

U-Lab: Creating Mindful Multi-sector Leadership and Innovation Capacities
For A Sustainable, Just, and Resilient Society

A proposal for an innovation platform that links leaders across cultures,
generations, and sectors: government, business, civil society

DRAFT 1.2 – NOT FOR CIRCULATION

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Executive Summary

We can expect the intensity of climate change and emerging conflicts around food and water to increase over the next decade or two. New leadership capacities on local and global levels are urgently needed that move beyond “quick fixes,” and address the fundamental root issues of the challenges. This is the time for more systemic, cross-institutional, innovations which include all the relevant interest groups, even those that are not yet organized (such as future generations and children).

This proposal suggests creating a shared cross-institutional learning and leadership platform—and a network of places—that allows for learning and capacity-building across institutional boundaries while including awareness and self-knowledge. We are calling this innovation and leadership platform U-Lab because it is grounded in the **U** learning methodology, which blends state-of-the-art systems’ thinking and participatory innovation methods with a journey of becoming aware and self-knowledge.¹

U-Lab helps leaders and change-makers in all sectors of society to collaborate across institutional boundaries and to co-create innovation ecosystems. U-Lab aims at creating a globally networked and regionally grounded innovation ecology that consistently generates the following seven types of outcomes:

1. Vibrant Living Prototypes
2. Leadership Capacity Building
3. Cross-Institutional Platforms for Innovation
4. Knowledge Products
5. Action Research PhD’s
6. Reinventing the 21st -Century Government and B-School
7. Core Group of Reflective Practitioners and Thought Leaders

By addressing key societal challenges of our time, this innovation ecology focuses on the areas of health, education, sustainability, agriculture, and banking and contributes to reaching the next stage of our global societal evolution and journey.

In addition to climate change and energy and water shortages, we face financial and educational crises, lack of health services, social exclusion and massive “unforeseeable” disruptive events such as 9/11 or Fukushima. All our societal institutions face fundamental challenges. We can expect the intensity of climate change and emerging conflicts around food and water to increase over the next decade or two. New leadership capacities on local and global levels are urgently needed. Coming changes will require that the current and the next generation of leaders must be ready to respond in ways that don’t offer just more “quick fixes,” but instead, use the crises for facilitating transformational change.

When we look at the banking crisis, for example, we realize the systemic roots of the problem have not been addressed. The issue of banks that are “too big to fail” keeps regenerating the same problems. Today’s institutions and their leaders only have limited capacities to do what is most needed: identify the *systemic root issues* and problems that underlie the crises, sense and create effective collective responses, and then translate them into institutional innovations throughout the entire system.

This interconnected set of challenges cries out for new global strategies. We need to bring together leaders from developed, emerging and also non-industrialized countries to collectively address the most pressing challenges of our time. The capacity of systems thinking, of cooperation and innovation in our various complex, turbulent, networked systems is more important now than it ever was. This is the time for more systemic, cross-institutional, innovations, which include all the relevant interest groups, even those that are not yet organized (such as future generations and children).

Despite its importance for the future of our children, our society, and our planet, there currently is *no place* dedicated to creating cross-sector collective leadership capacity. It doesn’t exist in our institutions of higher education, which are fragmented into academic disciplines. And it doesn’t exist in organizational training or leadership development programs, which are often narrowly focused on single organizations or sectors, or only on individuals.

The Blind Spot

What would it take to address this significant institutional blind spot and to enable leaders to respond to the challenges of our time in a collective and innovative way?

We believe that building new leadership capacities requires us to *broaden* the conventional concept of leadership (to include all change makers in a system, not just the team at the top) and to *deepen* leadership (to incorporate the qualities of *attention* and *intention*, not just behaviors, processes, and skills).

The following Leadership Learning Matrix (Table 1) describes nine spaces of leadership

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and learning. They are defined by three types of knowledge (technical knowledge, relational knowledge, transformational self-knowledge), and by three levels on which an intervention in a system can occur: (individual, institutional, systemic). Most current leadership learning focuses on the first row (technical knowledge) and the first column (the individual).

Table 1: The Leadership Learning Matrix

	Intervention Points		
Types of Knowledge	Individual	Institutional	Whole System
Technical knowledge (technical skills)	Individual skill building/training	Institutional skill building/training in organizations	System-wide skill building/training in the context of the whole system
Relational knowledge (stakeholder management)	Individual capacity of communication and dialogue (multi-stakeholder dialogue)	Institutional capacity of communication and dialogue	System-wide capacity of communication and dialogue
Transformational self-knowledge (identity, will)	Individual leadership capacity building of transformation and innovation	Institutional capacity building transformation and innovation	System-wide capacity building transformation and innovation

About 85% of all leadership and learning activities today set their focus on the first level (technical knowledge) and/or the first column (individual skills), and miss the real problem. The number one bottleneck in all deeper systems' change efforts—in health, education, sustainability, business, and government—concerns the relational and transformational capacity-building that connects the self to the context of their entire system (the bottom right cell in the matrix). That's the blind spot in our current institutional design.

This proposal addresses this serious oversight by creating a shared cross-institutional learning and leadership platform—and network of places—that allows for learning and capacity-building across institutional boundaries while including awareness and transformative self-knowledge. We are calling this innovation and leadership platform *U-Lab* because it is grounded in the **U** learning methodology, which blends state-of-the-art systems' thinking and participatory innovation methods with a journey of becoming aware and self-knowledge. Based on our experience with leadership challenges across sectors and cultures, we conclude that awareness and self-knowledge may be the most important leverage point of 21st-century leadership. U-Lab will invite its participants to bring the whole context in which they operate, and their whole awareness and self, into the lab and its leadership journey.

Purpose

U-Lab helps leaders and change-makers in all sectors of society to collaborate and innovate across institutional boundaries in order to pioneer profound innovation and systems' change. By addressing key societal challenges of our time, diverse groups of change makers and leaders co-create prototypes that become part of a globally networked and regionally grounded innovation ecology; it focuses on the areas of health, education, sustainability, agriculture, and banking that contribute to reaching the next stage of our societal evolution and journey.

Principles and Practices

Einstein's dictum that "problems cannot be solved at the same level of thought that created them," describes the point of departure for U-Lab. *Our biggest leadership and innovation challenges cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them.*

All U-Lab programs, projects, and platforms will be grounded in the following set of core principles and practices:

1. **Co-initiating:** Engage the *whole system* by convening key stakeholders across sectors to form a microcosm that mirrors the complexity of the whole.
2. **Co-sensing:** Break down the boundaries between individuals and institutions by going on deep *co-sensing journeys* that facilitate seeing situations from the edges of the system (e.g., from the view of the most marginalized). Then use *systems thinking* to create a shared understanding of the whole.
3. **Presencing:** Retreat and reflect, go to a place of stillness that allows the inner knowing to emerge. Connect with the deeper *sources of authenticity* and

leadership by addressing the two root questions of creativity: Who is my Self?
What is my Work?

4. **Co-creating:** Explore the future by prototyping—by linking head, heart, and hand—and by quickly learning from the feedback that the prototypes generate from the stakeholders.
5. **Co-evolving:** Sustain and scale the new throughout a system by connecting with the larger field of change makers and leaders and by sensing and operating from the whole.
6. **Blending Action Science, Systems Thinking, and Mindfulness.** The research program will blend prototyping-based action research with Systems Thinking (understanding the dynamics of the whole system), Systems Sensing (experiencing the system from the edges), Deep Structure Mapping (through the diagnostic use of social presencing theatre practices), and mindfulness, each of which brings a deeper level of understanding to the surface and into the awareness of the participants.
7. **Collective Intelligence:** Cultivating all intelligences, the *Open Mind* (IQ), the *Open Heart* (EQ: Emotional Intelligence), and the *Open Will* (SQ: Self-knowledge) in order to unlock the deeper resources of collective creativity.
8. **Power of Place:** Innovation happens in places. Places and their physical, social, mental, intentional, and awareness-based context are powerful enablers of both individual and collective creativity. Hence, U-Lab will leverage and interweave two types of communities: *Web* enabled communities of practice and intentionally designed *place*-based communities of practice.
9. **Power of Intention:** The power of intention is the ultimate experience of all entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs, and creators on this planet. It's the idea behind the statement: "Five people can change the world." Unlocking the dormant power of intention both in individuals but also in globally networked communities, is part of the core curriculum of any U-Lab offering.
10. Using **Open Source** and the **Creative Commons**, U-Lab will continue to put its core technologies into a creative commons license that facilitates its rapid replication in projects, organizations, and communities worldwide. By 2020, we envision U-Lab will have roots and collaborative communities in eight world regions, and involve networks of about 50-100 million individuals.

Outcomes

U-Lab innovation ecosystem of change makers, thought leaders, and institutions will effect the following seven types of outcomes:

1. Vibrant Living Prototypes: Each wave of U-Lab graduates will generate another set of prototype initiatives that test, advance, and evolve new forms of collaborative innovations across institutions, systems, and sector boundaries. Many of these prototypes have already taken on a life of their own in the form of new ventures, platforms, policies, and humming social networks that will continue to have a deep social impact many years down the road.²

2. Leadership Capacity Building: U-Lab will build individual and collective leadership and innovation capacity among the thousands of participants in its online and on-site capacity-building programs: foundation programs, online programs, masterclasses, and ELIAS-type high-potential programs.

3. Cross-Institutional Platforms for Innovation: U-Lab will co-create platforms for cross-institutional learning and cross-sector innovation around its five focus areas: health, learning, sustainability, innovations in democracy, and banking.

4. Knowledge Products: U-Lab will hold roundtable discussions and be the locus of thought leadership on the systems innovations necessary to bring about the next stage in the evolution of the economy and society (society 4.0). It will produce books, articles, films, videos, and papers, as well as support a website and a vibrant global social network.

5. Action Research PhD's: It is expected that twenty-four to fifty U-Lab students will earn a PhD in the lab's first five years of operation. A small number of additional students will be admitted each year so that there is a continuous stream of future leaders, scholars, and educators graduating.

6. Reinventing the 21st-Century Government and B-School: through a strategic partnership with the World Business School Council for Sustainable Business³, a platform of twenty leading global business schools, U-Lab will leverage and scale its innovations in education in order to collaboratively reinvent the 21st-century business school (a similar partnership could be developed with a global alliance of leading schools of government).

7. Core Group of Reflective Practitioners and Thought Leaders: A core group of master practitioners and global thought leaders that is dedicated to hold and cultivate the space for all of the above to happen, will be sustained, and scaled across systems, sectors and cultures.

Platform for systemic leadership capacity building and institutional innovation

U-Lab will be a collaborative platform for systemic and awareness-based leadership capacity-building in order to create profound societal innovation that is supported by institutional partners from government, business, and civil society and by a global web of reflective practitioners and change makers. Together, its contributors will provide thought leadership on how to advance our economic, democratic, and educational institutions in ways that create well-being for all. The currently existing institutional nodes are both virtual (including a 5,000-person global online community of practice) and physical (including institutional nodes of activity in the US, Europe, Brazil, Indonesia, Philippines, South Africa, Namibia, and China).

The Presencing Institute (as a precursor of U-Lab) already offers courses and programs, global on-line and in person networks, a global ecology of multi-sector initiatives, and a global web of institutional partnerships. An action research PhD program in collaboration with Witten/Herdecke University (and other universities) will be launched in 2012. Over the next five years, U-Lab will expand its network and degree programs and build new hubs in Europe, the US, Brazil, Asia (China, Indonesia), and Africa (North Africa, South Africa).

To create these cross-institutional innovation hubs in society—a place that nurtures and builds transformative leadership capacity—different levels and mechanisms of engagement will be required. Each has been successfully prototyped at varying scales through MIT and the Presencing Institute, but they have not yet been combined in a single integrated and intentional design (see figure 1).

The following eight building blocks create the evolving learning architecture of U-Lab:

1. Executive Champions Circle (ECC): The ECC blends a high quality learning environment for executives with the function of an executive steering group that provides intention and guidance for the overall direction of U-Lab activities. The ECC consists of senior executive leaders from key government, business, nonprofit, media, and academic institutions with a shared intention to bring about change. Together they consider how to build the leadership capacity required to make systemic change happen, and what specific innovation challenges U-Lab should be organized around. (One to two meetings a year)

2. Emerging Leaders Innovate Across Sectors (ELIAS): This existing MIT and Presencing Institute program brings together strategic constellations of high-potential leaders across sectors who need each other in order to transform their systems. While staying in their “day jobs,” these leaders meet five times over nine months, going on a journey of simultaneous system- and self-discovery designed to transform their relationships within their contexts—with each other and with themselves. They develop high-impact prototype initiatives for advancing and transforming the systems in which their

institutions operate. (four to five modules over nine months)

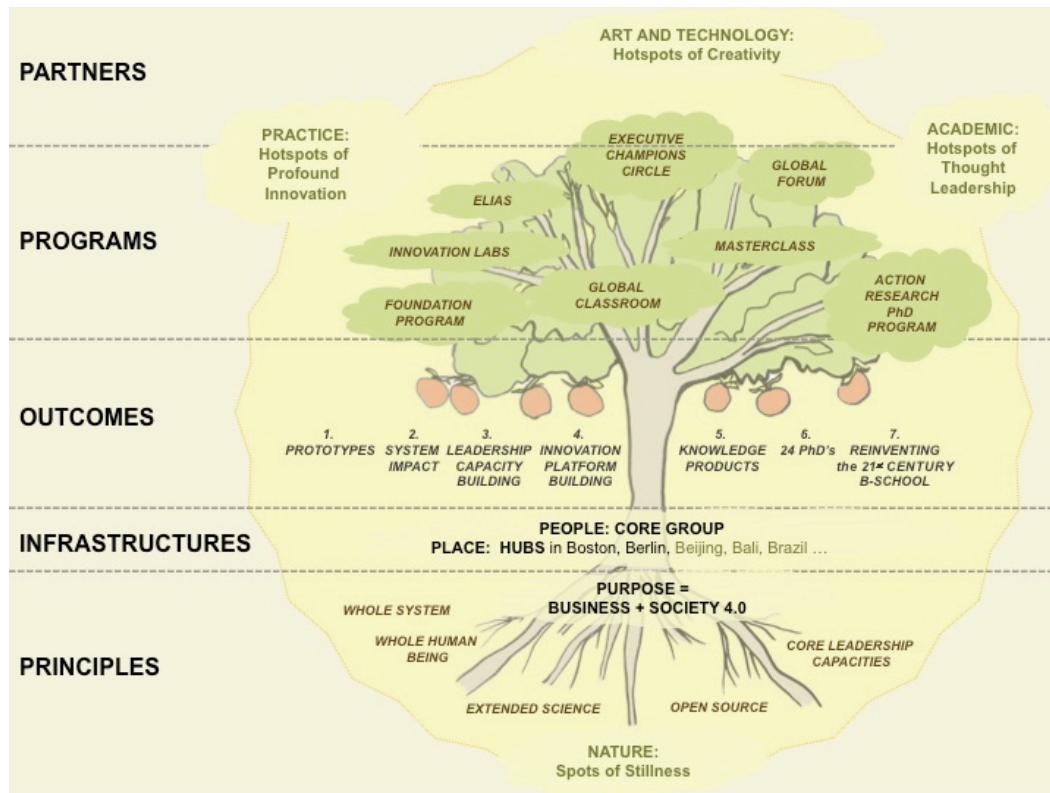


Figure 1: U-Lab -- Many Elements, One System

3. Innovation Labs: These focused multi-stakeholder innovation labs convene young institutional leaders and young business and social entrepreneurs in order to invent and test new approaches to systems’ innovation and leadership capacity-building. The Innovation Labs function as an interface between ELIAS prototype initiatives and creative young entrepreneurs and students, particularly in communities at the margins of society. (four to five modules a year)

4. Presencing Foundation Program: This introductory presencing program on “Leading Profound Innovation and Change” convenes leaders across all sectors and societal systems and takes them on a four-day experiential workshop journey that focuses on reaching a deeper understanding of systems and the self—and on the practical methods and tools that we can use to co-sense and co-create the future that wants to emerge. (Ninety participants; currently delivered in the US, South Africa, Asia, and Europe)

5. Global Classroom: The Global Classroom offers high-impact, low-cost capacity-building programs that help to scale profound innovation and change methodologies across institutions and larger systems.⁴ With the help of a live-video stream, participants join presentations, and connect via skype in small groups. They also practice tools and processes in their specific context. Current programs: Presencing Global Classroom is a

four-week introductory program which includes small learning groups, personal reflection practices, tool applications in one's local context. Led by Otto Scharmer, with an introduction to Process Consultation led by Ed Schein, The Global Classroom will continue to broaden and deepen its suite of offerings.

6. Presencing Masterclass: Advanced practitioners meet to build and advance the delivery capacity for large-scale innovation and change interventions (consulting and capacity-building mechanisms). The Masterclass is a two-year program that includes monthly coaching sessions and every six months an in-person four-day meeting with the entire global group. The first module of the Masterclass was held in Fall 2010 in Boston with seventy-five participants from twenty-five countries. The final module of this first Masterclass will be held in Berlin, Germany, in summer of 2012.⁵

7. Action Research PhD Program: This program will be launched in 2012 by a network of closely collaborating academic and research institutions, supported by the U-Lab (or the Presencing Institute) Europe and hosted by Germany's Witten/Herdecke University. The program will educate the next generation of faculty members in using U-Lab principles in hands-on multi-stakeholder learning contexts, both locally and globally. U-Lab will support this program through semi-annual research retreats for action researchers. The research retreats will be held in both initial locations of U-Lab (Cambridge, Massachusetts, at MIT, and Berlin, Germany, at the European hub of the U-Lab). The aim is to build an initial cohort of two dozen or so PhD students from half a dozen universities to collectively create a first-class environment dedicated to awareness-based global action research.

8. Presencing Global Forum: At this annual summit of social entrepreneurs and change initiatives, professionals working in different systems will meet to talk about their own change experiences, reflect on what they have learned, and connect the dots between major change initiatives and change makers across sectors, countries, and cultures. The 1st Global Forum will take place Oct. 24–25, 2011, in Boston. The 2nd Global Forum will be held in Berlin in June 2012 at the launch of the U-Lab Europe. The 3rd Global Forum could be held in Beijing or Bali in 2013. The 4th Global Forum could be held in Brazil in 2014. Between these Global Forum meetings the global community of practice will continue to be linked through the virtual mechanisms that U-Lab and the Presencing Institute platforms provide.

Faculty

The initial core faculty will work as a community of learning. The core group will comprise global thought leaders and world-class practitioner-scholars, action researchers, and strategic partners whose work has taken them to the hotspots of innovation and change around the world. Faculty will include Brian Arthur, Marshall Ganz, Dan Goleman, Arawana Hayashi, Beth Jandernoa, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Martin Kalungu-

Banda, Bob Kegan, Nicanor Perlas, Otto Scharmer, Ed Schein, Peter Senge, Tania Singer, Phil Thompson, Meg Wheatley, and Arthur Zajonc. A small faculty core group that has made U-Lab their primary professional commitment will lead the effort.

Methodology

All of these types of engagement (and elements of U-Lab) will take place in innovative learning environments that use, among other techniques, awareness-based social leadership technologies. These include among others presencing, social presencing theatre, process consultation, systems thinking, dialogue, emotional intelligence, the world café, dialogue, mindfulness, reflective writing (journaling), and appreciative inquiry.

Each program or intervention will be grounded by a curriculum that focuses on developing the core leadership capacities of 21st-century change makers as well as—to the degree required—practical skills, creative methods, and conceptual knowledge (in, e.g., ecosystem sciences, cognitive sciences, integral health, social business entrepreneurship, participatory planning and government, new media, emerging technologies, macro history, philosophy, and mindfulness).

Partners, Sponsors, Supporters

Except for the PhD program, all of the other critical elements of U-Lab have been prototyped over the past decade, many of them at MIT, which serves as the launching pad for simultaneous replication and adaptation of the model around the world. By bringing all of the parts together, U-Lab will strengthen this already burgeoning global network of innovation hotspots and institutional partners. Below is a selected list of existing and potential partners:

Universities and research institutes: Witten/Herdecke University (Germany); MIT Community Innovators Lab; MIT Leadership Center; Harvard Kennedy School of Government; Harvard Ed School; CBS (Copenhagen Business School); Shanghai Jiaotong University; University of Indonesia; Fundacion Getulio Vargas (Sao Paulo); University of Cape Town; Vienna University of Economics and Business; Wuppertal Institute (Germany); World Business School Council for Sustainable Business (WBSCSB)

Foundations: Breuninger Stiftung (Germany); Software Stiftung (Germany); Pohlmann Stiftung (Germany); Iona Stichting (Netherlands); Knight Foundation (USA); Nathan Cummings Foundation (USA)

Governments and multilateral institutions: GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation), EU Commission, Ministry of Education, Austria; Ministry of Trade, Indonesia; Ministry of Health and Social Services, Namibia; Ministry of Health, USA; The World Bank; UNICEF; UNEP; UNDP

Cities: Aarhus (Denmark); Emerald Cities Coalition (USA); Curitiba (Brazil)

Companies: GLS Bank; BASF; Eileen Fisher; Green Mountain Coffee; IDEO; Natura; The Global Alliance for Banking on Values; Triodos Bank; Seventh Generation; Shell; Unilever

NGOs: CDI (Brazil); Oxfam; IFRC (International Federation of the Red Cross); SEIU (Service Employees International Union); Synergos; SoL (Society for Organizational Learning, Cambridge, MA); UID (United In Diversity, Indonesia); WWF (World Wildlife Fund)

Multi-sector initiatives: The FoodLab; Coral Triangle Initiative; African Public Health Initiative; The World Economic Forum

Publishing: SAGE Publications

Partnership Levels

Value Proposition (to partners and sponsors):

1. Access to a global web of thought leaders and a collaborative action research think tank that work together to co-create profound innovation and change
2. Privileged access to the whole range of research output and tools
3. Privileged access to selected capacity-building offerings
4. A seat at the table to co-shape the emerging research agenda of U-Lab

U-Lab will partner with institutions from all three sectors of society on three levels: as Global Partners (the highest level of commitment and co-creation), as Regional Partners (a mid-level of commitment and participation), and as Local Partners (a low level of commitment and participation). A fourth membership category, Individual Partners, will offer individuals access to selected community resources and events.

Benefits to Global Partners

- Access to all community and capacity-building events worldwide.
- A seat at the table in determining the strategic direction of U-Lab's social enterprise.
- Customized support from U-Lab in leveraging U-Lab methods and tools throughout the partner's organization

Benefits to Regional Partners

- Access to all community and capacity-building events in the region.
- A seat at the table in determining the strategic direction of U-Lab's social enterprise in the region.
- Some customized coaching support from U-Lab in leveraging U-Lab methods and tools throughout the partner's organization.

Benefits to Local Partners

- Access to all community and capacity-building events in the region.

Benefits to Individual Partners

- Access to selected community and capacity-building events in the region.

Infrastructure

U-Lab US

Chair

Research Director

Executive Director

Project Manager

Community Host

General Manager

Coaches for doctoral students

Academic partners and supervisors for doctoral students

Additional Resources

Stipends for doctoral students

Travel and field research budget

Semi-annual research seminar funds

Conferences, knowledge products

Infrastructure

Academic Partner Network

Distributed academic network and capacity-building system (distributed modules on methods and tools, taught in Berlin, Boston, etc.)

Space

A global web of highly creative and inspiring spaces that accommodate the core team and all key events—with initial hubs in Berlin and Boston (and additional future hubs in Beijing, Bali, Brazil, Cairo, and Cape Town/Joburg).

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Access to large, inspiring first-rate meeting space already exists (Berlin: Helga Breuninger, Breuninger Stiftung; Bali: an excellent campus has been offered at very low cost).

U-Lab Europe

Chair

Research Director

Executive Director

Community Host and Creative Director

Project Manager

Academic Director for doctoral students

Coaches and Consultants for doctoral students and interventions

Academic Partners and Supervisors for doctoral students

Projected Timeline

2011

Over the course of 2011: conversations with possible U-Lab partners.

April 1: initial version of Project Proposal completed

April 11–12: Strategy retreat with a consortium of green global business schools (WBSCSB)

Summer: Development of an implementation plan together with founding partners of U-Lab. Decision of implementation strategy by Fall 11.

Oct. 24–25: First public presentation and conversation about the proposed U-Lab at 1st Presencing Global Forum in Boston

Fall/Winter: Strategy retreat with key partners/core group to plan the structure and launch of U-Lab in 2012

2012

June: Launch of U-Lab / Presencing Institute Europe in Berlin
Final Global Masterclass Module of Class 1 (in Berlin)
2nd Presencing Global Forum (in Berlin)

June/July: 2nd European Presencing Foundation Program (Berlin)

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Fall: Launch of Global Action Research Ph.D. Program (Module 1: Boston)
Launch of Class 2 of Presencing Masterclass (Module 1: Boston)

2013

Spring: Module 2 Global Action Research Ph.D. Program (Berlin, Witten/Herdecke)
Module 2: Presencing Global Masterclass (Berlin)

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¹ Scharmer, C. Otto (2009). Theory U: Leading from the Emerging Future As It Emerges. The Social Technology of Presencing, S.F., CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Senge, P., C. O. Scharmer, J. Jaworski, and B. S. Flowers. (2004). Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future, Cambridge, MA: SoL Press.

² The 2006–07 MIT ELIAS program, for example, resulted in the creation of several new ventures, as well as innovations in participatory governmental policymaking (in Indonesia) and in cross-sector leadership programs in five countries to date (South Africa, Indonesia, Philippines, Namibia, Holland). The U-Lab prototypes will focus on innovation and leadership in: Health, Education/learning, Agriculture/sustainable business/climate change, Participatory democracy/community development, Banking/finance

³ <http://www.wbscsb.com/>

⁴ See <http://presencing.com/capacitybuilding/globalclassroom.shtml>

⁵ See <http://www.presencing.com/fst/>