FACTSHEET n. 4/2023

The HOOD methodology: Enabling Co-planning with homeless people

This last factsheet briefly retraces what we learned within the project with respect to the Enabling Co-planning approach used with homeless people, the key aim of the HOOD project. This document can be useful for those approaching the HOOD project for the first time, it contains references to other documents created by HOOD's partners and uploaded to our website, which we recommend reading to anyone wishing to learn more about the topic.

The roots of the HOOD project

 The HOOD project was born out of a desire to learn about and experiment with the methodology of Enabling Co-planning in the work with homeless people. The Study Center DiVI (For Rights and Independent Life) of the University of Turin created the Enabling Co-planning to work with people with cognitive and mental disabilities, drawing from the Open Dialogue approach, created by the team of the Finland psychologist Jaakko Seikkula. The adoption of Dialogical Practices in therapy means to recognise a multiplicity of voices in an equal relationship with each other, rather than a single authoritative voice defining the discourse's object. Moreover, in the Open Dialogue approach, it is no longer a matter of developing a therapeutic pathway that involves only the therapist-patient dyad but of including the latter's network in the process.

Moving from this premise, Enabling Co-planning differs from the Open Dialogue because it focuses on socio-educational planning rather than therapy. The Enabling Co-planning approach aims to ensure that people with disabilities can live their lives in a full and unrestricted way, exercising their citizenship rights and developing their full potential. The process involves practitioners who, on the basis of personalised project documentation, support the person to set their own aims and to design the step to get there. It is the work of the Enabling Co-planning with people with disabilities that inspired the partners of the HOOD project, that decided to learn this approach and adapt it to the work with homeless people.

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Our steps in the Enabling Co-planning
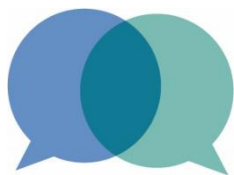
The collective learning process started from the first phase of theoretical study of the methodological approach developed by the DiVI Study Center. The team of UNITO wrote a review of the literature on the Open Dialogue the Enabling Co-planning and approach, and the "bites" (brief papers) from n.1 to n.7, that focus on key elements of the latter. In addition to that, UNITO held a two-day-long online training with a group of practitioners from all the operative partners of HOOD. On the HOOD website and Youtube Channel, five videocasts (#1 - #5) shot during this training have been uploaded. Finally, Ufficio Pio Foundation, the project leader, carried out interviews and focus groups with a public social service and a social cooperative that are already adopting the Enabling Co-planning approach with people with disabilities in the Italian context. The findings of these interviews are described in bites n. 9 and n. 10.

UNITO suggested adopting a "training on the job" approach to learn the methodology. Hence, the theoretical learning phase was very short. As described in detail in the Intermediate IO2 Toolkit, soon, partners started to put into practice what they were learning: each operative team started an Enabling Co-planning path with one recipient, called "Mr or Mrs HOOD". During this "pilot phase" – which lasts 5 months – each organisation's team met periodically the scientific partners of UNITO in a supervision setting. Moreover, collective methodological meetings have been held, in order to allow all the organisations to share with the others what they had been achieving in terms of methodology skills.

After the pilot phase, each team finds a way to multiply the impact of the approach in their organisation. Some repeated the "training on the job" model, supervising a new group of colleagues, others organized collective training days in their organization, asking for the intervention of UNITO. Other practitioners from each organization were trained in the Enabling Co-planning approach, which was adopted with new Mr and Mrs HOODs, up to a total of 80 recipients involved.

During this phase, in addition to remaining available for individual support, UNITO organized the collection of data on the ongoing process through two online monitoring tools: the first was aimed at recording the individual paths carried out with each beneficiary; the second one was a periodic review to be filled once a month from each team, sharing reflections and episodes happened related to the Enabling Co-planning approach. Then, UNITO periodically shared the results of the periodic review with all the partners.

It is important to stress the fact that HOOD partner associations are very heterogenous regarding their services organisations, missions and the wider context of culture, legislation, institutions, and access to rights. Therefore, the pilot phase underlined these differences when it came to the early adaptations. Projekt UDENFOR is based in Copenhagen, and it is a small organisation that does outreach work as a low-threshold service in the framework of harm reduction. SJD Serveis Socials is based in Barcelona, and they are a bigger organisation with several different services. They mostly deal in residential services and day-care centres for people in a homeless situation. Klimaka on the other hand is the biggest reality involved and it is a Greek NGO based in Athens, they mostly work in mental health services and with migrants. On top of that, they work with homeless people or with people at risk of homelessness that might find themselves at the intersection with the other fields Klimaka operate in. They run both low-threshold services and day-care centres in Greece. Finally, Ufficio Pio is a foundation that operates in Torino

mostly managing local social innovation or social equity projects. Among these, they run a project targeting people who recently became homeless, based on an early intervention approach.

These differences presented a challenge, but also an opportunity. If initially, it seemed very difficult to confront due to the diversity that separated the organizations, gradually these have become resources to better understand Enabling Co-planning. In fact, within HOOD it was possible to experiment with this pedagogical programming approach in very different services and with very different targets, arriving at verifying which are the ideal conditions for implementation.

Pills of HOOD methodology

From these three years of the project, an adaptation of the Enabling Co-planning approach to work in the field of homelessness has been elaborated and is described in a clear and detailed way in the **HOOD Toolkit**. Some of the key elements of the methodology are summarized below.

The Co-planning adopts the Anticipatory Dialogue (see bite n.3) technique: practitioners collect a dreamscape where the person pictures themselves in a positive future distant enough to be free of the worries of today, surrounded by their network of meaningful relationships. Then, with the support of the professional, the person is invited to work backwards from that dream to establish what are the steps they can today to get there. Therefore, the person's dream becomes the individual project's mission and the steps the operative goal.

The dream is also a strategy to redistribute the power of the helping relationship, giving people back the power to decide on their own life. Indeed, Enabling Co-planning requires dismissing the traditional dynamic of the social worker dictating the best path for the person and expecting compliance. Instead, the person is empowered to set their own goals and priorities, to steer the direction of their own life project, while the professionals support their perspective. Moreover, the dream serves as an engine to get the person moving toward a different future.

UNITO developed with the HOOD partners a structured documentation to define the individual project to get to the dream. However, the approach's heart is not the achievement of the dream, but the process that is activated to reach it. Indeed, it becomes an opportunity for learning, for discovering themselves and the surrounding reality, for building a greater sense of self-efficacy and the ability to decide for oneself. The process itself is what enables progress not solely the concrete objectives or the mission.

"the dream redistributes the power of the helping relationship, giving people back the power to decide on their own life. "

Often in HOOD, the operators have encountered unrealizable, impossible, when not dangerous dreams. By adopting a dialogic approach, they have learned not to judge them, but to accept them as the will of the person. In the HOOD methodology, it is crucial that the "reality check" is not provided by the social worker who anticipates the outcome, but by the reality itself, whether that be another professional in a prescriptive position, or the person experiencing something for themselves, only to find that it's not what they wanted or that they don't have the resources to get

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there. The professional continues to support the person in this journey, even in the face of failures or painful discoveries, which lead the person to redefine the dream, as happens in everyone's life.

However, a change in the practitioner's mindset is the core element of the HOOD methodology. This consists in being aware of their gaze as professionals, to dismiss the "traditional" professional role and the power of the helping relationship. HOOD calls to move away from the idea that the social worker's job is to orient, evaluate, and assess the person's performance and judgment. This traditional role is based on the belief that the professional has a more objective and correct view of the situation than the person, but an enabling and dialogical relationship is not compatible with this assumption. The professional has to actively and intentionally moves from a strategic role (aimed to convince the person, to orient them, etc.) to a supportive and enabling relationship.

To this aim, it is also important to change what in organizations contributes to maintaining the asymmetry of power. HOOD partners have developed a grid of power elements which can help to reflect and verify the situation of your organization in this regard. These are different elements: from changing the offices where we meet people, to completely abandoning the offices to meet them where they feel more comfortable; from avoiding technical and professional language in favour of adopting the person's own words, to sharing all the documents concerning them with the person themselves.

Finally, the network is another crucial element in both Dialogical Practices and the Enabling Co-planning approach. Unlike other service targets, homeless people often have a very limited network, and sometimes it consists only of professionals. Hence, the HOOD partners developed a way of working on the network coherent with the power redistribution mentioned above. The aim is to involve more the person in their relationship with the professional network: inviting them to the network meetings, making phone calls together using a speakerphone, or deciding together what the professional should say in the meetings in which the person would not be present. On the other hand, the HOOD professionals also work actively with other colleagues of the network, to involve and inform them about the empowerment process and ask for their cooperation.

Tolerating uncertainty and the power of cooperative learning

A key element of the Enabling Co-planning methodology is uncertainty tolerance (see bite n.4), a key ability to implement for social workers. In classical support paths, uncertainty and risk are a weakness. In the classical social work framework, in fact, circumscribed and static definitions are needed since the solutions available are essentially circumscribed and static and, above all, are "solutions" to a very limited number of problems. In this professional culture, contingencies, changes, and uncertainties are disturbing factors. Instead, according to Enabling Co-planning, the opening of spaces without predefined answers, the happening of things that were not planned, and the rethinking and changing of the path by the person are welcomed elements. They are all part of the process of meaning remaking that the professional has to promote, not hinder.

Another methodological approach also shares the recognition of the ability to tolerate uncertainty as a fundamental skill of professionals: Intervision. In the multiplication phase of the methodology, HOOD partners started to meet in periodic online sessions of Intervision. The Intervision approach used in HOOD is inspired by the Altervision developed by Professor Luigi Gui (see bite n. 11 e n. 12; videocast #12- #17), who considers as a key competence

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of social workers "welcoming uncertainty, knowing how to navigate and taking charge of it". Professor Gui highlights how in social work there are no certainties, formulas or predefined tools that can be adopted in all situations. Neither can Enabling Co-planning be considered a precise recipe to follow, it always requires to be adapted and rethink according to the individual recipient and the organisations' features. Each situation in social work is partially new, and this generates uncertainty. Facing these difficulties, Altervision proposes a work of cooperative construction of professional knowledge, moving from the sharing and reflection of previous experiences of professionals. In peer group sessions, following the

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phases described in Factsheet 3, HOOD partners shared their dilemmas about real episodes faced implementing the Enabling Co-planning approach. Instead of giving abstract suggestions, other partners recollect memories of similar situations, describing how they acted and with which consequences. The idea of Altervision is not to find the solution to the dilemma but to open the horizon of things that can be done and offer professionals a setting for improving reflexivity and co-creating professional knowledge. There is no supervisor, no expert because knowledge is already present among peers, who must learn to make it explicit and share it. Some of the learning co-created in the HOOD Intervision sessions – inspired by the Altervision - have been described in the bite n. 14.

Learning from the HOOD experience

From the joint work of HOOD, thanks to the diversity of applications developed by individual partners, from the feedback collected from the homeless people involved (see bite n. 13), and from what emerged in the Intervision sessions, some reflections emerged with respect to the HOOD methodology.

The HOOD partners discovered that before getting into an individual Enabling Co-planning with a person, it is necessary to gain their trust and to satisfy their urgent needs. Indeed, a person needs security and stability to dream. Short-term, life-threatening issues need to be addressed before moving on to long-term goals with HOOD. For this reason, the HOOD approach may not be the best fit for outreach work, street units, and low-threshold services, even if it can still offer valuable insights when adapted to these contexts.

The main conclusion drawn from these three years is that the HOOD methodology is a very useful socio-pedagogical tool that has the potential to complement Housing First and Housing Led projects that are really flexible in their organisation and day-to-day practice and have no hard deadline for the housing solutions they offer. This organisational framework is best suited because this rights-based approach to social housing is very much in line with HOOD's foundations and provides the physical, financial and mental security for the person to embark on an empowering educational journey.

The flip side of the same coin is that HOOD is not suitable for organisations or practitioners who have a mandatory or prescriptive role or commitment. Where recipients need to demonstrate that they deserve the support they are receiving, and where standards of performance and behaviour are highly valued and necessary in order for the person to continue to be supported or to access more permanent housing solutions (e.g: "they need to stop drinking in order to..., they need to keep a steady job so that they can..., etc. "), HOOD is not appropriate for these contexts. The same is true for institutionalised residential services, shelters or housing solutions where the organisational

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needs of the context take precedence over the individual's right to self-determination and where rules are enforced to facilitate these organisational needs (e.g. respecting strict times for entering and leaving the premises, no guests allowed, the person needs to come back to sleep).

Finally, while HOOD partners initially felt that the proposed methodology was not something different from what they were already doing, as the project progressed it became evident that the changes proposed by HOOD are challenging, and most importantly cannot be implemented by a well-intentioned individual social worker alone.

> *"It's not enough for the professional to change, those around them need to change with them and invest in the transformation promoted. "*

The HOOD methodology requires the support of the organisation in which one works, as it involves changing organisational practices and even structures. If an empowering approach doesn't fit in with the structure, practice and mission of the service, it won't be effective and can lead to frustration for both professionals and recipients. An empowering approach to the helping relationship is not a silver bullet and it's not about being a 'good' social worker. It's not enough for the social worker to change; those around them need to change with them and invest in the transformation promoted.

All that considered, the HOOD partners hope that this experience will be of inspiration and help to other professionals and organizations who want to embark on the path of empowerment in working with homeless people and hope that the reflections shared here and in the other documents mentioned can support several transformation processes, to promote together welfare based on rights and desires.

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