***PREVENTING AND SOLVING SOCIAL CONFLICT***

***BY CREATING SPACE FOR DIALOGUE***

***A proposal for PhD research***

***By***

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**1- Introduction**

My proposal, which builds on my M.S. thesis, fits in with the one specific theme of your academic career: Public Space, Public Domain and also your initiatory role at Amsterdam Centrum for Conflict Studies: conflict and its negative and positive effects of it.

In my thesis, I concentrated on the interdisciplinary position of cultural studies and urban sociology, focusing on cultural patterns of youth in living with each other, such as their intimate relationships, and urban unbalanced development that leads to harsh struggle and conflict between uptown and downtown youth. In this study I found a unique landscape of problems of cultural discrimination with different aspects of inequity between young people such as in gender, race, economic class and the like.

An important point of my thesis was the ethnographical concept of *lived experience*. Usually without lived experiences and historical memories of urban inhabitants, finding the roots of conflict and violence is very hard. Most of the time violence remains hidden until times that we see or hear about obvious conflict and crime in the news. After conflicts, people unfairly tend to justify one side of a struggle, whilst most of the time two sides of the struggle are guilty. Without knowledge of lived experiences and historical memories of urban inhabitants, the search of causes and solutions relies on incomplete information.

So for understanding the root causes of violence, it is necessary to study the social and cultural discrimination among the different classes of youth such as people's disrespect either due to their life-styles such as affectionate dependencies to family members or due to their body gestures, hairstyles and religious beliefs. In this way, as a method, a focus on *intimacy* as a vitally lived experience is needed as one the most important elements of *ethnographical observation*. Lack of intimacy can be seen as an indicator for identifying of probable discriminations and conflicts.

So by ethnographic techniques, in my M.S. thesis I intended to investigate memories and day to day stories of young people about common intimacies and hostilities between urban inhabitants, especially in gathering places which they choose for their leisure activities. I tried to find friendly spaces of middle and upper class youth in Tehran’s recourse which have been gathering places of youths since adolescence or even childhood. In these places, young people exchange their ideas and experiences concerning everyday hostility and disrespect.

As an observation activity, I concentrated on *everyday life* and its process such as alienated work or social irresponsibility that destroys intimacy and solidarity among the youth. The study mainly took place in important shopping centers of uptown Tehran where youth groups gathered in recourse together with other youngsters some of whom they knew and others they did not. At the gathering places, I looked for the roots of the harsh and fierce struggles between youth groups of text and that in this case means uptown and downtown young people. This situation occurs when downtown youth groups having widely different intentions ranging from psychological revenge to assimilation with “high class people”, offend the moral sanctum of uptown and ruin lively and friendly relations between uptown youth groups in the environment of shopping centers, for example by disturbing sexual and love relations between young local residents or by promoting drug addiction.

Then, for finding information about the intensity of conflict or the closeness of interaction between two groups, I initiated the creation of *dialogical* space by these groups for resolving their problems, but without successful results.

At present in my research at PhD level, I want to research supplementary methods and more detailed theoretical frameworks that are necessary for effective and satisfactory *dialogues*; dialogues such as were mentioned above.

In this way, in addition to a trip to Leiden and Amsterdam for investigating future steps for continuing my study, in March 2009 I delivered a lecture[[1]](#footnote-2) on this thesis during the conference of Ethics in Everyday Life in Salzburg, Austria, organized by Inter-Disciplinary.Net[[2]](#footnote-3). This is a non-profit network with an office located in Oxford. For more detail, I attach the text of this lecture.

In this PhD proposal, I want to answer the question how to reduce the intense conflicts and cultural discriminations between members of one community such as youth groups or immigrant communities and the main body of society. Therefore, I mainly concentrate on interrelations between the members of one community instead of their relationships with other groups, cultures or institutions of the society. The main topic of the PhD proposal is how to conduct effective and satisfactory dialogues in order to investigate and find the main reasons of conflicting living experiences of these urban residents. So with this main objective and following the guidelines for proposal submission on the site of Leiden University I will now briefly discuss the key features of this PhD proposal.

**2-Problem Statement**

In my thesis, I will look into the effects of sexual, racial and cultural discrimination on the social capabilities of certain groups. Due to this repression their economic opportunities are reduced as well as their social motivation for creative work or responsible citizenship. As a result their abilities to become intimate and (successfully) cooperate with family members, peer groups, colleagues and the like is poor, and they show aggressive and selfish behaviors leading to violent conflicts.

These forms of deprivation and discrimination are accumulated and repeated in everyday life leading to everyday crime (big or small), which in their turn can cause even serious crises for society, for example crises unleashed by Muslim immigrants, racial or religious minorities or youth subcultures (like the recent riots in France); some may even have occurred because of incompetence of public administration (like the recent rubbish crisis in Italy) and the like.

A first problem that can be identified is weakness of solidarity especially among younger generations that do not experience or don't believe in the ideals of their parents or intellectuals who are engaged in activities such as anti-racial protests or demonstrations against capitalism.

A second problem is the collapse of traditional cooperative identities especially among minorities or immigrants in the urban public spheres of more developed countries.

In the unbalanced development of urban environments, these problems are exacerbated by individuality, egocentrism and selfishness that are typical for the mainstream life-styles of modern society.

**3- The Urgency of Problem**

Basically, deep roots of cultural/social conflicts are weakened solidarity, weakened intimacy and weakened cooperation between the people. Therefore, this research wants to rebuild solidarity and intimacy and consequently to advice on policies in the following two problem areas:

**3-1-First Problem Area: Unbalanced Urban Development**

Unbalanced urban development and cultural/social discrimination have reinforced each other or they were two sides of the same coin since the start of rational planning by western nation-states, and subsequently other nation-states. So, reviewing of some forgotten aspects of urban development can help outline new guidelines for better understanding or resolving of cultural/social conflicts.

I will now describe how rational urban planning led to unbalanced urban development.

Below I will explain how urban development disregarded in urban districts by the government. This unbalance can be illustrated by unconsidered activities and social spaces that are necessary for balanced urban development:

1) At the level of cultural development by governmental organizations, most of the time the *public sphere* as a social space is not considered. *Public sphere* is something like a space for gathering of equal and free citizens. According to a theorythat has first been developed by Jurgen Habermas (1962), in the public sphere, communal discussion on public affairs and problem solving by urban residents, is theoretically formed by *communicative action* (1981). But in reality, at the level of cultural planning by governmental organizations, *public sphere* does not have a unique and legitimate position for embarking on urban development. Sometimes, recourses, coffeehouses and public locations have a semi-function of public sphere but they don't have the particularity and properties of the theoretical public sphere.

Moreover, most of the historical traditions of *enlightenment* in western countries which were vitalized by communal free discussions have shifted to universities, artistic spaces and private gathering places of intellectuals and their media. Also, in less developed countries, there is a shift from popular emotional rituals to violent underground activities, ideological government or repressed and usually unsuccessful social movements.

As a result of this shift, the unemotional urban environment has been formed outside public sphere and includes ordinary people engaging in full time work, media-related leisure, and private life. In the absence of a public sphere, there is a greater potential for socio-cultural conflict. It is my hypothesis that effective dialogue could rebuild disregarded public spheres. Finally, from these dialogical public spheres new methods may be conceived for the urban planners and governmental organizations.

2-There is category in the public sphere including social movements that are far from the everyday socio-cultural conflicts of ordinary people. Among them are N.G.O. activists, green and feminist campaigners and humanitarian workers. Most of these voluntary activists are well educated intellectuals. In other words, activities in the public sphere do not concern the realities in day to day life like the need to engage in commerce at the highest profit, or to earn a living by full time and sometimes alienating work. Family tasks, racial preferences and religious norms can constrain persons to only care and engage with members of their small communities (friends, family, religious sect or others) and combination of these obligatory engagements with general dissatisfactions of private life, indirectly can sow the seeds of conflict and violence among the members of racial and youth groups and even other family members.

Due to this gap between public life and everyday private life, gradually historical traditions of the public sphere such as syndicalism collapse and with it the ability to gaining a better salary, job security, decrease of working hours and the like. Another example is youth subculture and their music bands and life style which have become more conform with the general needs of media market such as lovely private content of poems until live recording and protesting content of poems and songs.

In addition, the capitalist market motivates consumerism in private life and consequently lived experiences of employees, immigrants, ethnic groups, women, or youth groups in public life can't improve beyond ineffective demonstrations and protest without any change in quality of their public life, for example despair of N.G.O. members due to result of climate change conference, violent protests against globalization or recent blind riots of youth in France.

Therefore, public communities such as employees, immigrants, ethnic group, women or youth groups need cooperation and dialogue for investigating and defining their problems, needs and probably common goals, so they can contribute as responsible members of their community and without violence and conflict. The approach through dialogue aims to cool and reduce violence and conflict between communities resulting from selfish materialist lifestyles on one hand and prejudice in favor of one’s own family, race etc on the other.

With this approach, community oriented people can help each other to find the solutions for their problems that caused by disrespect to their different cultural beliefs and norms, economic deprivation, educational unequal opportunities, gender discrimination and the like. This is necessary for rebalancing urban development in which governmental planning and attention to individual needs of human beings is strong but the public sphere is left weak.

**3-2-Second Problem area: The Theoretical Challenge Posed by Non-applied Aspects of Social Science**

It is unwise to separate theory, with its theoretical concepts, from practice with its empirical problem-oriented approach. Theory separated from practice would confine the work of academics to theoretical cognitive activities such as presented in written conference papers, treatises, public speeches or scientific lectures.

If academic disciplines are limited to theory, then experts would be supposed to only discuss and observe social phenomena of society and specify conceptual frameworks based on theoretical research. Vice versa, without theoretical grounding, a situation where social scientists want to create new experiences for community members based on new theoretical framework -to define and solve their problems- cannot be shaped[[3]](#footnote-4). Alternative experiences through the social movements, racial emancipation politics, welfare guidelines, environmental or rehabilitation approaches of NGO's and the like, and, ironically, also scientific explanations of these existing alternative phenomena would be repeated and practical theoretical-based suggestions for improvement or creation of such experiences would be lost.

When theory and practice are separated, what is the similarity between the social scientist as a theoretical observer or the critical scientist on the one hand and the intellectual pragmatist or activists in social movements on the other? What is the role of social science, its methodologies and theories and its enlightenment spirit for bridging this gap between theory and action or between scientist and activist?

By this thesis, I hope to provide an answer to this question. An answer to this question is urgent because disciplines of social science may be used to distill practical guidelines, by which practitioners can embark on new courses of action and also intellectuals can use the approaches of social science for example the methodology of the ethnographer.

Such approaches may help the marginalized classes in big cities to remember and rethink what intimate experiences they left behind when they emigrated from their cherished motherland to the materialistic and selfish environment of the city. In the next part of this proposal, I will discuss the similar methods as solutions to bring this about.

**4-Solutions**

**4-1-Introduction; Constructing Dialogue Based on an Ethnographic Framework Focused on Memoires and Everyday Events**

In order to reduce the intensity of conflicts and culturally and socially repressive discrimination among racial groups, youth sub-cultures, Muslim immigrants, etc, I proposed the use of effective and satisfactory dialogue aiming at discussing the forgotten intimacy of cultural communities and families on one hand and the unsuccessful experiences in public life of urban inhabitants on the other.

The agenda and content of these dialogues must be constructed after recording and observing narratives, conversations, doing a widespread survey at public gathering places and collecting the narratives of their inhabitants. In this survey, inclusion of historical and day-to-day events of specific urban environments should be considered, for example mostly during the leisure time, activities inside shopping centers and their day to day occurrences can show the weakness of solidarity among uptown youth groups, which I explored in my M.A. thesis. Therefore, their memoires can shed light on the main real problems of racial and religious minorities, immigrants, youth subculture, majority uptown groups and the like.

Diverse and different memoires about everyday experiences are available via an ethnographic framework that is focused on situations leading to conflict. In such a framework, narratives and memories of detailed events may reveal indicators such as the drudgery of earning a living without enthusiasm for the work, the lack of intimacy in neighborhoods and social relations, everyday boredom, aggressive reactions to selfish behavior and everydayness, lived experiences reflecting social indifference towards minorities, cultural alienation and the like that may be reported by ethnic groups, women, youth groups, and other.

For this purpose, I outline two research projects that I did to investigate specific problems of urban communities. The problems that were be identified in these two researches, were very necessary for constructing the agenda for further dialogues between members of urban communities in order to reduce their problems. Below, I discuss the methodology that I will apply similarly in this Ph.D. thesis for identifying the problems and constructing dialogue based on an ethnographic framework.

**a) Home Business Studies: Development Strategies and Participation Patterns**

I have started this project since delivering my proposed program for surveying existing home businesses to the Strategic Office for Management of Human Resources, a subsidiary office of the Labor and Social Affairs Ministry.

As a pilot study, I designed 4 phases that include identifying and reactivating the capacity for marketing, training, organizing and financially supporting home business activities in three provinces of Iran. This project was planned at two levels, i.e. of government policy and the functioning of home business activities. Its main objective was reduction of conflicts between provincial offices and home business people caused by the absence of clear rules or legal guidelines for home business or by loans based on confidential negotiations between government and business people.

So, for finding the problems~~,~~ the project set out to gather data and analyze issues such as financial problems, budget deficit and unproductive official interventions and to design quantitative parameters like socio-economical indicators.

In this way, in accordance with the everyday memoires of home business people, I wanted to investigate the experiences and real events in their activities and problems to satisfy owners of home, employees and consumers, regarding salary, productivity and quality. For example, what conflicts are there between neighborhoods and owners of businesses, or resulting from disobedience of children who work for their parents? Moreover, some problems can solve by cultural approaches of ethnical minorities in creation of ethnic products or face-to-face and close contacts of home business activities and the like.

**b) Evaluation of Social and Cultural Potentials of Persian Gulf Islands: Hendorabi Island**

In this project, I concentrated on opportunities and threats that had challenged the traditional living of people of Hendorabi. This island, close to the more developed island of Kish, is preparing itself for plans for economic and commercial development, focusing on tourism in order to exploit its attractive historical and natural sites.

Using different methods of dialogue, I tried to persuade different strata of rural residents such as youth groups, women and the mayor of the village to scrutinize various opportunities for future development of their island, such as tourism activities, training on new environmental and industrial skills related to land and water protection, and diving. Then, by using the method of dialogue, by being in each other’s company, an atmosphere of intimacy and social solidarity was created for the participants.

Again, by researching the specific problems of rural inhabitants through dialogue, ethnographic observation and other forms of data collection, historical and social changes during the past 100 years were identified such as the loss of ancestral skills and jobs, emigration to more developed places like Kish and Dubai, gap between generations, crises of the island like disease and war

**4-2-Solving the Problems through Dialogue**

After collection of data on past developments and events of the community, I will discuss with them how these data reflect on their current problems. This may lead to their rethinking the origins of their everyday conflicts, such as those occurring with other members of their community or with other cultural groups. Are their conflicts due to the neglect of communal activities or past traditions, for example face-to-face work in the home business or communal work for the development of their village? After this has been clarified, the time may be proper for a next set of dialogues in order to identify solutions of the problems.

For the next set of dialogues, the proposed theoretical framework and methodology are discussed below. In the theoretical framework, I will propose some concepts for solving problems, while in the methodological section I will show how these concepts can be employed for developing the second set of dialogues.

**4-2-1-Theoretical Framework**

Above, I wrote about the social interactions within ethnic or youth groups, the warm intimacy between local urban residents and the communal solidarity and cooperation in shared activities. In addition, I described how these relations have been damaged and even destroyed by different processes of unbalanced urban development, and I concluded that memories of past experiences and social relations are of great importance for reduction of hostility and conflict. Then I described how I may identify these problems and experiences during the first set of dialogues.

*Everyday life* with its everyday annoyances theoretically is a starting point for understanding how discriminative, violent or indifferent behavior between people originates.

My intention is to clarify certain processes of *everyday life* and explain experiences of ordinary people, such as *boredom,* and *indifference* to social problems and the like by using some concepts from the critical theories of Walter Benjamin.

Walter Benjamin (1939) outlined the concept of ‘Erlebnis’ or *ephemeral shock* (Highmore, ­ 2002)*.* Such shock may lead to sudden realization of the decline of social and political values, when a person suddenly is faced with complex problems as varied as domestic conspiracy, divorce, political oppression, economic fraud, impassive children, aggressive isolated gangs and psychological fear or painful situation of the impoverished mass.

Shockmay bring to mind the past intimacy of the close face-to-face market where people were not wasting time for consuming, or for the poor people, the loss of intimacy and close relationships with other people. It may bring back to memory the more protective situations of deprived and poor people in past times when traditionally they had economic and affective protection of their family members and others. For middle class groups, it may remind them the better social security, social welfare and freedom of speech they used to enjoy.

After these shocks there is one crucial question: How to recreate what has been lost or discarded? At micro level, these losses might be felt as more inattentive, irresponsible and unreliable forms of communication between people.

Namely, after dialogue, the reactions of the poor racial immigrants about their better past life at homeland and their painful present situation at abroad can be categorized in three ways:

1) Indifference, describing their present situation as normal and even defending the painful and troubled situations of themselves and others

2) Avoidance of talking, silence, compassion and regret for better life in the past , and proposing protective solutions for discrimination and inequality, such as better wages and more power to purchase the attractions of industrial society, as a replacement for the caring role of families in traditional society,

3) ­Light-hearted, playful, ironic and ridiculing reactions to the painful and troubled states in which they themselves or others are. Not only do they try to deprecate the past life but they also portray the present and future situations of themselves or others absurd relics of the past.

Now with help from three linguistic terms of Bakhtin (1922-24):

1)’I-for-myself’,

2)’I-for-the-other’, and

3)’other-for-me’ (Todorov, 1984)

I will now formulate three antitheses or opposites to the above-mentioned three *systematically* *distorted communications* (an expression from Habermas (1976)) (Pusey, 1987):

1) Responsibly relating to the others with concern for the painful and troubled situations of themselves or others;

1) Being responsible persons relate to the other persons via attention and concern to the painful and troublesome situations of their selves or other selves,

2) Wanting the others to behave responsibly, and wanting them to be concerned for their needs and rights and to understand their sense of less,

3) Behaving seriously towards others by trying to experience, understand and think about the identity they happen to have (such as their sex, race, religion and the like). They can try to become more mature by building up a new set of experiences of what it is to be someone else by participating in such things as carnival. There they can experiment with different identities (sex, race, religion and even socially deviant behavior) by dressing up and experiencing how other persons can be under attack and ridicule.

During such cultural events with their artistic representations, a man can experience the feminine side of his personality, the atheistic can experience the spiritual friendly space of religious sects or the black person can experience the solidarity of their community during the racial ceremony.

**4-2-2-Methodology**

In this proposal, by means of the three antitheses, during a dialogue I separately motivate the two sides in a conflict to protest or agree with the suggestion rebuild the past life which was better according to ideas of the other persons of their community. It means that their troubled present situation and their better life in the past are discussed and this may motivate them to think about how to rebuild their better past life in accordance with the three antitheses.

In this methodological approach, each side in the conflict can openly elucidate its experiences of desperation for having neglected their responsibilities (distorted thesis no.1), having abandoned their rights (distorted thesis no.2) or having ridiculed the past and present situations of their life (distorted thesis no.3). Then without fear, participators in the dialogue can revisit their experiences, evaluate why and how they came about and moreover defend, deny or even confirm their mistakes during these experiences.

Simultaneously, it is likely that the former *distorted communications* (refer to p.12 & 13) make way for their three antitheses (refer to p.13) and become *speech acts*[[4]](#footnote-5). Speech acts as these happen especially when members of the community speak out about problematic issues they experience in their present situation, such as discrimination (distorted thesis no.1 to 3).

The two sides can now discuss the better past life, and emphasize, exaggerate, elicit, suggest and even make up the experiences of the past when the immigrants lived with their families in their old home communities in a more respectable condition. By this discussion the formerly distorted communications will be able to make way for their opposites or antitheses (refer p.13).

Finally, by reviving and sharing their memories, immigrants will reluctantly confess and accept the merits of their former past life. This acceptance is the corner stone for building their immigrant identity. This renewed identity is a basic source that can reduce the conflict between immigrants and other sectors of the society.

Without this renewed identity, immigrants will be without the protective shield it provides against painful situations in the present or discriminative actions against them as strangers. With it, however, they can define and recognize themselves by their remarkable common history and identity. Eventually, they can consolidate their solidarity as a protective unity against the selfish aggressive situations in everyday life. It is precisely this solidarity built on acceptance of the better past life that can reduce conflict. This can come about by dialogues using of the three forms of antitheses.

**4-2-3-Practical Suggestions for Solutions**

But this challenging dialogues as well as renewed identities usually are not the practical guaranties for reduction of the conflicts. Despite these dialogues, participators can be persuaded to return to their normal everyday life such as their discriminative beliefs, painful present situations and the like. Then, for real change, participators must practically create their renewed identities with real new experiences.

It means that after the step of reluctantly confessionary acceptance of their better past life until trying to experience and recreation of their past memories (result of the dialogues), as a second step, primary suggestions can be declared. These following first suggestions for action may be:

But these challenging dialogues as well as renewed identities usually are no guarantee for reduction of conflict in practice. Despite these dialogues, participators can be persuaded to return to their everyday life with all its painful situations such as discrimination and the like. For real change to occur, participants must establish new experiences.

It means that after the acceptance that their past life was better, thanks to reviving memories of the past by means of dialogue, as a second step, suggestions can be made for practical action. First suggestions for action may be:

- Setting up or supporting face to face home businesses of immigrants to solve their problem of unemployment,

-Rebuilding social networks for activities such as nature conservation, secondary socialization of children and families (both of immigrants and natives) by initiating training workshops or action for building social responsibility and public opinion against discrimination, poverty, inequality, lack of education and the like.

-Rebuilding social care and empathy by construction relationships between native and immigrant in order to come to deal with humiliation, cultural poverty and communal traumas. Besides official welfare policies of the Government as well as the ordinary tasks of family members, activities for social and economic protection may be initiated by social networks of immigrants and natives in urban neighborhoods.

-Cultural exchange based on the *cultural diversity* concept and re-applying the neglected cultural customs of the immigrants and alternative life styles of other cultures can be considered as experiments with new ways of life can be considered. So, artistic exhibitions, documentary movies, fusion music, novel reading, discussions on positive and negative aspects of cultural traditions, programs for native people to visit the home country of immigrants and the like, may be organized with the specific aim of recreation of reinforcing renewed identities and as a result reducing tensions in urban immigrant communities.

In this stage urban residents of specific communities may be ready for making practical suggestions and constructing new social networks along the lines mentioned above. I will write more about these steps of the research in the last section of my proposal about the theme of planning. But before this, briefly, I will describe some literature that is close to my field of study.

**5- Literature Review**

The two main sources of this proposal deal with *formal structure* and *thematic content* respectively*.* In the formal structure, some references are used that clarify how the researcher, with knowledge of the structure of dialogue, facilitates the process and leads the participants through the three steps of 1) identifying the problem 2) making immigrants accept that their life was better in the past life and making them experience and revive their past memories and 3) making practical suggestions and constructing networks.

On the other hand, as for thematic contents, similar themes occur as in research on life-styles: empathic feelings, cooperative relationships and sympathetic friendships. These themes can be used as variables representing the “ideal life” of human beings comparable to what I described as the “better past life” of the immigrants. Such themes can function much the same as topics for dialogues and starting points for explanation of unpleasant or satisfactory situations of the participants in dialogue, for example immigrants.

Through participation in certain types of activities participants can better figure out their problems, revive their memories more easily as things that matter, and rebuild and grasp their feelings of empathy cooperative relationships and sympathetic friendships. Such activities may include the carnival traditions of their self or host country; the everyday parties of their own cafes; communal media-related discussions after watching the T.V. political or social programs for instance during the voting campaign; walking, camping, strolling or communal trekking of the neighborhood, youth subculture groups and the like; or even more individual activities such as traditional cooking by an immigrant housewife for her children as opposed to the use of fast-food products.

For the formal structure of dialogue, the main process of my problem-solving research, I have found inspiration in E.T.Stringer’s *"Action Research: A Handbook for Practitioners"* (1996). The author describes management workshops in step by step stages similar to the process of dialogue in this proposal: problem identification, problem solving and practical suggestions. Also the role of researcher as initiator and facilitator of dialogue is described in this book.

In addition, from an *ethnographic* point of view, I adopted the approach of James P. Spradley in *"The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in Complex Society"* (1972). In this book, *categorization* is defined as “categorized observations that concern the differences and similarities between observational entities”. It means that with *Totality* as a basic concept of *ethnography*, *categorization* of the varying equal or unequal relations between the immigrants as united whole is possible. If we observe the stable permanent relationships between the immigrants as a united whole and apply the observational instructions of this approach, we may be able to identify different equal or unequal relations between them.

In this way, I identified three different forms of distorted communication with characteristics of inequality such as defiance, disagreement, discrimination and obedience and equality with characteristics of empathy, cooperative relationships and sympathetic friendships, solidarity and racial emancipation.

Another issue that must be regarded is the united whole of the immigrant community (totality) as a context in which observation of diverse relationships must take place. It means that relying on the mutual personal relationship between two immigrants is not preferred. The three different forms of distorted communication and their antitheses occur through their social interactions with other members of the immigrant community, with their cultural and economical dependency or independence, their family relationships, job relations, religion that must be observed, a totality, for even while they are experiencing severe disagreements and conflicts, they continue to keep their contacts with each other.

Concerning the thematic content of dialogue, as mentioned above, the immigrants engage with each other through four social solutions or even more (refer to p.15 & 16) for understanding their problems, recalling their memories as things that really matter and rebuild and experience their empathic feelings, cooperative relationships and sympathetic friendships (through three steps of dialogue).

In accordance with this, media studies that belong to the tradition of cultural studies in England show how strongly self-awareness Caribbean women are. Through the method of open-ended dialogue, David Morley tried to specify the interpretations of viewers of a famous BBC T.V. program (1980). He wanted to know which social class preferred and selected the mainstream message of this T.V. program that was consumerism and individualism. According to his analysis, Caribbean women insisted on their closeness and traditional solidarity in opposition to the main messages of the T.V. program. The communal habits of caring support towards other Caribbean women caused them not to accept the message of this program. After having watched the T.V. programs, the participants in open-ended dialogue will probably have developed more empathetic feelings towards one another and feel closer to each other.

Besides this research, other domains of social interactions have been investigated by other researchers such as Henry Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. In the theory of Lefebvre, a French sociologist and philosopher, negative and damaging aspects of the tourism that have no effect on creation of the permanent close relationships between the tourists and their host communities, are considered (Highmore,­ 2002); the ideal situations that are created by their mutual efforts to find common interests or shared problems and keeping alive their respectful attention for each other, common experiences and valuable memories during the camping or trekking.

Without such abilities for expanding affectionate relationships, through some sort of very hedonistic leisure camping, the individual persons involve themselves in more routine programs of seeing attractive places, eating, drinking, consuming, retreating and visiting ethnic or religious celebrations in the manner of old-fashioned celebrations without any participation or experiencing of them.

This explanation inspired me to think about the immigrants and possible tourism activities with to introduce their distinctive culture, building expert networks between receiving academics and visiting professionals for joining one another, finding out common interests, exploring preferred archeological or natural sites and the like. Finally, all of these possibilities in order to stimulate their ability for meaningful cooperative communication between the immigrants and can be used to perpetuate the empathetic vigorous ties of the immigrants with their motherlands through introducing this topic to them in different steps of the dialogue and especially the third step of making practical suggestions and constructing networks. It also leads to recalling and remembering their history and realizing the potential it offers for tourism.

Also, similar social situations but in a more individual variety than the tourism example, were discussed by Michel de Certeau, a French scholar (ibid, 2002). He focused on different forms of consumption or cooking such as the consumption of home-made foods, the old-fashioned recipes, drinks from childhood or home country and cooking of the traditional foods by the housewife in contrast to the usual fast-food and the like. So he points out the practical advantages of women insisting on the traditional elements of culture in order to maintain the familial closeness.

Moreover, in accordance with the main goals of this research, remembering of the better past traditional food between the immigrant women can lead to broader results. In this way the researcher, through different stages of dialogues, can provide a proper atmosphere for encouraging the traditional foods by forming a widespread network of different cultural and social communities of immigrant women, and after that he can reinforce lively social spaces in urban neighborhoods.

Now, it is obvious that these networks can be made through the third step of dialogue, but narratives of the immigrant housewives, their looking back on their customs, defining the fast-food product as a problem for habitual diets of their children, and identifying positive mental effects of traditional foods and the supportive cooperative rituals of the traditional cooking, are created through the first and second steps of the dialogues.

Now, after this brief literature review, I will outline the plan of my research below.

**6-Planning**

Below I will outline the four stages for this research which I plan to carry out in four years.

**6-1- First Stage**

In the first half of year one, the theoretical framework and methodology must be completed with more elaborate and relevant literature reviews. The focus will lie on the conflicts between locals and immigrants and on the breakdown of solidarity within the immigrant community.

Then, in the second half of year one, in line with the principal directions of this proposal, I will study the main problems of immigrants in the Netherlands and especially religious and ethnic minorities such as Asian immigrants. My own Asian background together with my close contact with Dutch activist friends in Leiden and Amsterdam will help me to start with the identification of conflicts, cooperation between existing immigrants or their responsibility or lack of it towards each other in their neighborhoods or gathering areas. After that I will record their life experiences, memories, narratives about the crucial conflicting events in the present and the appreciation of their life in the past, as well as their cooperation with others and existing support networks.

During year one, I will regularly work on complementary data gathering, searching archives, analysis of statistics and other investigations such as official reports and relevant quantitative and qualitative researches on immigrants and their problems

**6-2-Second Stage**

In the second year of study, by focusing on the current problems of an immigrant community that will be chosen after review of data and introductory surveys, I will try to outline the way their solidarity and supportive roles loosen and how the loss of closeness in their relationships transforms their lifestyle from a cooperative to a more selfish lifestyle. Also, through ethnographic observation, I will describe the degree of cohesion among members of the immigrant community, which is a vital hinge between community members.

These processes must be described and explained precisely, with details about how, when and why changes and dependencies occur such as I described in my M.S. thesis on the rush of a downtown youth group to an up-town district, following the unbalanced development of the city of Tehran.

Towards the end of the second year, I expect to have the support of friends and activists belonging to the immigrant group. In addition, I must gain confidence among persons of the community and have regular and friendly meetings with them. This is essential, especially for the levels of researches described in 4-2-Solving of Problems and 4-2-3-Practical Suggestions for Solution

**6-3-Third and Fourth Stages**

With reference to the theoretical framework, in year three and stage three I will program the second set of dialogues with serious and challenging discussions about existing problems. Gradually by recognition of the three speech acts and their antitheses, further dialogues will be conducted jointly or separately with youth groups, women and educated persons and likewise among members of the immigrant community.

The main purpose of distinguishing combined and separate dialogues is to specify the best form of dialogue to achieve integration, harmony and solidarity between the participants. It implies that we must explore what combinationof participants is best able to agree on their problems and are able to go through the process of converting distorted communications into their antitheses. For example, from the point of view of group composition a dialogue with a group of immigrant women may appear to produce a better result than a dialogue with a group of immigrant youth

This analysis can lead to a more precise assessment for the second set of dialogues. Without ascertaining the existence of solidarity, cooperation and mutual confidence of the immigrant participants, practical suggestions for social support networks and movements would make no sense (third set of dialogues).

Then, in year four and on level four, dialogues based on agreement, will be initiated in order to organize social support networks, intercultural activities and other options. The number of these initiatives is not important but if only one of these would have a sustainable continuation, i.e. social prestige and ability to solve conflicts arising from discrimination of immigrants, then the evaluation criteria for this PhD research would be met.

Finally, with these criteria, I hope to clarify the main question of this PhD research: Can practical, effective and satisfactory dialogues and ensuing social networks, create a new landscape for the urban planner and Government, and solve the problem of the gap between theory and practice in social science and thereby reduce feelings of pain and helplessness in the immigrant community or not?

***7-Reference***

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1. -http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/probing-the-boundaries/persons/ethics-everyday-life/conference-programmes-abstracts-and-papers/session-1-ethics-and-asian-youths/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. -http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. -For example, it means that by communicative action theory or other new developed forms of it, the social scientists can try to create new communicative experiences or actions for members of community. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. -These antitheses are renamed “speech acts” because of the close similarity with the concept of speech act that was first introduced by Austin & Searle in ordinary language philosophy especially in *How to Do Things with Words* by Austin (1975) and *Speech Acts* by Searle (1969). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)