

Anticipatory Dialogues

This bite is the third of a series of seven documents that offer a first introduction to the approaches that will be adapted to the homelessness field along with the HOOD's project life: the Dialogical Approach and the Enabling Coplanning. They discuss topics ranging from epistemology at the basis of the approaches, the core principles of the two methodologies mentioned, and the key elements that characterized them. Overall, they facilitate the progressive comprehension of the two approaches considered, also providing tips for further readings.



Future or Anticipatory Dialogues are key instruments of Dialogic Practices and originated within the framework of the early intervention approach. In early intervention, professionals face a specific issue expressed by Tom E. Arnkil: "it consists in defining whether the early intervention aims to orient the person's future or to promote empowerment, so that the person him/herself will take the direction of his/her own existence, together with those who are significant for him/her". The two options – aspire to orient the other's future or to promote their empowerment – are alternatives. Indeed, it is not possible to do both during an operative intervention.

The traditional model embraces the first objective: the professional disposes of several lenses to observe a person's life (that can consist in paper grids, but also in thinking categories). This kind of tool puts the professional in a predictive position concerning the person's life. Without often being aware of it, as the professional collects information, almost automatically they hypothesize on what would be better if they were or were not in the person's present and future. Little room is left to the professional placed in this position for choosing the empowerment route. Indeed, if they already know where they want to go and the best way to get there, it makes no sense at all for them not to say so and not to try to guide the person in that direction.

Considering the fact that early intervention aims at promoting empowerment, it is necessary that the professional adopts a dialogic position (see the bite n.2): they will assume that they know better both as far as the goal is concerned as how to get there and will adopt a position not of orientation but support. Only in this way, will the person be sustained in imagining their desired future, which will be developed slowly (see the sheet on uncertainty tolerance) in their minds when an authentic space (of aims, things to do) appears empty without this imagined future.

Anticipatory Dialogues assume this dialogic function within the early intervention model. According to this methodology, the person is supported in "remembering the future". Thinking of a joyful future, the person is guided to go backwards, tracing the good things that will make their lives happy in an imagined future and what support, and choices brought them there. In this way, the present – that is charged with worries and doubts – is "approached from the future" and considered a condition that is not only surmountable but already overcome.

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