

Managing Organizational Change

Process, Social Construction and
Dialogue

Second Edition

Lecture Notes Chapter 5

5

CONSTRUCTING CHANGE THROUGH THE FIELD CONCEPT

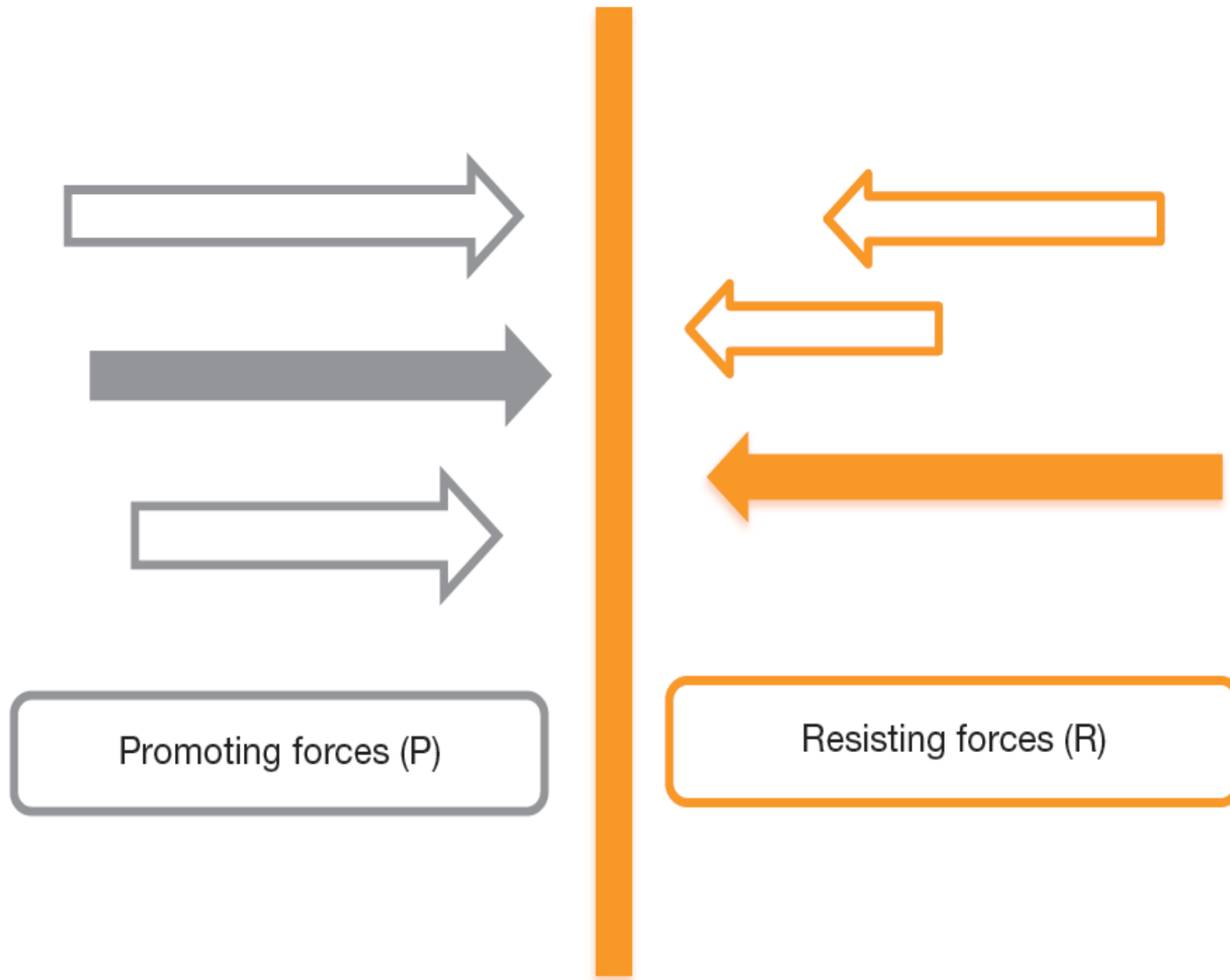
Learning objectives

By the time you have completed your study of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Elaborate on the work of Kurt Lewin.
- Define the role of force-field analysis in managing change.
- Highlight the role of forces in the social construction of change.
- Explain the role of action research in managing change.

Force-field involves people working individually or collectively to engage in problem-solving in an effort to cope with change and its manifestations.

By elaborating on the situation requiring change, organization members meeting together can come to discuss the desired situation and, at the same time, co-construct the direction and magnitude of these forces.



We start with *unfreezing* –

Unfreezing is our first step in the change process. It draws out what is holding back the organization from changing.

It is also about helping people to become ready for the change ahead.

Unfreezing would need to involve some 'disconfirmation' of the status quo - for change to begin.

What do we mean by 'disconfirmation' of the status quo?

Disconfirmation is about showcasing that the current situation could be improved upon.

For disconfirmation to occur we will need to access good information and data about the organization, its customers and its competitors.

Changing, as the second stage, involves a deliberate effort aimed at altering behaviors and attitudes within an organization in order to achieve the desired change.

- **The aim here is to start moving.**
- **To loosen up existing situations.**
- **To loosen ways of thinking and preferences.**

Changing, as the second stage, is truly about movement.

It is about co-constructing a platform for moving forward - towards the desired state.

Here we modify the balance of promoting and resisting forces, bearing in mind the question of which force is more important than the other.

Each force, whether promoting or resisting, is used as a vehicle for changing the balance in favour of the desired situation.

The third stage is about '*ice- topping*'

But what do we mean by '*ice- topping*'?

We enhance force-field by taking 'refreezing' to mean 'ice-topping' as a fleeting act.

Through the notion of '*ice- topping*', we retain (improvise) the most relevant aspects of Lewin's force-field while providing an essential backbone for change.

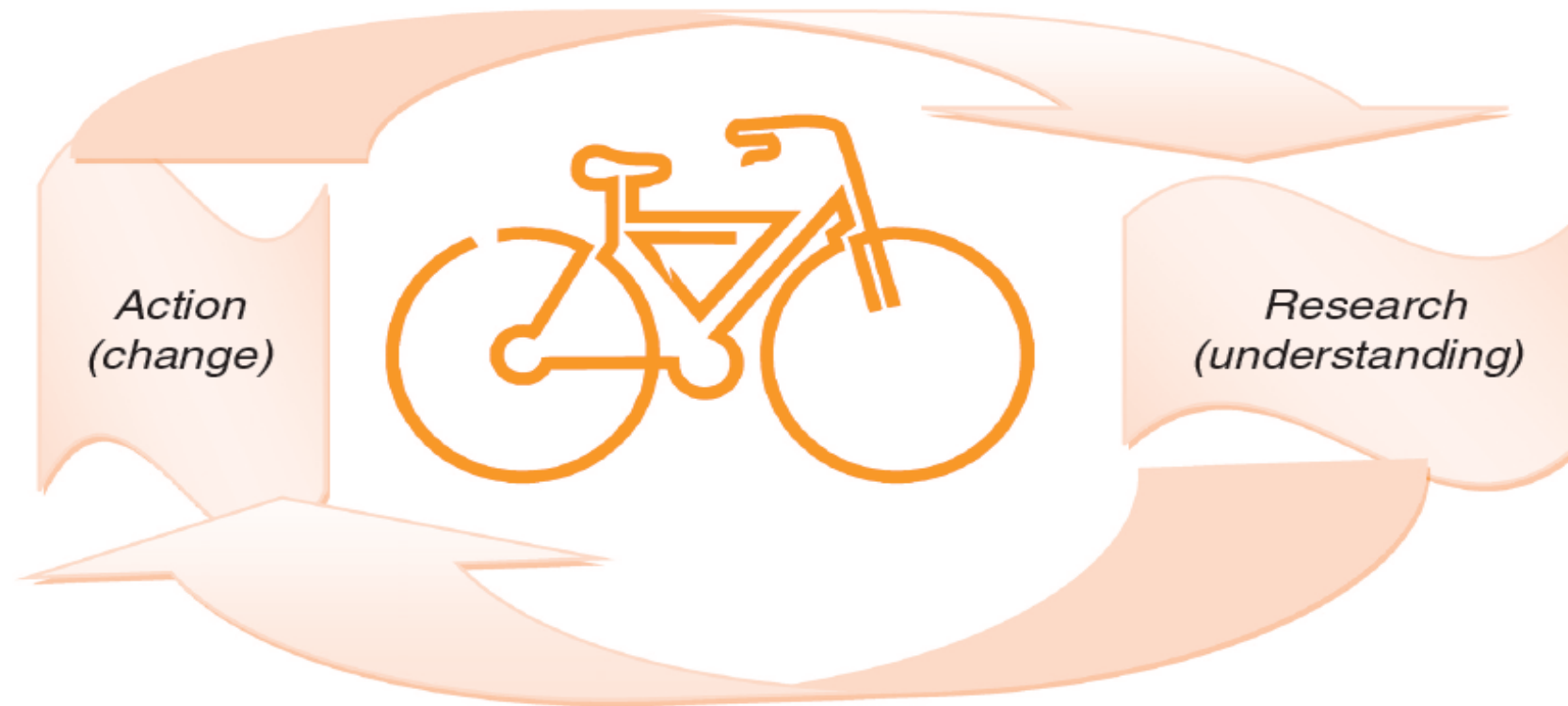
Through the notion of '*ice-topping*' we ensure continuous learning, hence more opportunities for on-going change.

Ice-topping is also about developing agility.

Ice-topping has the aim of preventing the organization lapsing back into frozen rules, structures and rules.

Such agility will be fuelled by change agents embracing the notion of 'chang**ing**' – rather than the word 'change'.

Action research starts where force-field ends.



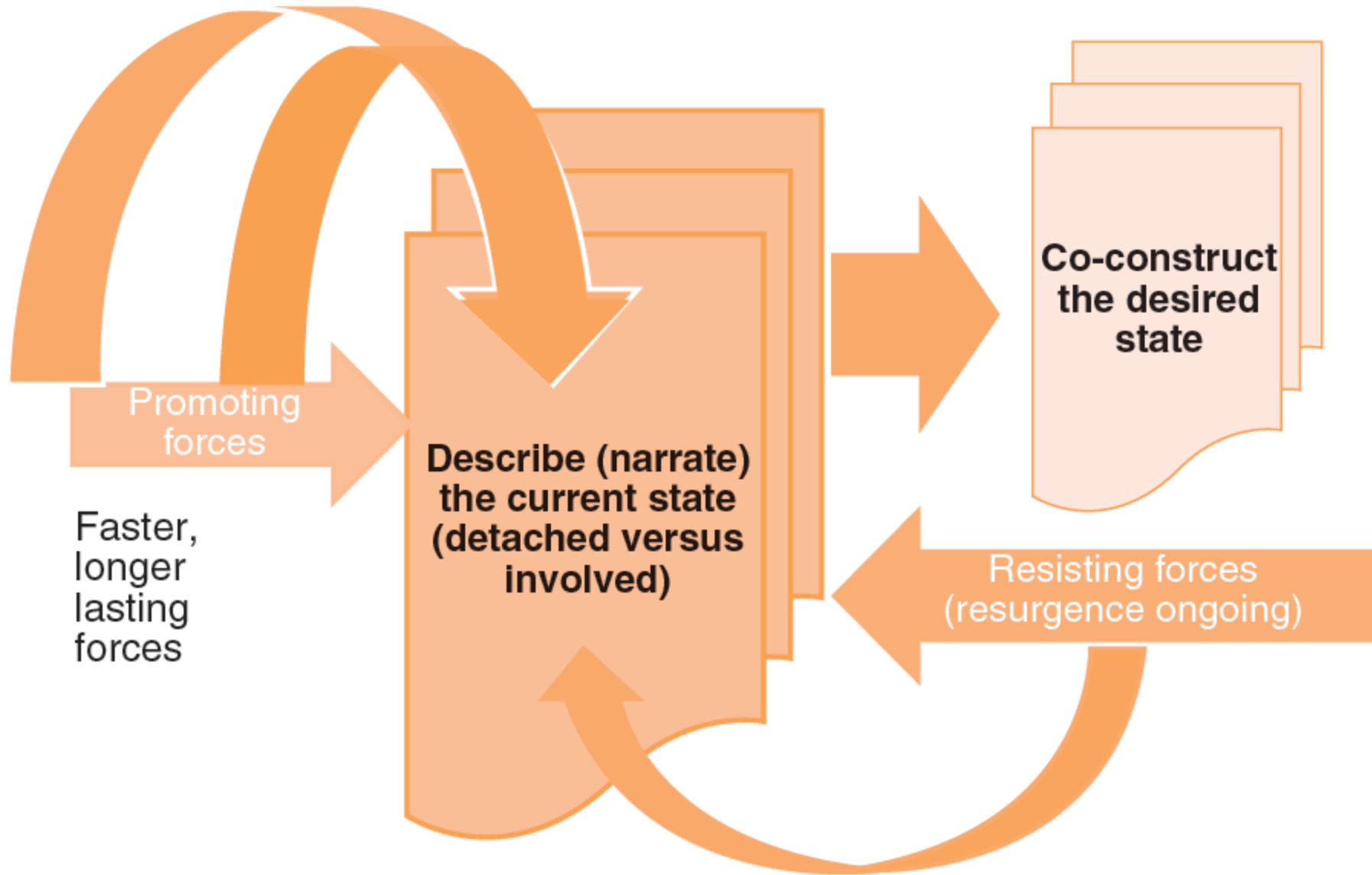
Recap

- The key factor in action research is collaboration between the change agent/team and the people at the coalface. Such collaboration is largely *cyclical* between action (change) and research (understanding).
- Action research fits its name. In essence, action research is a methodology that aims for action (change); simultaneously, it aims for achieving research outcomes (understanding).

Three Lewinian principles

1. There is no research without action (change);
no action without research (understanding).
2. Nothing is quite so practical as a good theory.
3. If you want to understand a system, try to
change it.

Source: Lewin (1951).



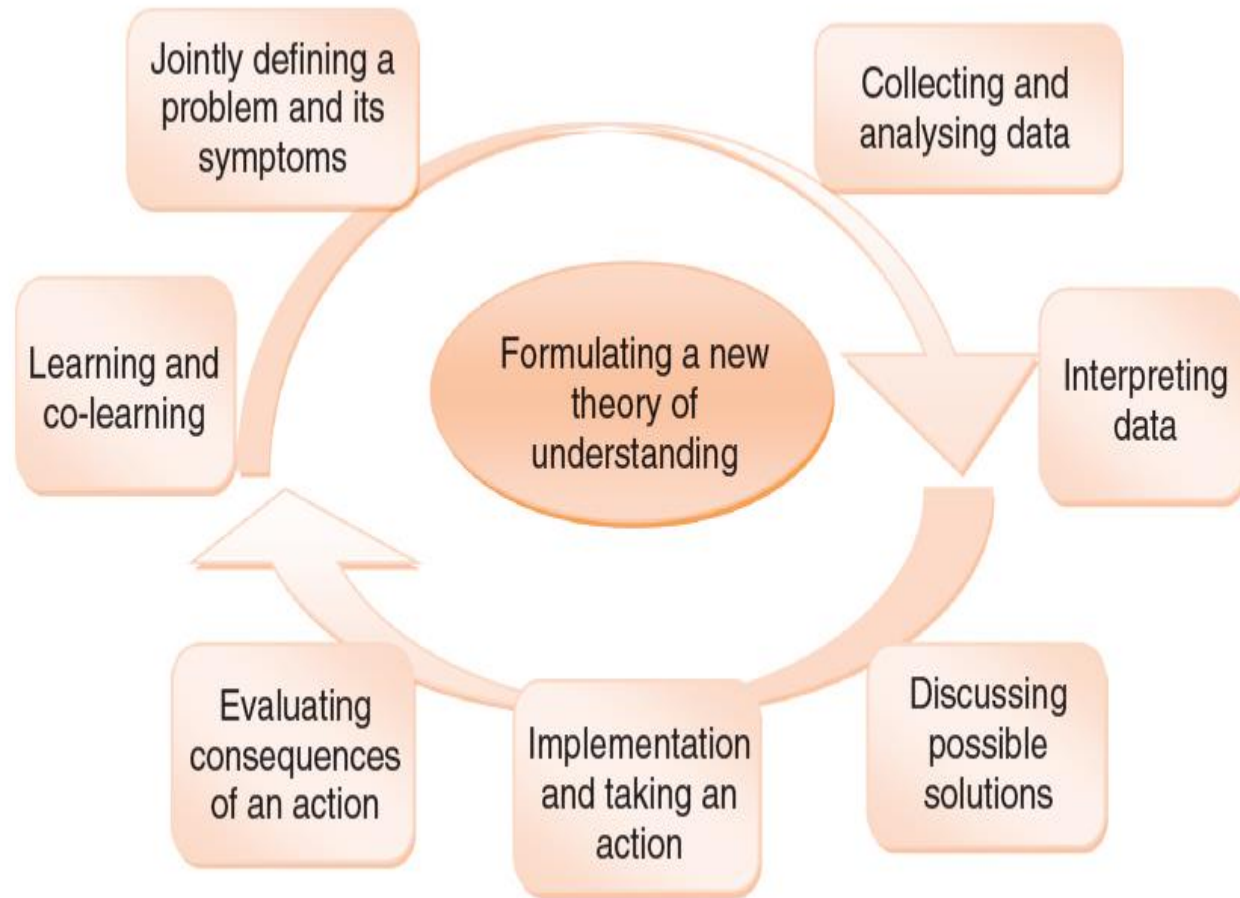
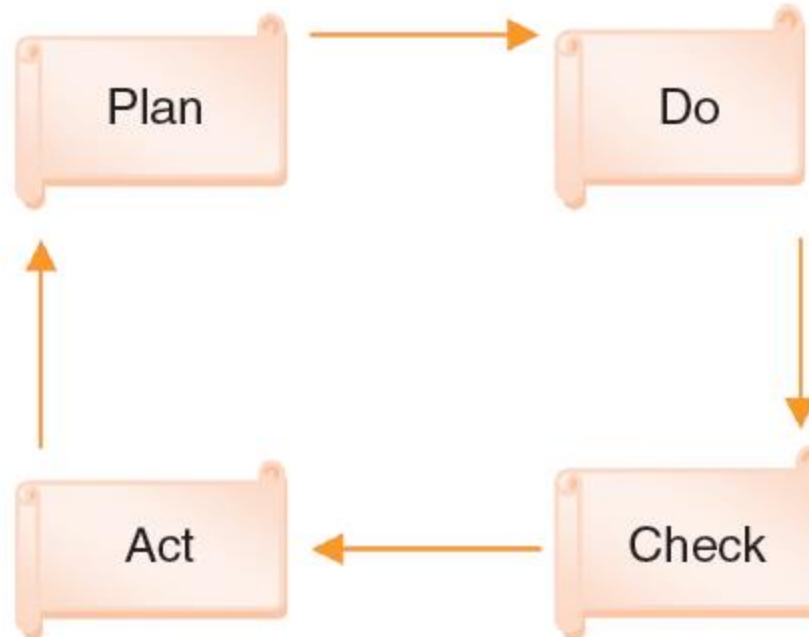


Figure 5.4 Stages of action research

Could it be that the PDCA cycle has its origin in the principles of action research? *Let's discuss ...*

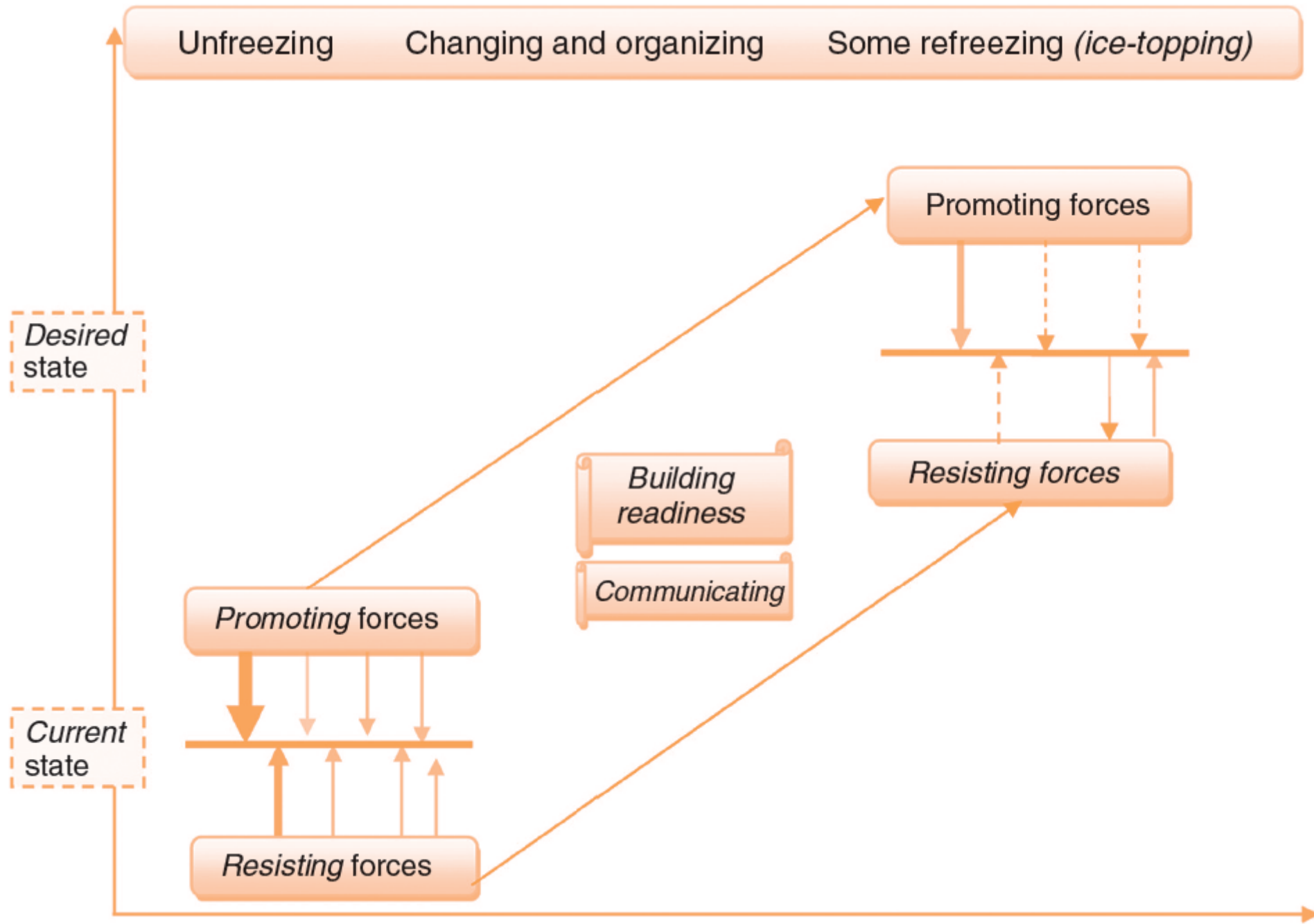


Force-field (FF) as an ice-breaker. Three things to keep in mind ...

To open up discussions ranging from problem identification to creating readiness for change. FF can prove useful sharing work experiences.

FF can be used as an ice-breaker and/or as an exercise to identify and interpret forces that push and forces that hinder.

A moderate level of facilitation is required to promote discussions. Using groups of five or six individuals, can be a good strategy.



Time

Viewing force-field through the lens of social construction provides new possibilities for extending the sphere of changing. Force-field resonates with the social construction of

promoting and resisting forces. Promoting a conversational background helps in the unpacking of promotional and resisting forces to reveal their social and narrative dimension.

Role of storytelling

Storytelling tells how a force (promoting or resisting) informs our description of the situation and backs up analyses of these forces.

In the example below, note how forces can be expressed in utterances.

Nora: 'In this hospital, shortage of nurses is a pressing matter.'

Anne: 'Yesterday, another patient fell and broke her hip.'

Nora: 'Medication errors are on the rise, too.'

John: 'We need to put forward a clear position on recruitment.'

Nora: 'The director of nursing needs to have the full picture as she is new to the job.'

Anne: 'We need to make a case.'

John: 'Not only that, but we should spell out actions to be taken, by whom and when.'

Thank you