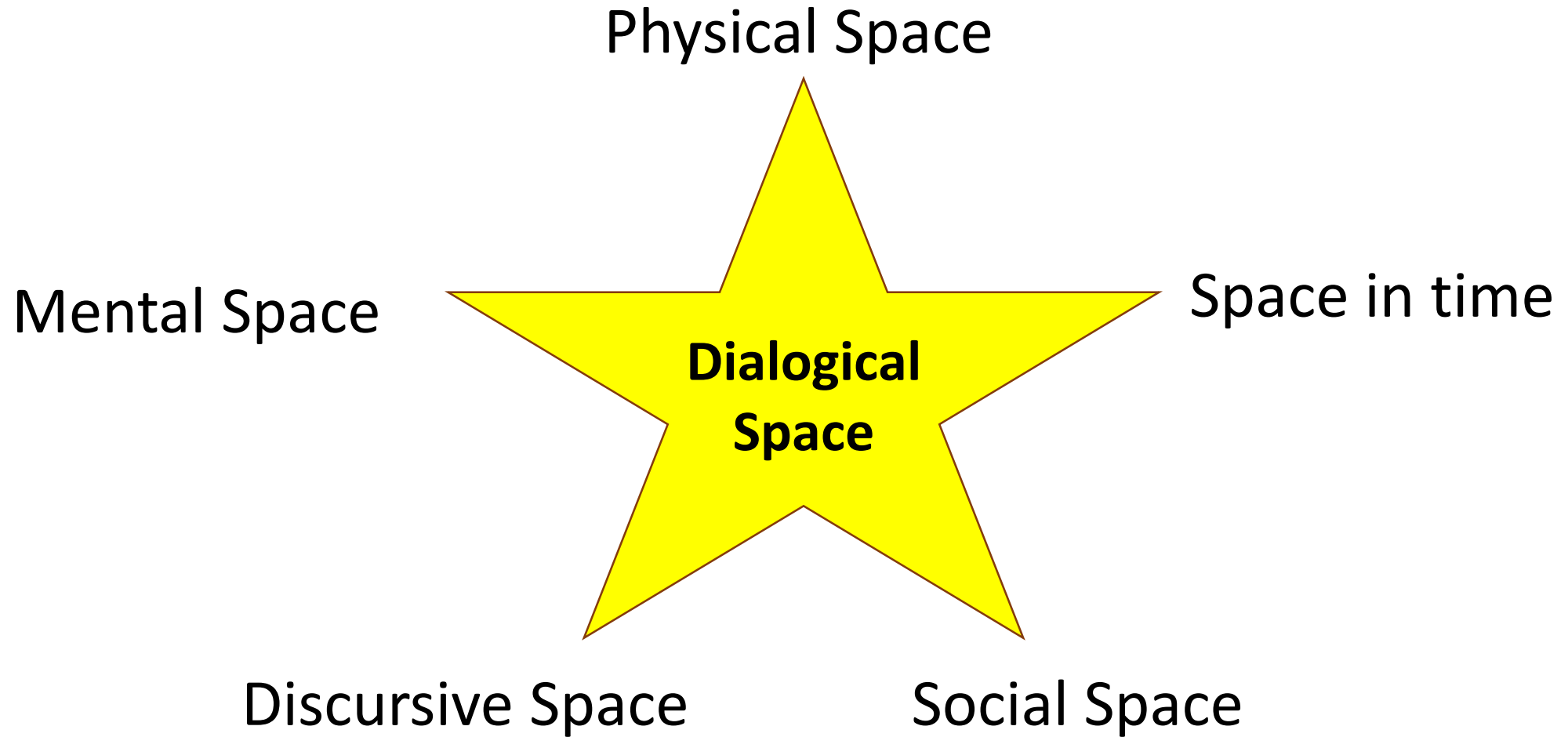


Dialogical Practice

Raffaella Pocobello, Ph.D.



Tom Erik Arnkil (2019). Generating Dialogical Spaces- Challenges for Open and Anticipation Dialogues and dialogical practices in general. Available here: <http://dialogicalpractices.org>

Dialogicity and physical spaces (1)

- ✓ Physical settings are not quite as innocent as they may seem - they “epitomise” ideas.



Dialogicity and physical spaces (2)

Physical spaces and arrangements do not enable or inhibit dialogicity as such, but they can enhance or hamper possibilities in significant ways.

Have you attended auditorium-seminars with presentation after presentation on the podium and no gaps for discussion? These might not be the most dialogue-friendly combination of physical space, but it is not an uncommon one either.



Dialogicity and physical spaces (3)

For dialogues, we want to find an appropriate meeting site and to arrange the settings, making sure everyone sees and hears each other properly, ensuring flexible possibilities for small group discussions, and so on.



Dialogicity and spaces in time (1)

- ✓ A profound dialogue will require more than a couple of minutes, even between just two people, and more time is required with several people present discussing weighty matters and especially if all the voices are to be appreciated and heard.



- ✓ More meetings (as in Open Dialogue) or one meeting (as in Anticipatory Dialogue).
- ✓ Do the participants get an equal share or does someone get to dominate? Participants will notice allocations of time, though with more meetings to come there are also more possibilities to compensate for any imbalances.

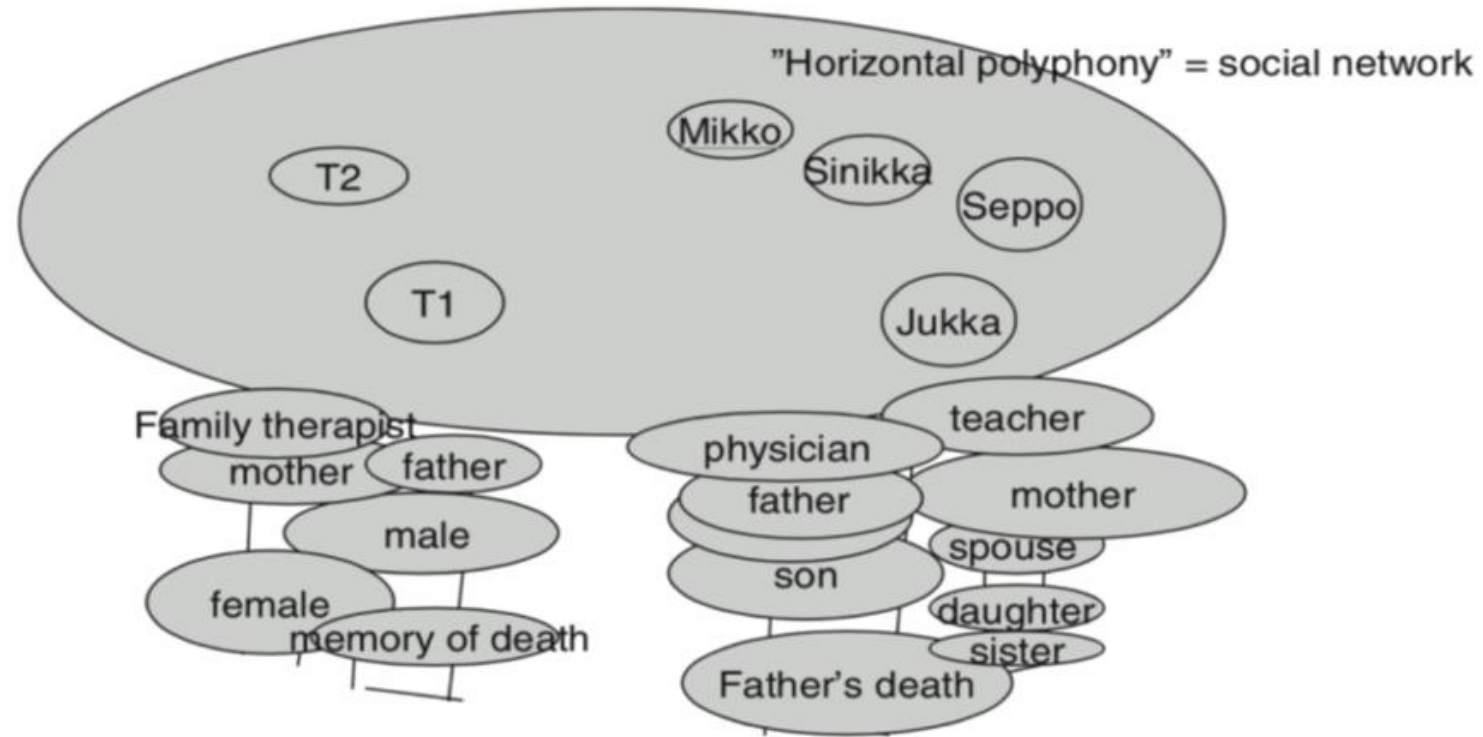
Dialogicity and spaces in time (2)

Separation of talking and listening

- ✓ This practice, originally inspired by Tom Andersen's work [1], aims at making space for both external and internal voices to be heard.

[1] Andersen, T. (1991). *The reflecting team: Dialogues and dialogues about the dialogues*. New York: Norton.





- "Vertical polyphony" = inner voices

Figure 1. Illustration of horizontal and vertical polyphony

Polifonia verticale = voci interne

There is a polyphony of voices present even in one-on-one dialogues. Besides taking part in dialogues between the people present, each participant takes part in dialogues with their inner voices.

Dialogicity as social space (1)

Social space of presence: creation of a safe and welcoming atmosphere that encourage a feeling of
«**us here now together**»

- ✓ The relation is the starting point
- ✓ The aspect of inclusion and exclusion is key
 - Who are the significant persons?
 - Who point them out and why?



Dialogicity as social space (2)

- ✓ Complex issues exceed the boundaries of a compartmentalised system
- ✓ Integrating professional work and plans for action



- 1. Horizontal:** Expertise, function, peers.
- 2. Vertical:** Rank, class, seniority, authority, power.
- 3. Stakeholder:** Partners, constituencies, value chain, communities.
- 4. Demographic:** Gender, generation, nationality, culture, personality, ideology.
- 5. Geographic:** Location, region, markets, distance.

Dialogicity as discursive space (1)

All **utterances**, not just verbal one, are simultaneously *response* and *invitation to respond* (Bakhtin, 1984):

- ✓ In **authoritative discourse** utterances are finite, completely already without the listener joining to develop them, they do not require or welcome others to modify them. You are supposed to acknowledge the authority of the speaker and others are invited to absorb the ideas.
- ✓ In **dialogical discourse**, on the other hand, utterances are open and invite modifications and even playing with them.

Dialogicity as discursive space (2)



Dialogicity in worrying situation where you can anticipate unwelcome developments:

- ✓ Understandable temptation to take control
- ✓ However, it is an illusion that the others will assume our position: they cannot occupy the same point in the social world and see things in the same ways

Dialogue and decision-making – keep it separate!

Decision making implies restricting alternatives until there is only one left. In dialogical discourse, alternatives are kept open. It might be useful to have dialogue to inform decision making and after to reflect on what the decision means for participants.

Dialogicity as mental space (1)

Participants experiencing to be treated as unique persons worthy of being listened to vs being positioned as recipients:

- ✓ *Psychological uniqueness* (Shotter, 1993)
- ✓ Importance of *difference* for dialogicity (Bakhtin, 1984)
- ✓ The *Other is always more* than one can grasp (Levinas, 2004)
- ✓ Leave room for *insight*
- ✓ Have *certainty of not knowing*

Dialogicity as mental space (2)

- ✓ «I will respect your Otherness unconditionally»
vs I will listen to you, if...
- ✓ Respecting unique relational individuals
- ✓ Avoid strong conviction and authoritarian discourse
- ✓ Be aware of the risks of categorizations



Dialogicity as mental space (3)

- ✓ Emotions are contagious (Surakka, 1999)
- ✓ As corporal being embodied in relations, we attune to each other without efforts and all the time (Seikkula et al, 2015)
 - ✓ Although we can not read each other feelings, we can *feel* them
 - ✓ Richer understanding if we remain open to multiple voices (polyphonic nature of truth)
- ✓ Being respectful, curious and empathetic
 - ✓ Prerequisites and outcomes of dialogical practices



Practice: general guidelines

- ✓ Participants should be given the chance to think for themselves
- ✓ Include reflections
- ✓ Everyone have the possibility to share
- ✓ Use each other's names
- ✓ Only one person speaks at a time
- ✓ There is no single right answer
- ✓ Being mindful- in the the present moment

To summarise:

Tasks/challenges in dialogical practices

1. Arranging the physical place to make it appropriate for dialoguing
2. Making sure there is adequate time and that it is “distributed” in a dialogue-favourable way
3. Including the significant persons and helping them to join in the social space of presence
4. Encouraging the open mental space for respectful curiosity and empathy
5. Preserving dialogical discourse jointly with the others in the encounters and averting authoritative discourse

Dialogic Organization Development

The impact of Dialogical Practice in Organizational Science

- ✓ Bushe & Marshak (2009) theorized the emergence of a new species of Organization Development (OD) that they label Dialogic, to differentiate it from the foundational Diagnostic form
- ✓ They argued that how any OD method is used in practice will be depend on the mindset of the practitioner
- ✓ They assume that *“diagnostic and dialogic action logics are mixed and matched, perhaps serving as figure and ground to each other, with one being accentuated to varying degrees over the other, in the minds of individual practitioners” (Bushe & Marshak, 2014, p. 2).*



Diagnostic OD

- ✓ Based on the change theories developed in the 1940s-50s by Kurt Lewin
- ✓ Change is conceptualized as a planned process of “unfreezing” a current social equilibrium, creating “movement” to a new and more desirable future equilibrium that then needs to be “refrozen” to sustain the change.
- ✓ A key aspect of planned change is action research, which includes “diagnosis” of the existing situation - the elements, factors and forces maintaining the current state in order to know where and how to intervene to induce unfreezing and movement in the direction of the desired state.

Dialogic OD- Theoretical basis

✓ Complexity science

- ✓ Challenging dominant assumptions of a fragmented, linear and predictable world:
 - a. Chaos arises through the interaction of individual agents
 - b. Complexity as “ a state that is just stable enough, far from equilibrium”
 - c. Self-organisation spontaneously arises when multiple agents interact

✓ Social constructionism/interpretative social science

- ✓ Meaning depend on relationship. It has a fluid and contextualized nature (Gergen, 1999)
- ✓ If language constitute our social world, conversation and dialogue can be a source of transformation

Contrasting Diagnostic and Dialogic Organization Development (OD)

	Diagnostic OD	Dialogic OD
Influenced by	Classical science, positivism, and modernist philosophy	Interpretive approaches, social constructionism, critical and postmodern philosophy
Dominant organizational construct	Organizations are like living systems	Organizations are meaning-making systems
Ontology and epistemology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reality is an objective fact• There is a single reality• Truth is transcendent and discoverable• Reality can be discovered using rational and analytic processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reality is socially constructed• There are multiple realities• Truth is immanent and emerges from the situation• Reality is negotiated and may involve power and political processes
Constructs of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Usually teleological• Collecting and applying valid data using objective problem-solving methods leads to change• Change can be created, planned, and managed• Change is episodic, linear, and goal oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Often dialogical or dialectical• Creating containers and processes to produce generative ideas leads to change• Change can be encouraged but is mainly self-organizing• Change may be continuous and/or cyclical
Focus of change	Emphasis on changing behavior and what people do	Emphasis on changing mindsets and what people think

From Bushe & Marshak, 2009

Assumptions of the Leader Dialogical Mindset

1. Reality and relationships are socially constructed
2. Organizations are social networks of meaning making
3. Transformational leadership shapes how meaning is made and especially the narratives which guide people's experience
4. Organizations are continuously changing, in both intended and unintended ways, with multiple changes occurring at various speeds

ASSUMPTIONS OF THE DIALOGIC MINDSET (2)

5. Groups and organizations are inherently self-organizing, but disruption is required for transformational adaptation and change

6. Adaptive challenges are too complex for anyone to analyze all the variables and know the correct answer in advance, so the answer is to use emergent change processes

7. Leading emergent change requires mobilizing stakeholders to self-initiate action, then monitoring and embedding the most promising initiatives

Reflecting

✓ Be respectful, curious and sensitive

- ✓ Avoid judgmental comments
- ✓ Respect silence

✓ Gaze is not directed towards the clients - the network is free to just listen, if they want to

✓ Formulate ideas subjectively and in a hypothetical form

- "Could it be that...?"
- "It seems to me as if..."
- "I am not sure, but maybe..."
- "I'm asking myself, whether..."

- ✓ Speak in a slow manner and make your reflections short
- ✓ Short breaks (5 secs) between one speaker and another
- ✓ Each person should reflect
- ✓ Longer dialogues in the reflections reduce the attention of the listeners
 - ✓ not more than 6 ideas - maximum of a few minutes
- ✓ Talking as if to oneself
- ✓ Expressing an inner dialogue
- ✓ Offer new ideas instead of an affirmation of something that has been said already in the reflection
- ✓ Differences & polyphony are usually more helpful than consensus
 - ✓ Complementary or even an opposing idea

Dialogical Practice - References

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