their phases and the different types of resistance that arise in them.

In the autumn of 2013, Anne Caspari, had an in-depth conversation with Ken Wilber on the insights gained from her extensive work comparing and overlaying the AQAL and U-Process maps, including their basic phenomenology⁴. The discussion ranged from phase- and pattern-recognition in transformative processes to mapping resistance to change and methods for correcting it. It also touched on the fallacies that users and participants of these processes frequently fall into, and the fallacious application of methodology. Wilber was especially interested in the newest research conducted by the co-authors of this article with Bonnitta Roy, in the framework of the Alderlore Insight Center⁵, about collective processes and their emergent

¹ Translated by Mushin from the article in the *Integrale Perspektiven* issue June 2014: *Beziehungsdynamiken, kollektive Transformationsprozesse, „we-space“, - ein Vergleich integraler Landkarten und der dazugehörigen Territorien.*

² Ken Wilber: *The Integral Operating System, Version 1.0, Sounds True, 2005, "Going Further" with Ken Wilber.* Disc 2)

³ For instance the work of Andrew Venezia, Dustin DiPerna, Thomas Hübl, Terry Patten.

⁴ Conference call with Ken Wilber can be downloaded at www.mindshift-integral.com; see also <http://mindshiftintegral.wordpress.com/mapping-transformational-processes>.

⁵ <http://alderloreinsightcenter.com/2014/>

process-like, dynamic U (lying on its side) onto the AQAL 4-quadrant map. Think, for instance, of an individual change process where the person disidentifies from an unwanted behavior (situated at the top right) by doing shadow-work (happening top left); the change of behavior will again show up as illustrated in the graph (red arrows).

The fat green arrow depicts the resultant sum of all the individual change processes as a collective U.

Superimposed against the AQAL 4 quadrants in this way, the transformative practice of the U-Process leads to two predictions:

1. Systems change:
If these U-Shifts (red arrows) are deliberately and consistently practiced by many members of a collective (a group, an organization), a culture arises that changes the system in consequence.
2. Vertical development:
The accumulating transformative moments of shadow-work and the integration of dissociated aspects of the personae of participants in this process foster a vertical development to later action logics.

Superimposing these two maps in this way also matches the predictions by Wilber et al about societal change⁸ and general ideas in integral circles, where extrapolations from the individual to communities and relationships are the norm. The “We” (bottom left) is regarded as a more or less ordered heap of individuals and their culture.

Practices and methods of facilitation, and ways of participating

During our action research of *Collective Insighting* in Alderlore in November 2013 - a process that can be described using the U-Theory - there was neither facilitation nor moderation nor any other form of process direction in any traditional sense. This was an integral part of the design of the action research. Consequently, it became crystal clear that even integral priming⁹ from the developmental level called Turquoise (Cook-Greuter’s equivalent is construct-aware), which was attempted by some participants, interfered with any real emergence. We will go into why this is later. Because there was enough diversity in the room, and thus enough people refusing to anticipate a result by priming for it, facilitation attempts like these simply stretched the duration of the authentic chaos phase (a term from the Alderlore Interpretation designating a phase similar, but not identical to the Deep Dive phase of U-Theory). *Collective Insighting as a wholly natural process seems to reject any form of priming.*

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQtUhEOYNQU>

⁹ *priming: in this context explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious directing of a process towards a result by words, ritual, exercise or other method.*

Phases of process, states of consciousness, relational dynamics

Politeness is at once a boon for civilization and a loss for the individual, unique expression of human beings. From such polite beginnings, Collective Insighting moves into authentic chaos relatively quickly, certainly once participants in a diverse group start to express themselves authentically. Blind spots are uncovered. Shadows become visible. That hurts, sometimes deeply, regardless of a participant's developmental stage¹⁰. Within this slowly deepening chaos, all the strategies and tactics so often used to 'come to grips with the situation' and lead to a desired result are unmasked. In this process, every such manoeuvre only leads deeper into authentic chaos. This phase is experienced as painful by all participants – which obviously explains why people try to wriggle out of it by such means.

At a certain point, that can be foretold by none, all attempts at priming, facilitating or directing the process are “burned out.” It becomes obvious that one cannot make emergence happen. Eventually, all participants give up trying to direct the process. The pain disappears and a sense of peaceful “capitulation” settles upon all. Emptiness. Silence. Nothing goes.

It could be concluded that the minimal elegant structure in this process is simply that of resisting the temptation - in critical phases or otherwise - to intervene to balance, lead, integrate or catalyze. Legitimate interventions do happen, but when they do, they are self-organizing, aware, arising from the process itself, not out of knowledge, reflection or a meta-perspective. If it is truly understood that this process has no “outside”, it becomes apparent that any suggestion or facilitation from an imaginary outside can only lead to a paradox à la Watzlawick, “Be spontaneous! Come from source! Stay in the causal! Find deeper meaning!” This is also one of our main critiques of those U-processes where the attempt is made to force emergence through priming and facilitation, and to create tool kits for this purpose.

The silence, which may at first feel gloomy and born of failure, gives way to a growing clarity. In the Alderlore interpretation, we call this state *sensory clarity*. It does not obliterate individuality, but the persona (often mistakenly called ego) certainly steps back. We have arrived at the bottom of the U. A state of encompassing psychological and spiritual well-being spreads among all. Individuality is clearly present but its boundaries are no longer experienced: we-being, we-fullness, we-space - this experience has led to a number of terms centered around “we”.

The phenomenon that we are calling sensory clarity does not correspond to the “causal”¹¹ state of consciousness that Scharmer describes as awaiting us at the bottom of the U. We take this to be a simply confusion of state-qualities. It is probably easy to mistake this clarity for the causal state because it is so rarely achieved that it seems extraordinary and deeply spiritual. So when authentic chaos has removed all filters, masks and manoeuvres, what remains is simple,

¹⁰ *The capacity of participants to handle this, as with all aspects of this process, is also dependent on the developmental stage of the individual; these capacities must be trained and practiced, regardless of one's level of development.*

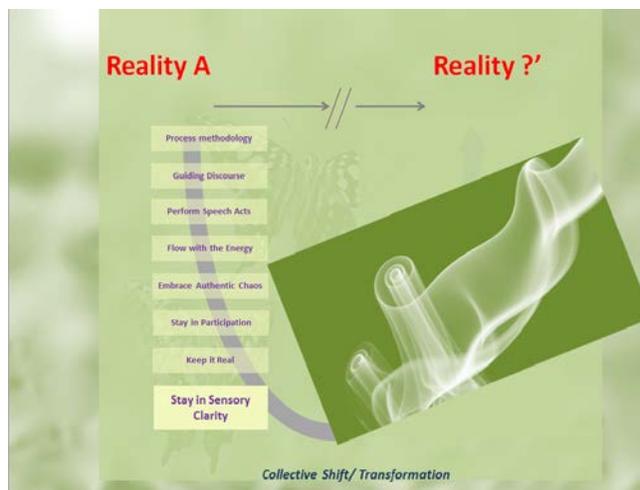
¹¹ *For another description of the states at the bottom of the U by another author of “Presencing” (the book about the original research that Scharmer later formed into his Theory U) see: Jaworski, J. (2013): Source.*

natural, sensory clarity. Erroneously labeling this causal consciousness arguably makes real emergence at the bottom of the U impossible, robbing the process of possible insights that would be *really* new, in the sense that they have never before been possible¹². The causal is, after all, an Integral definition, “what has always been there” and a step towards timeless and changeless non-dual consciousness. Due to all the Integral literature on gross, subtle and causal phenomena, this interpretation calls the attention towards the state-qualities, whereas interpreting it as *sensory clarity* directs the attention towards what comes up presently and emerges in clarity.

The beginning of an emergent new quality of consciousness in a collective

In our research, sensory clarity was revealed as the first phase in a encompassing unfolding that we have been and continue working on through the Alderlore Interpretation, in an ongoing dialogue with other pioneers of the process.

If the group of action researchers can, seeing what appears in real-time, remain in this clarity and let possible contradictions, strangenesses, apparent paradoxes, etc. “be whatever they are”, then a next phase of clarity can unfold that we call *subtle energy/ emotional clarity*. This alludes to the participants’ capacity to also “see clearly” in these dimensions. If the group is diverse enough - meaning that it encompasses several cultures - then as a next stage *cultural / identity / intersubjective clarity* can unfold. In this clarity, finally, it is also possible for what we call *conceptual clarity* to become emerge. It is the co-authors’ conviction that what we are now calling the Alderlore Interpretation emerged from the latter clarity after having, together with Bonnitta Roy, sought to understand and model this process into a process view that would not prime further action research but would, rather, be a minimal elegant structure that could foster further investigation and collaboration among the pioneers of this process.



In conclusion, we believe that what emerges¹³ in a real collective U-Process that *includes* authentic chaos cannot be predicted or foreseen, but it is nevertheless clearly recognizable by all. We are clearly able to recognize this way of being, just as we can recognize light or darkness, regardless of our level of development. Conversely, the *interpretation* of what emerges in the collectively experienced lucidity, and what an individual does with that, does indeed depend on their personal and collective development. Since, in our

¹² (causal/non dual bliss out vs body mind drop)

¹³ *Emergencez* (latin, *emergere* for „appearing“, „arising“ or „rising out of“) is the spontaneous coming into being of new characteristics or structures of a system out of the interplay of its elements.

view, the capacity to allow for authentic chaos grows with every developmental stage, it may be that in earlier stages priming and facilitation are inevitable; further action research will be needed to determine if this is actually so. On the other hand it seems to us that several other interpretations of this process have been much too quick to develop means and methods to constrain and restrict authentic chaos, for the purpose of reliably creating a predictable and wonderful we-feeling of some spiritual depth. In contrast, the Alderlore interpretation holds the intention of allowing the collective to experience the clarities described above, and finding or creating something really novel to move towards, a real next step. If there is enough maturity to allow this process to unfold in its entirety, then we will strongly suspect that we shall see that this is a next evolutionary stage of self-organization in a collective.