



Knowledge for a better world

Bringing companies and
researchers together for
workplace innovation – Action
Research in practice

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Presentation

- Historical positioning
- Theoretical approaches
- Empirical illustration – The PALU model
- Findings and discussions



Sociotechnical systems theory

Tavistock institute

Trist and Bamforth (1951)

Socio-technical work





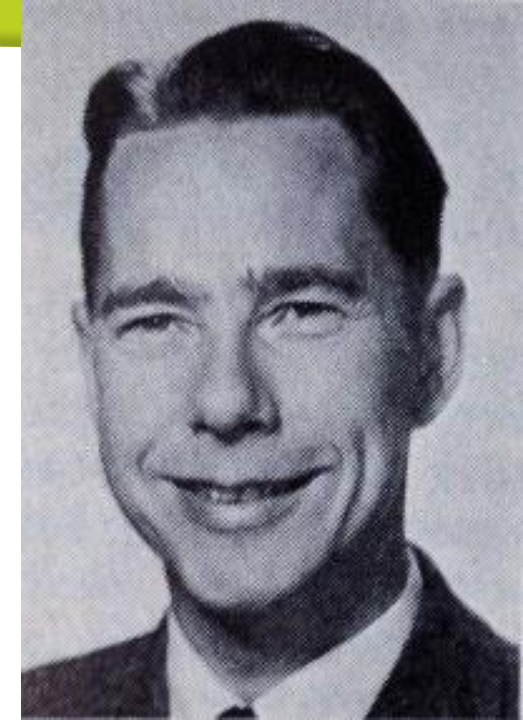
Action Research

The sociotechnical approach to Action Research

- The core idea of the socio-technical tradition posited that **practical problem-solving** served as the foundation for theoretical development, marking a significant departure from the hypothetical-deductive approach to research
- The **contextual factors** influencing knowledge creation without abandoning the concept of generalizable knowledge
- The approach emphasized a **holistic** or systemic understanding of problems
- Grounded in **democratic values**

From Tavistock to Trondheim

- In Norway, an extensive formal political infrastructure supported participation in work life through union-management agreements creating a suitable context for STS
- Einar Thorsrud and Fred Emery instigated a research project that concentrated on democratization of work in practice.
- Supported by The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and the Confederation of Employers
- Democratization of work in practice
- **Industrial Democracy Program**
- Action Research



International series on the quality of working life



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Democracy at work

Fred Emery and Einar Thorsrud



**IF YOU WANT
TO TRULY
UNDERSTAND
SOMETHING,
TRY TO
CHANGE IT**

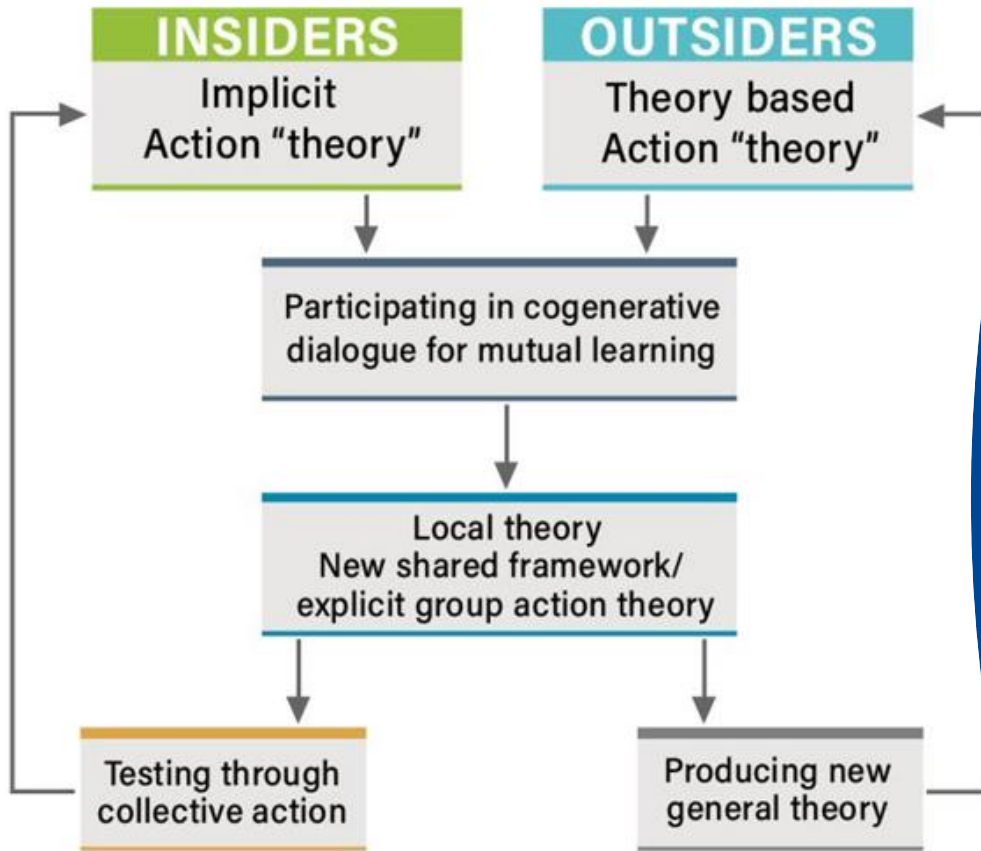
KURT LEWIN

PICTUREQUOTES.COM

Action Research

- 1) Action
- 2) Participation
- 3) Research

(Greenwood and Levin, 2007)



Different forms of knowledge

- New local knowledge
- Knowledge about how to build new knowledge (becoming a learning organisation)
- Theoretical knowledge

Elden & Levin (1991) taken from Finnestrund (2023)

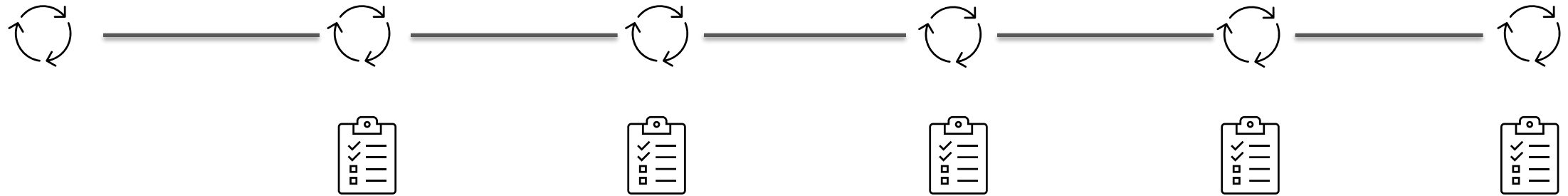
Enterprise development through union-management cooperation (PALU)

- Dream: "Look to Trøndelag" - A network of companies in Trøndelag who are in front of exploiting collaborative industrial relations as a competitive advantage for increased value creation
- Develop new practical competence and theoretical knowledge on how the trade union and managers can cooperate on enterprise development
- Prepare the participants on new forms of cooperation through theoretical knowledge and practical work in its own company

Participation of employees

1. Effective decisions: To make a decision may be time consuming, but the implementation phase is both better and faster
2. Better decisions: Decisions are better because the company has used more of the human resources' skills and competence
3. Correct decisionmakers: The workers who are supposed to work with the new machines or function in the new organizational structure should be involved in the design of it
4. Building competence among the workers





Reporting on local projects





Reporting on local projects

Theoretical perspectives





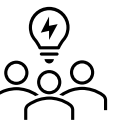
Reporting on local projects

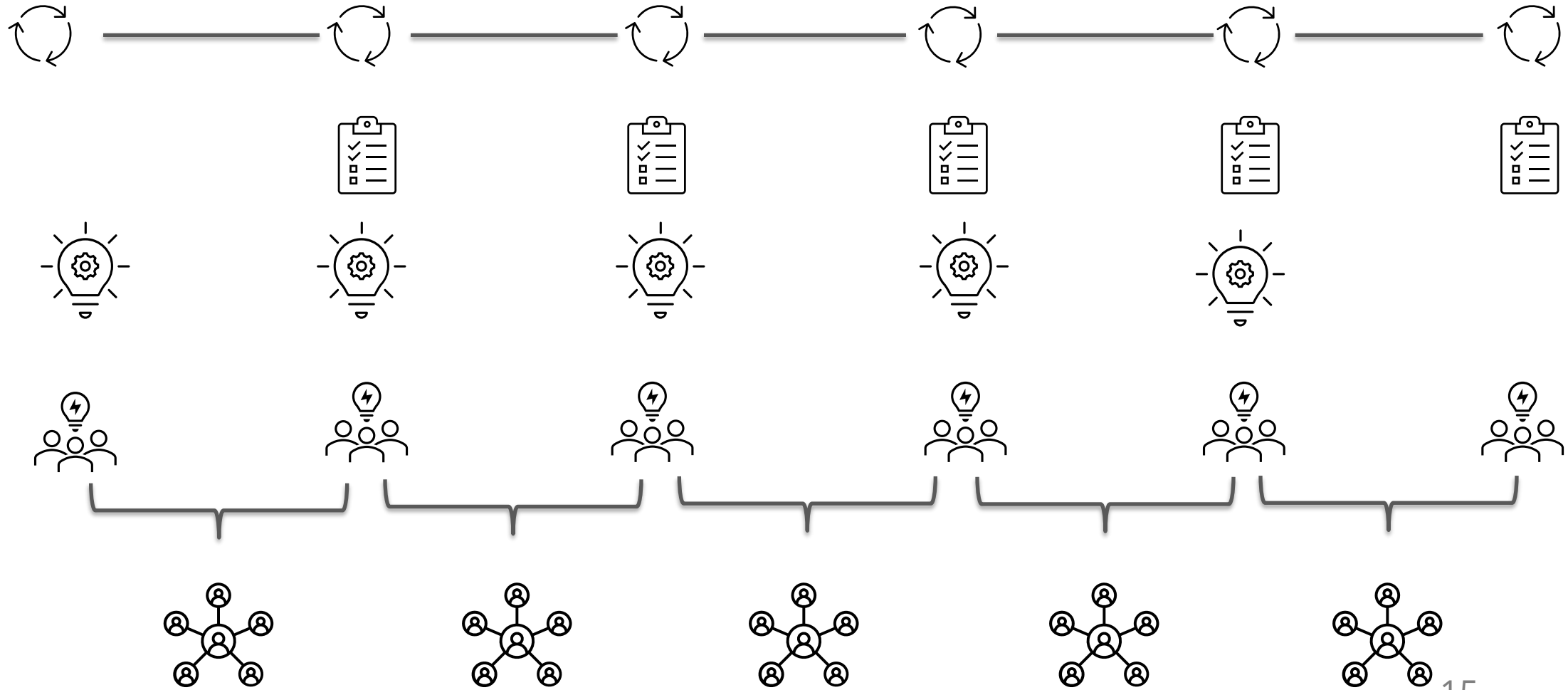


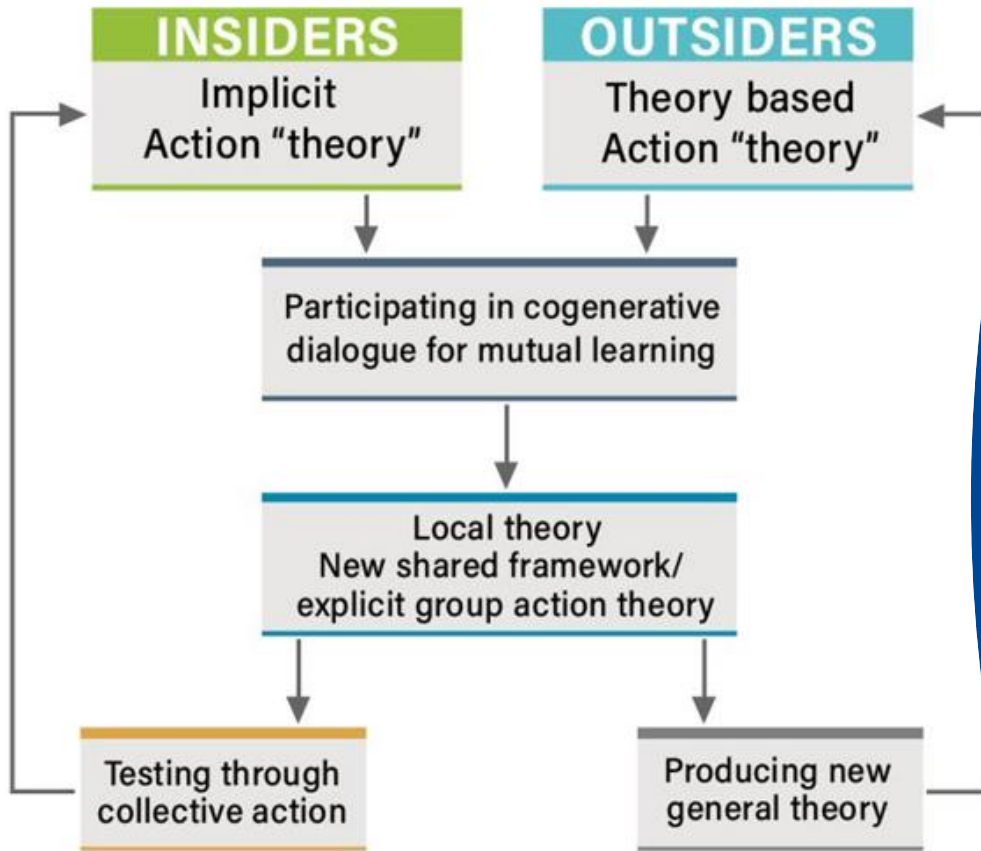
Theoretical perspectives



Collective reflections





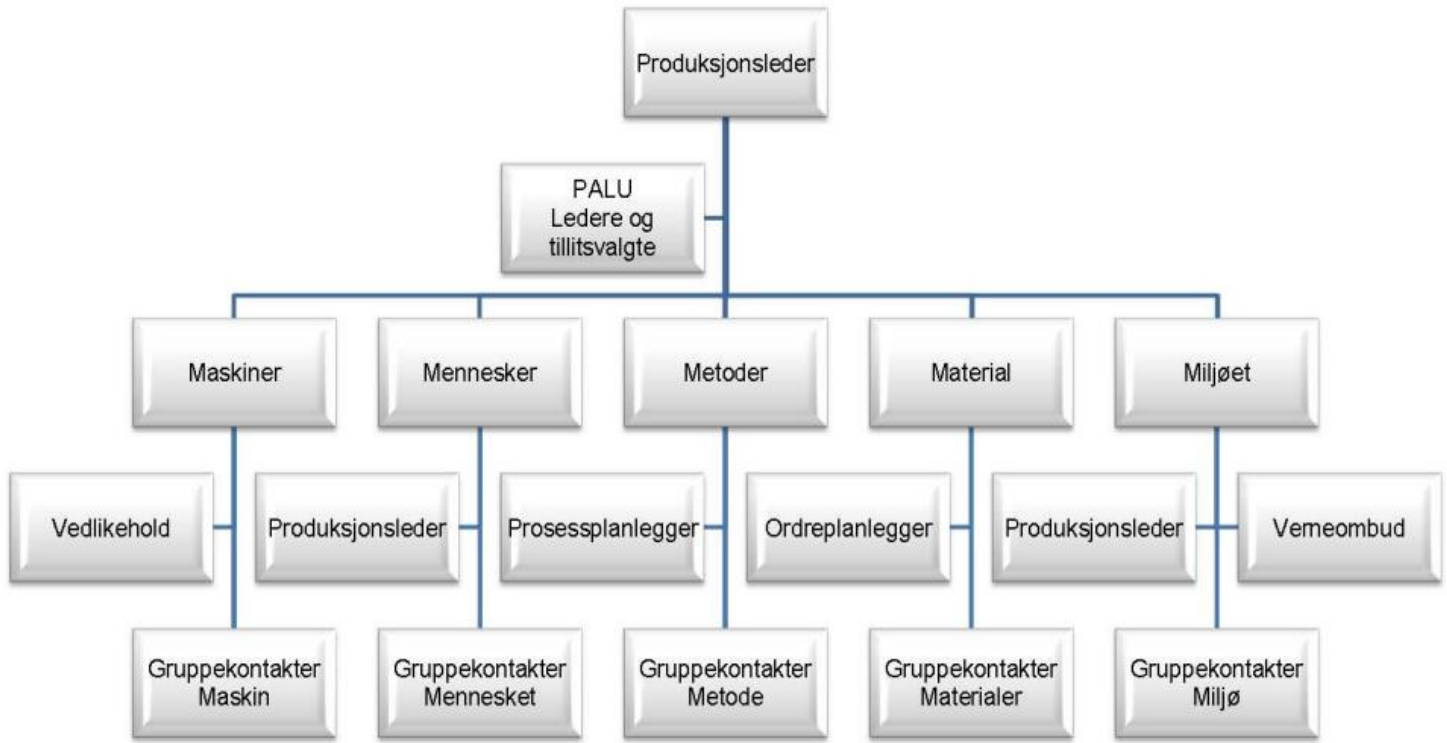
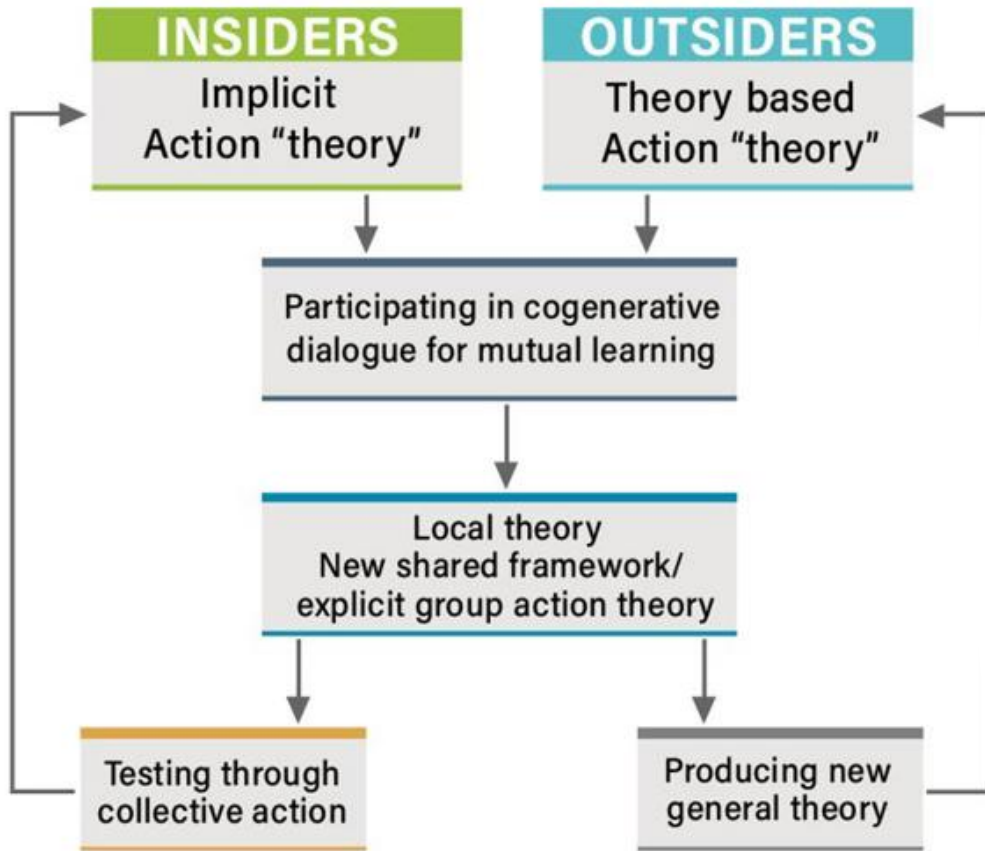


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Elden & Levin (1991) taken from Finnestrund (2023)

New local knowledge



Definition of job packages



Knowledge about how to build new knowledge

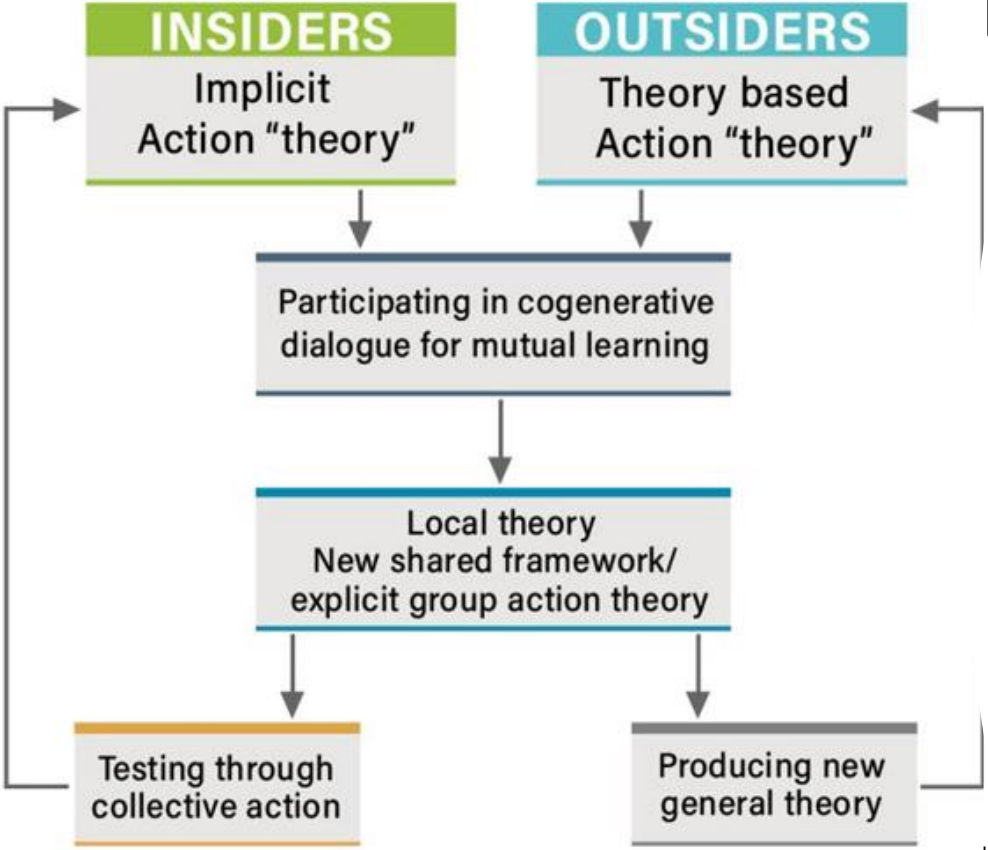


Photo: Innherred

Theoretical knowledge: Union reps filling the “information gap”

- The trade union develops the members by informing and discussing the company's challenges together with them
- The union reps uses the knowledge of the members in discussions with the management
- Criticism, suggestions, frustration etc. are discussed in a safe environment simply because the union reps are not managers (another logic)

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Thank you!

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