

Managing Organizational Change

Process, Social Construction and
Dialogue

Second Edition

Lecture Notes Chapter 6

6

CREATING READINESS AND THE NOTION OF SENSEMAKING

Learning objectives

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

- Provide a conceptual overview of the notion of readiness.
- Explain levels for analysing readiness.
- Explain ways of enhancing readiness.
- Discuss relationship between readiness, capability and urgency.
- Explore Chris Argyris's notion of double-loop learning.
- Highlight the role of communication in creating readiness.
- Explore Karl Weick's notion of 'sensemaking'.

In this chapter, we focus on readiness and on how to create a compelling case for change.

- **We start by exploring the processes by which readiness for change is created.**
- **We then move to discuss Weick's notion of sensemaking. This is an important notion for it helps us to understand ways of organizing change when breakdowns or disruptive situations occur.**

Creating readiness is about helping people to see the need for change.

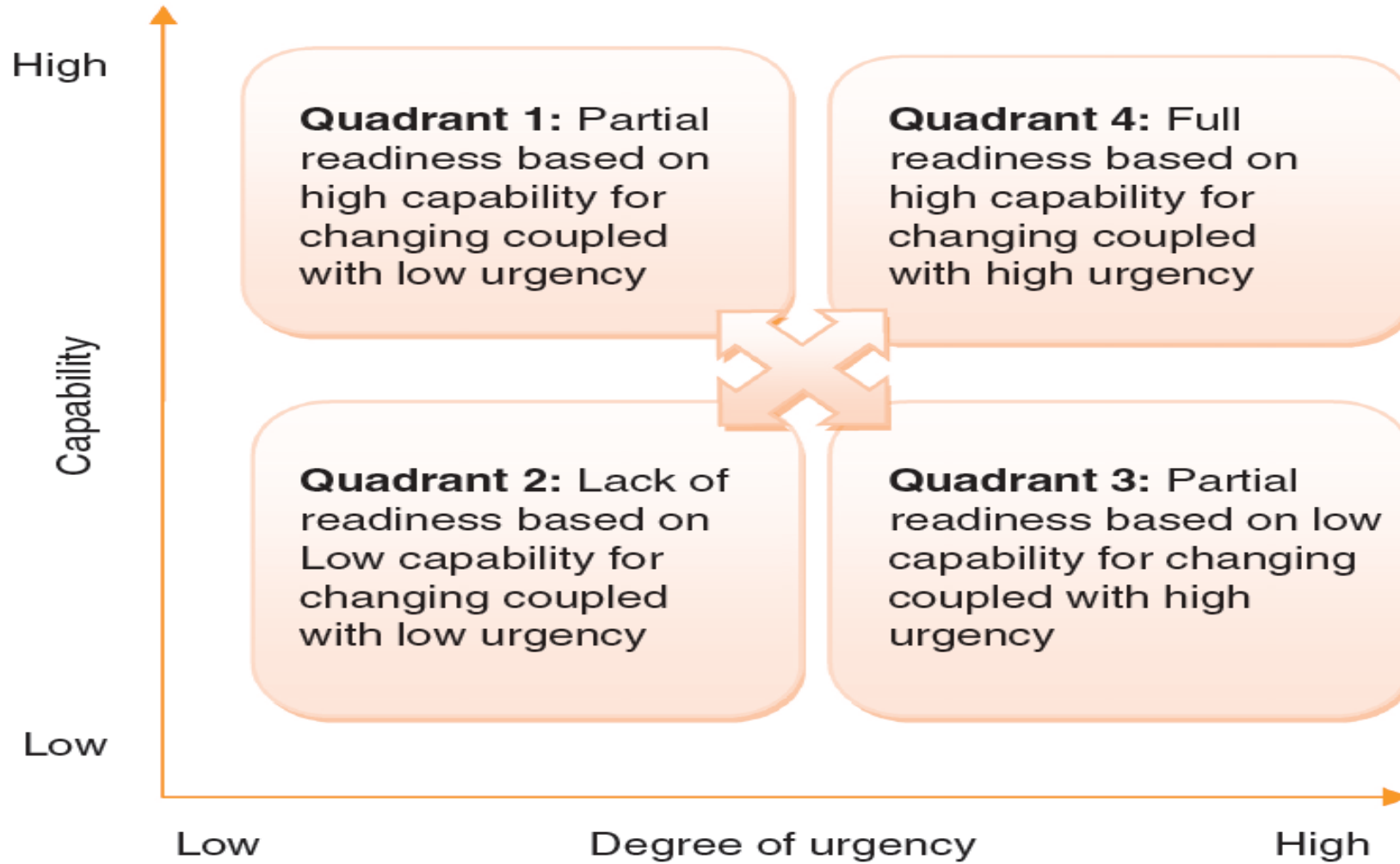
Creating readiness is also about helping people to make sense of continuous change.

Creating readiness is also about communicating the need for change.

There are two fundamental dimensions or facets useful for analysing readiness:

- The existing **capability** of the organization to undergo change; and
- The **urgency** with which change needs to proceed.

Combining the two dimensions, we now have four quadrants:



A question comes to mind:

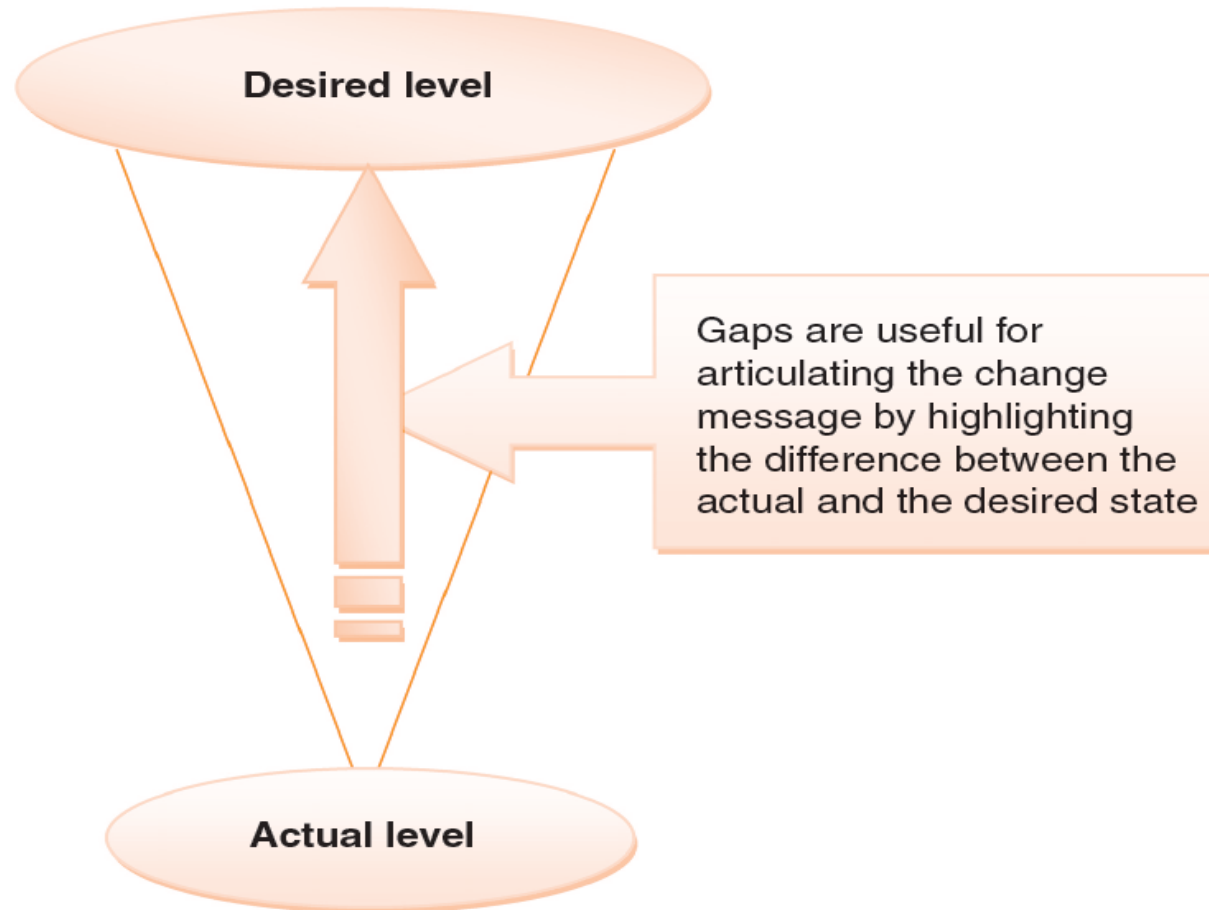
How do we go about building the case for change when top management is too far removed from seeing the problem at hand?

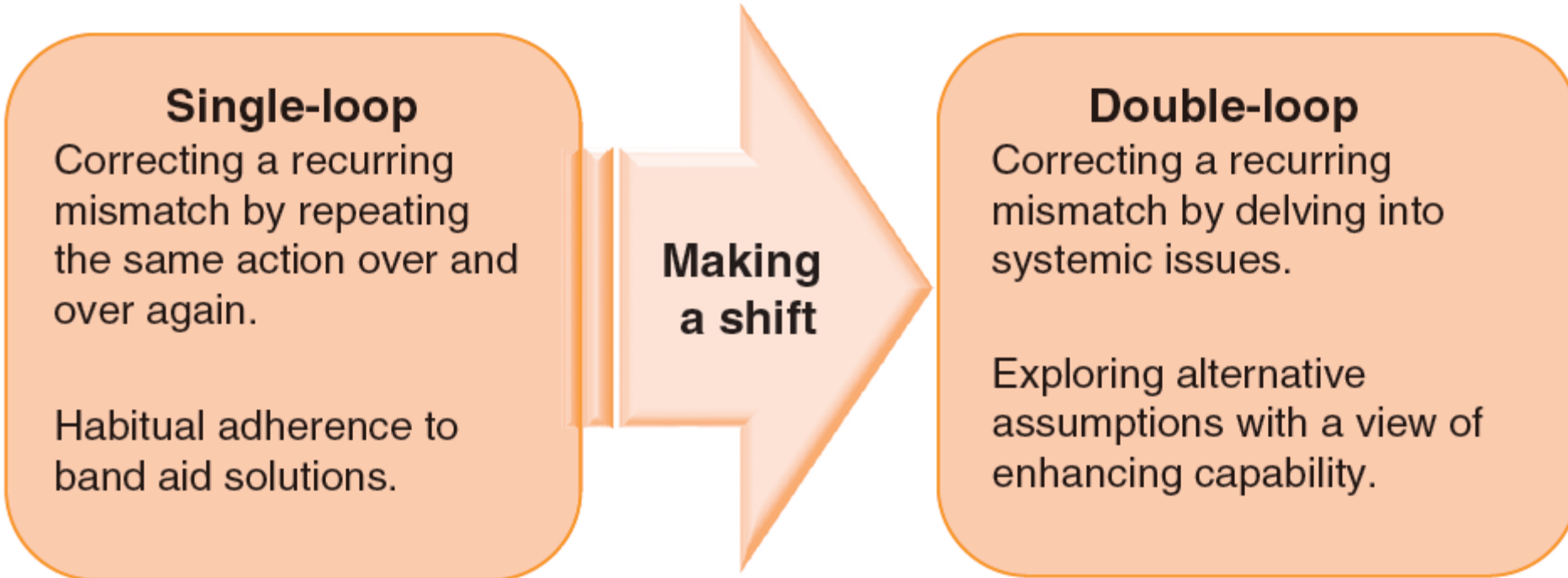
Let's discuss ...

Invite top management to see the need for Change.

- Using gap analysis to build the case.
- Inviting key individuals to see how things are working.

Importantly, never fake or stage the case for change.





Sensemaking and readiness are connected.

- Let's explore how and why the two notions are connected to each other ...
- Let's begin by reciting the story which gave way to Weick's (1993) notion of sensemaking.

Some questions that come to mind ...

- What happens when a breakdown forces itself on our existing situation?
- What happens when a new crisis occurs?
- What about a change that comes suddenly (out of the blue), in which an accreditation standard needs to be replaced with a completely new one?

In sum, what is the role of sensemaking in all of the above?

Let's discuss ...

Sensemaking and its associated notion of '*Dropping one's tools*' comes from Weick's (1993) story about firefighters in the Mann Gulch disaster.

In the rugged mountains of Montana, 13 firefighters perished in an unexpectedly large blaze after a lightning storm had started.

Weick (1993) explained why the 13 young men had perished, despite the fact that the foreman, Wagner Dodge, made new sense of the rapidly changing situation shouting for everyone to drop their firefighting tools.

... but the tragedy is that no one did ...

‘Dropping one’s tools’ is about willingness to learn and co-learn.

It is also about our willingness to make sense of the situation at hand.

Wagner Dodge (the foreman) had both the readiness and the insight to drop his firefighting tools.

Unfortunately, none of the firefighters were willing to drop their firefighting tools, an action which, in Weick's analysis, would have allowed them to escape and save their lives.

Part of Weick's conclusion was to display the importance of sensemaking and its implications for readiness.

Weick (1993) explained why the 13 young men had perished, despite the fact that the foreman, Wagner Dodge, made new sense of the rapidly changing situation by shouting for everyone to:

- Drop their firefighting tools,
- Improvise by lighting a grass fire, and
- Lying down in the ashes.

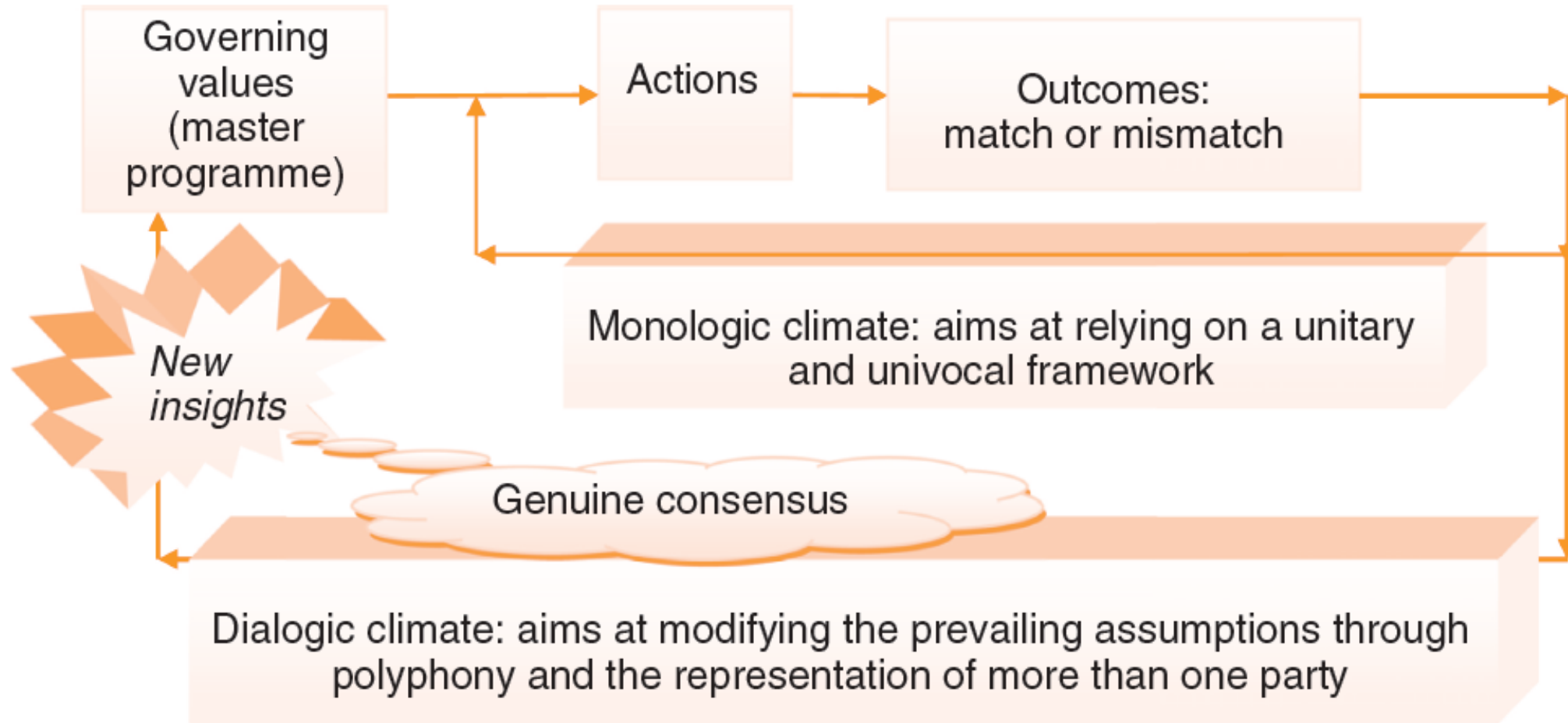
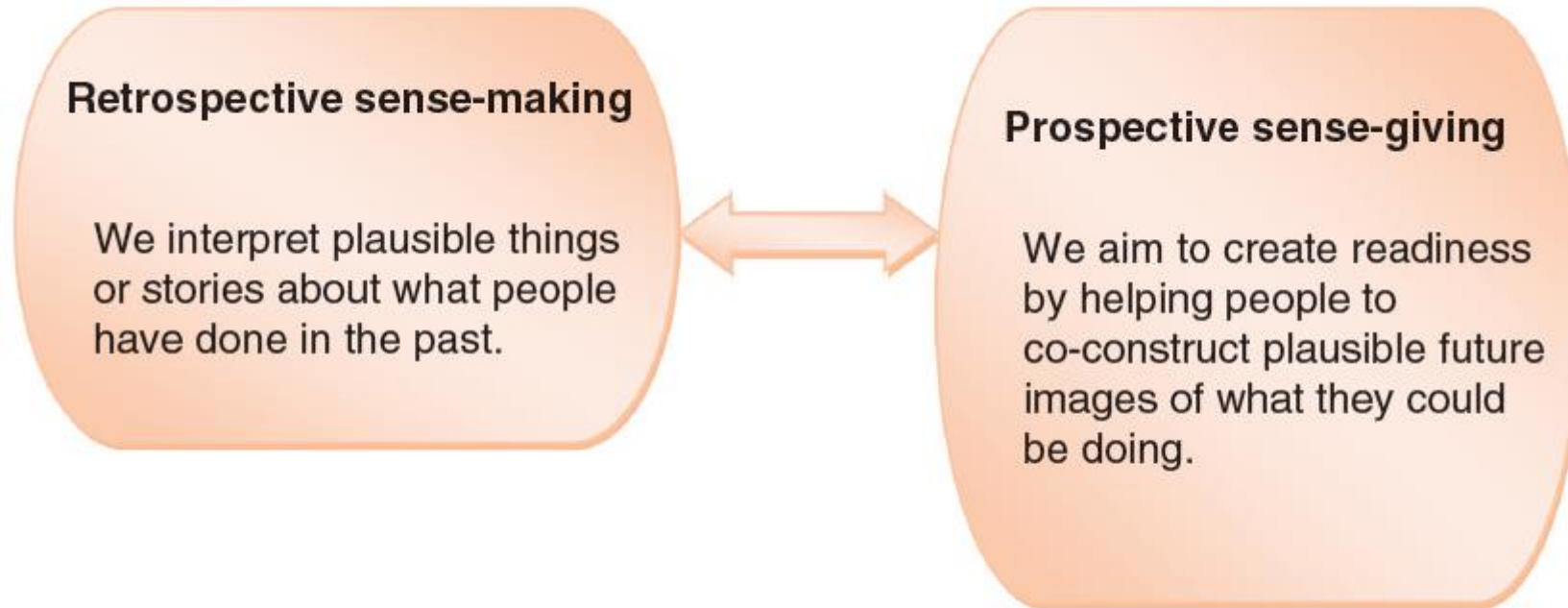


Figure 6.4 Learning achieved through dialogue



Thank you