



GROUND SHIFTING

AN EXPLORATION OF ONE-TO-ONE
CONVERSATION AS A DESIGN PRACTICE

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*“Stories go in circles.
They don’t go in straight lines. It helps if
you listen in circles because there are stories
inside and between stories, and finding your
way through them is as easy and as hard
as finding your way home. Part of finding
is getting lost, and when you are lost, you
start to open up and listen.”*

(TAFOYA, 1995, P.12, AS CITED IN WILLSON, 2008, P.6)

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GROUND SHIFTING

A research methodology that is based on a bottom-up approach where the starting point begins with one-to-one conversations aimed at establishing common ground.

Abstract

DESIGN IS MEANT TO

Bring about a future that is built from the bottom-up. Where the starting point to every solution begins from the end of the spectrum most affected by the problem.

DESIGN IS MEANT TO

Serve anyone and everyone. It is not a privileged practice reserved for any set social segment.

DESIGN IS A TOOL THAT

Enables people of all social statuses to find common grounds that could serve as the starting point.

This research paper explores my process of conducting one-to-one conversations as a method that focuses on intimate interactions rather than generic demographic information. An approach that emphasizes the exchange of thoughts and emotions to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying emotional needs of the speaker.

Ground Shifting is a research methodology employs a bottom-up approach, commencing with one-to-one conversations as a means to establish common ground.

The reality is there exists an undeniable gap between all social spectrum, and we need acknowledge and make peace with the fact that we can never truly understand one another's hardships, trauma, tragedies or difficulties in life. But just because that gap exists does not mean we cannot find common ground, because establishing that base is the key to achieving a starting point for new and better possibilities.

The one-to-one conversations happened at different times and places, during which people shared their personal experiences living away from their home country. Based on the conversations, I suggested three methods to structure the one-to-one conversations: unraveling, rereveling, and shifting.

Unraveling marks the initial phase of the one-to-one conversation process, characterized by the act of sharing and unfolding information. While rereveling is the stage where a designer embarks on introspection and reassessment of their work. Lastly, during the realization stage of shifting, there is an inquiry into the designer's process and knowledge.

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Through my daily interactions, I observed various conversation types. There are short and casual exchanges known as small-talk or icebreakers, often centered around the weather. Professional conversations take place in business meetings or workplaces.

Debates or conflict-oriented discussions require active listening, empathy, and problem-solving skills to find a mutually beneficial resolution. On the other hand, informal conversations with friends and family are unstructured and typically revolve around personal topics like hobbies, interests, and family matters.

I understand conversations as essential. For me, they shift how we relate to ourselves, the individuals, and the environment. Conversations open spaces of knowledge we are unaware of, such as cultures, ideas, thoughts, beliefs, concepts, struggles, hopes, dreams, values, likes, dislikes...etc.

It allows us to reflect on and evaluate our position as designers, parents, teachers, friends, relatives, or strangers. It questions prior conversations, inner thoughts, and unconscious behaviors, establishes new relationships and connections, or disbands existing ones. For me, an authentic conversation starts organically; it is never forced.

By authentic, I mean vulnerability and space for emotions to connect despite the difference between the two conversations. We could prepare a set of exercises or questionnaires or even design a place that might encourage individuals to talk. But such tools will not work unless both individuals conversing feels safe, heard, accepted, and comfortable.

For example, I was part of a government-funded project in Abu Dhabi. The project required our design team to research reasons the Community Majlis¹ buildings are no longer being utilized. The design team was asked to gather insights to provide solutions.

A Community Majlis is a cultural building that

follows a standard one-floor rectangular space design in every neighborhood. The cultural usage of the space was to practice “Shura,” meaning consultation, or to teach the younger generation oral traditions. Only men gather to share questions, concerns, news, and poetry or drink coffee to chit-chat casually. It is a form of debate, conflict-oriented, and a casual conversation.

Historically, Community Majlis (Majlis means seating in Arabic) originated from a nomadic gathering where Emirati men from the same tribe would gather around a fire to share news and hunting techniques, and elders would teach kids oral traditions. Individuals would form a U-shaped circle for tribe members to join at their pace.

The design team and I did every part of the workshop correctly; we used keywords to spark stories and created a list of possibilities for the invited individuals to vote. The outcome was divided into demographics, age groups, and what-if scenarios. As we kept analyzing, we lost everyone’s personal story and emotions to a set of designed graphs and common keywords.

Yet, the most valuable part of the workshop was the unplanned one, when I decided to join a table with five female students to drink coffee casually. I heard a genuine concern between the laughs and the giggles. One female whispered while looking around the Majlis room, “I am worried I don’t know how I would work in a room full of men,” while another shared, “I want to be involved in the Community Majlis, but I don’t know how. I have never been to one”.

I shared my “I” part of the concern as I genuinely cared and did not want to be perceived as an investigator aiming to collect insights and keywords. So, when one of the students said, “I am worried I don’t know how I would work in a room full of men,”

1. Refer to this link to view the project: Community Majlis | Heba Daghistani. (n.d.). Heba Daghistani. <https://www.hebadaghistani.com/communitymajlis>

I replied, “I was anxious too! And even now, after years of experience, I still get nervous around people with more experience and a louder voice than mine. I was also nervous about being in a room filled with elders today.”

Firstly, I do not share the same cultural upbringing as an Emirati woman despite being raised in the Emirates my entire life. Secondly, I have done enough research about the Majlis to understand its role through time, but the research did not reflect the female student’s struggles. As a result, it was essential to pause, observe and listen. I then expressed that I understand the anxiety of being in an unfamiliar experience and that it is not perceived polite for a young individual to “challenge” the thoughts of an elder.

The private casual conversation I had with the female students was not part of the insights the team presented to the client. Because it was unplanned and required deeper understanding. The solutions we offered suggested new innovative space usage but did not tackle the concerns of the female guests we invited.

If I were to re-work the project, I would not have gathered 20 in one room. Instead, I would have opted for one-to-one casual conversation while sharing coffee or walking. I would observe the converser’s interaction with the place and what triggers a memory or a need. I would share my experience as part of the Majlis and what I have been learning.

After receiving the speaker’s consent, I would have suggested having a smaller gathering of groups from different generations. The one-to-one conversation would have played a role in gaining an understanding of each individual; their personal stories would demand presence rather than being lost to slides containing graphs and data, and it would have prepared each individual and me for the next stage, where we sit as a smaller group to discuss possible solutions.



Figure 01: Author (2019) Community Majlis Entrance. This image was taken as part of research project I worked on as a design researcher with Slash Concept Studio back in 2019



Figure 02: Author (2019) Image of one the workshop sessions where i was collecting keywords.

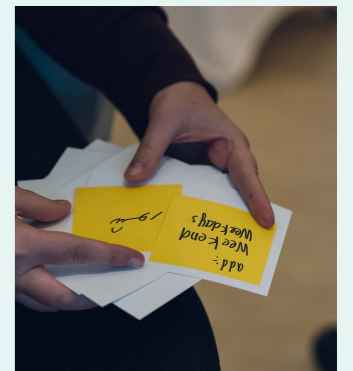


Figure 03: Author (2019) Image of one the keywords.

This image was taken as part of research project I worked on as a design researcher with Slash Concept Studio back in 2019

This image was taken as part of research project I worked on as a design researcher with Slash Concept Studio back in 2019

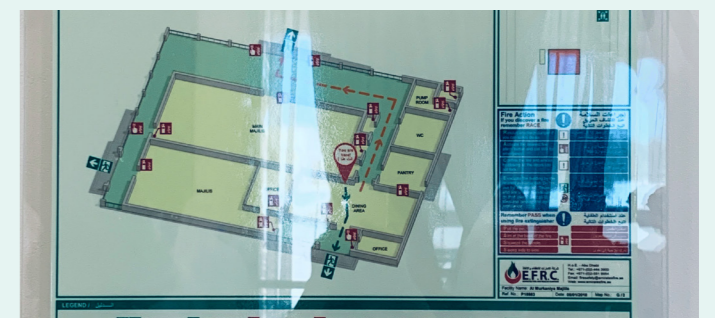


Figure 04: Author (2019) Image of the Community Majlis floor plan.

This image was taken by Heba Daghistani

Why did I set up a one-to-one conversation?

In this section, I shall explain why I set up a one-to-one conversation and give an example of an existing design practice that influenced my thoughts. I chose to explore a one-to-one conversation as a research method because I sought an intimate interaction. I also wanted to explore alternative approaches prioritizing exchanging thoughts and emotions over generic demographic information.

How might a design researcher tap into a deeper understanding of an underlying emotional need of the speaker? Further, conversations are not fixed; they have this shifting dynamic and fluidity. A method of exchange that is not linear to find a mutually recognizable interpretation or an outcome of something.

A conversation starts from a need to gather to pursue knowledge more than I already have. It is a form of gathering that often involves exchanging “I” in a safe place and a comfortable time for both speakers. A conversation and a gathering require an open heart, a curious soul, and engaged listeners for both speakers to cultivate the value of the conversation. This value differs based on the needs of both narrators; it might be to gain connections, compassion, understanding, help, or advice.

Three years ago, I participated in a debate or conflict-oriented conversation hosted by Futuress that greatly influenced me. Futuress² is a feminist platform for learning and publishing dedicated to bringing people together from diverse backgrounds to help guide them in creating their narratives. The platform is co-directed by Nina Paim, a Brazilian designer, editor, curator, and educator, and Maya Ober, an activist, researcher, and educator.

I was part of Futuress’s remote workshop titled Troublemakers Class of 2020, which aimed to bring

ongoing research to discuss and write. By the end of the workshop, each participant would have written an article edited and published on the Futuress platform. During the workshop, we shared our struggles and challenges in design and debated existing thoughts and practices.

We tackled topics such as the education system, typography, and colonization and shared many reading references. The conversation gathering was conducted safely, with all participants in the comfort of their own homes.

During our conversation, I learned about a design rarely seen or discussed in the Emirates. The design I was used to was mainly about branding, marketing, and product design. While the design we talked about during Futuress’s workshop was a design that contributes to supporting inequalities through several systems but also a design capable of questioning such disparities.

An example of such design conversation is Cherrypye’s³ essay titled Culture, no context discusses the ethical challenges of European Ethnographic Museums and their portrayal of cultures without proper context.

The two workshops I was part of, Futuress and Community Majlis, and this research are a form of gathering to conduct a conversation that would help resolve a problem or gain knowledge. In the book Art of Gathering, the author describes the need for the gathering because we need one another to help solve problems, share strengths or weaknesses, make decisions, build, welcome, or say goodbye. (Parker, 2018, p. 11)

The Community Majlis example mentioned above was a form of a gathering where a form of conversation took place; because of that accidental one-to-one

conversation with the female student, I became aware of an unspoken concern and started to notice the interaction between the different generations.

In this research, my one-to-one conversations lean towards casual gatherings; they are typically unstructured and informal; they have been in-person and online. They often involve light-hearted topics like hobbies, interests, or movies to more serious issues like current events or personal experiences.

In such a conversation, I am not aiming to resolve a conflict, interview, debate, or persuade. Instead, I desire to listen and learn about thoughts and feelings. Of course, my goal for the conversation is usually shared beforehand, but I welcome the spontaneous exchange of ideas, sharing experiences, and expressing opinions.

Before using the one-to-one casual conversation method, I had researched the portrayal of post-war and political crises in mainstream media. However, I found myself craving personal answers that I couldn’t find in those sources. I arranged one-to-one conversations with people who had inherited stories of post-war or political conflict narratives to gain a deeper understanding.

Specifically, I sought out individuals forced to leave their homeland due to uncontrollable events like war, conflict, social, economic, political crises, or natural disasters. These conversations were more intimate and informative than desk research or group workshops like the Community Majlis example above.

Thus far, I have explained why I chose to have a one-to-one conversation and how I aimed to look at a method that prioritizes the exchange of thoughts and emotions over generic demographic information. Next, I shall explain who I conversed with and how I set up the conversations.

2. Follow this link to visit the platform:
<https://futuress.org/>

3. Refer to essay: Cherrypye. (2023). Culture, No Context. Futuress. <https://futuress.org/stories/culture-no-context/>

With whom did I have a conversation, and what was the process of setting it up?

This section will explain why I chose a specific target audience, how I initiated the one-to-one conversations, and what challenges I faced. I arranged personal conversations with non-EU students, refugees, and immigrants from the Middle East residing in the Netherlands. The need started from emotional bewilderment.

I am half Adygea / half Dagestani⁴, born in Syria and raised in the UAE. My surname traces me back to what is today known as the Republic of Dagestan. I belong to a diaspora forced away from their land due to Russo-Circassian War (1763–1864). My parents were born and raised in Syria to North Caucasian parents. My parent's inherited stories connect me to Republic of Adygea and Dagestan.

My parents' connections to North Caucasus were inherited from their parents' stories of green mountainous lands, traditional dances, a few recipes, and the pain of being a diaspora. Every Circassian I know has inherited their own story from a parent or a grandparent. I inherited fragments from my grandparent's adaptation. I heard stories of how my parents grew up, the challenges of having a layered national identity, and the constant redefinition of a homeland.

Therefore, I chose this target audience because I have wondered how others inherited and crafted stories about themselves when living away from what was supposed to be their homeland.

To start the one-on-one conversation process, I first created an invitation to start the process. The invitation requested a coffee meeting to discuss two questions:

1) What are your personal stories about post-war or political conflicts?

2) Have these experiences impacted your sense of identity and belonging?

I shared the invitation on platforms I knew my target group was in it, such as WhatsApp's university group chat, and posted it on social media platforms, including Instagram and LinkedIn. I received responses from two individuals on Instagram and one on WhatsApp. Although many of my followers on these platforms were part of my intended audience, I was disappointed by the lack of participation. I questioned whether my invitation lacked appeal or if Instagram stories were quickly overlooked.

Despite some individuals viewing my account and not responding, I took the initiative to message them directly. I received a few replies, with some confirming and others declining. Some individuals suggested I connect with someone more knowledgeable about the topic, while others didn't reply.

I carried out five conversations; each speaker was named based on a feeling or a memory they reminded me of. The first was with The Prayer Plant exploring life as a non-EU student and the women-led Iranian revolution's impact on her. It took place at the school's social space, sipping pumpkin soup.

The second conversation was with The Wind, which was online through Zoom and sought a deep, vulnerable conversation about family history. The third conversation was with The Dutch Volunteer; it was quick and short voice notes through WhatsApp.

In the fourth conversation, I was invited for dinner, and it was with The Family. We discussed life outside Syria and the impact on kids when being raised in different cultures. The fifth conversation was on a boat with Zain, where we shared our fears of pursuing a passion and the guilt of leaving our family behind.

During the gatherings, I shared my purpose, and we introduced ourselves. Our conversations remained organic; I welcomed their natural flow between engagement and silence. I didn't list questions beforehand to avoid unconsciously sticking to them. I accepted that thoughts might not be as organized during a casual one-to-one conversation as when conducting a well-planned workshop.

I sometimes experienced jumps between ideas or incomplete thoughts, but I appreciated the natural flow of dialogue, including shared feelings, moments of silence, and random topics. I ensured that all our conversations were confidential and did not use any recording device. Because I wanted to practice listening and avoid being perceived as a reporter, I would write down my impressions of the speaker, thoughts, place, gestures, and feelings after our conversations.

Writing had two purposes for me. Firstly, it helped me preserve personal details I might forget if I waited too long before writing. Secondly, it served as a personal archive that I could refer to at different stages of my research.

In conclusion, I chose to initiate personal conversations with non-EU students, refugees, and immigrants from the Middle East residing in the Netherlands to explore how others inherited and crafted stories about themselves when living away from what was supposed to be their homeland. Despite facing some challenges, I successfully conducted five one-to-

one casual conversations with different individuals, exploring their experiences with post-war or political conflicts and their impact on their sense of identity and belonging. Writing down my impressions was a personal record to refer to at different stages of this research.

⁴ Refer to essay: Daghistani, H. (2022, June 7). Circling the Circassian Identity. Futureess. <https://futureess.org/stories/circling-the-circassian-identity/>

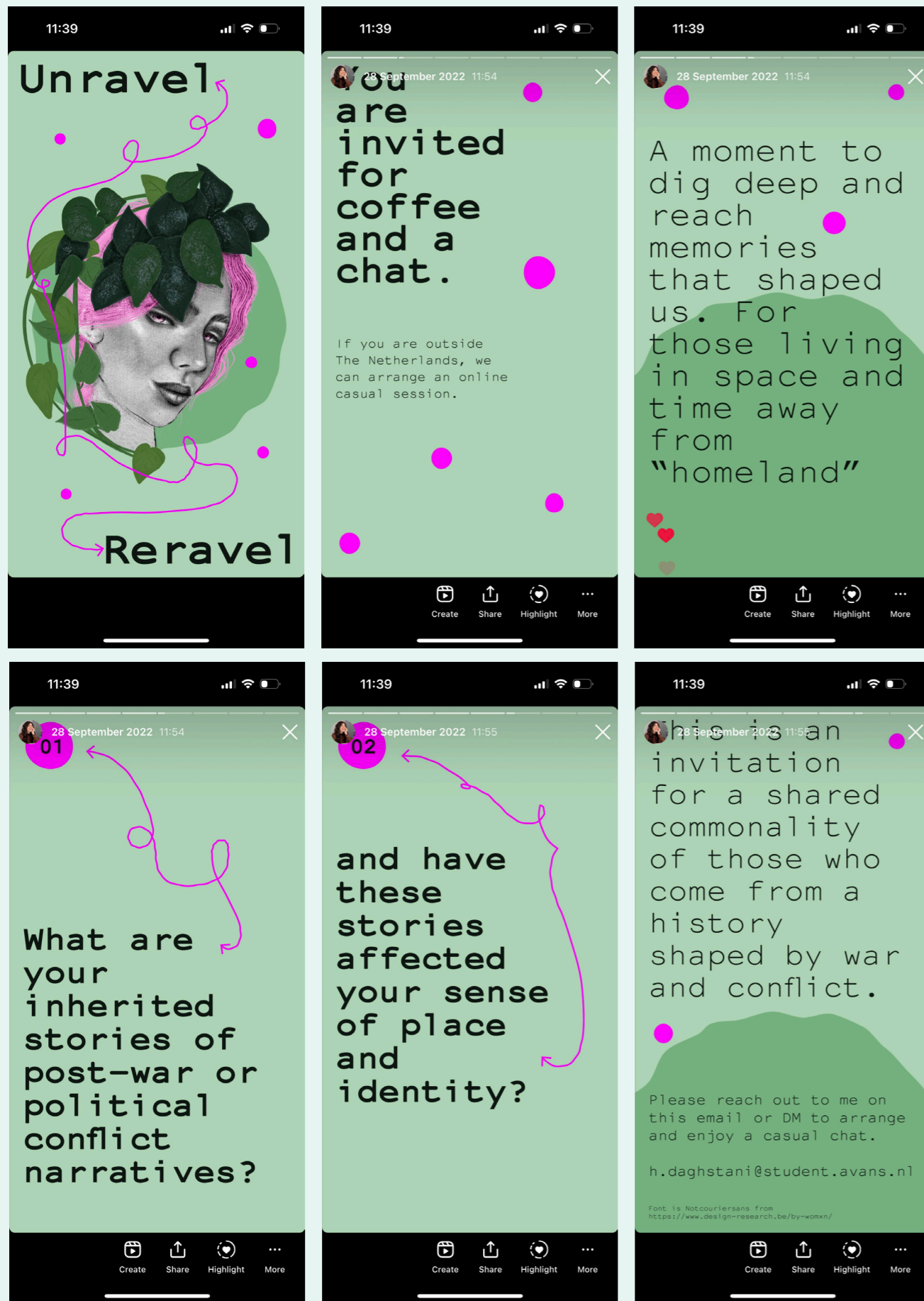


Figure 05: Author (2022) Screenshot of invitation shared on my personal Instagram account to start the one-to-one conversation.

The three steps one-to-one conversation method

In this section, I will introduce how my experience engaging in a one-to-one conversation led to forming three methods. In every method, I shall explain the purpose, the intention or the outcome, and how it was conducted, and I will give examples from the five one-to-one conversations.

In her essay, “Unraveling” published in Emergence magazine, Terry Tempest Williams (2022), an author of *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, states that unraveling reflects the entangled nature of undoing and becoming. She then lists three main definitions she found in the dictionary of unravel; one is a verb that means to undo and twist.

The second is an intricate process that disintegrates, while the third is to investigate or explain. All three-definitions share the act of revealing what has been hidden. Thus, Williams’s definition of unraveling stuck in the early stage of my research; it was the term that made me realize the value of the one-to-one conversation. After reading “Unraveling,” it became the first step of a three steps methods that I started relying on to analyze the conversations. My one-to-one conversation relies on three methods: unravel, reravel, and shift.

In this research, I propose unraveling as the start of the conversation process, the act of revealing. I propose reraveling as the second stage of the conversation process, where reflection occurs. The third step I propose is shifting. I see it as a realization step where a designer gains knowledge or questions existing ones.

UNRAVELING



The first step of a one-to-one conversation requires a safe, familiar place where emotions can roam freely and thoughts can indeed be. Speakers unfold personal opinions, experiences, and memories. Every thought and feeling is accepted and welcomed. Within a one-to-one conversation, the speakers' hearts are lightened, and their minds are free, In the company of a friend, in a place of serenity.

For a smooth conversation, it's best to have it in a private setting with only two speakers. Creating a comfortable atmosphere and allowing for a natural flow of expression. It also builds trust between the speakers as they don't have to worry about adjusting to their surroundings or the presence of strangers. For example, I had a conversation with The Wind⁵ that was planned over Zoom in the comfort of our house. She was knitting while I was sipping on coffee.

After ensuring a private setting, we must introduce ourselves again and the purpose of this gathering. The Wind and I are classmates, so our conversation started as a check-in of our summer holiday and research progress. She then gave me a mini tour of the beautiful courtyard house she lived in with blue windows.

As we started sharing more details the conversation started to get emotional. Therefore, The Wind and I shared a few moments of silence, especially after sharing a vulnerable memory. It is essential to allow the speaker to take their time to answer and accept when the speaker chooses to change the topic. The Wind did not want to dig into details of her interaction with her father; her tone of voice and silence hinted not to poke at it and accept what she was willing to share.

In the middle of our shared silence, The Wind changed the topic to talk about the giant banana tree behind her, which I expressed interest in—persuading her to pick up her laptop and take me to the kitchen

to show me the banana harvest. This change of topic, to talk about the banana tree, was needed and gave both of us a breather. The tree reminded me of a childhood story that I shared with The Wind.

There were instances where I wanted to know more details, such as her father's reaction to her trip. I asked her permission and stated that it was ok not to share if she felt it was too personal. Validating the speaker's emotions gives them control over what they share and increases their trust that the listener cares about their feelings rather than just seeking information.

Most importantly, unraveling requires being an active listener and observer. Notice nonverbal communication gestures such as the speaker's facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. Helping us better understand their message and convey our own emotions more effectively.

Unravel opens the door for connection, allowing the speaker to connect with us more personally, which can help them feel less alone and isolated. Such as my concern about The Wind's feelings when she became emotional, expressing the willingness to change the topic or even end the conversation, and my efforts to share a glimpse of my vulnerability when the moment was right.

It's important to note that there is no specific time frame for unraveling a conversation. The duration can vary depending on factors such as the level of familiarity between the speakers and the complexity of the discussed topic. My one-to-one conversations last around one and a half to two hours. However, the most extended conversation I've had was with The Family⁶ when they invited me for dinner at their private home.

In short, the first step of a one-to-one casual conversation is unraveling. During this step, both speakers share their vulnerabilities within a private

setting. A process where speakers expose a part of themselves that they may not show others. As a result allowing designers and researchers to gain a deeper understanding and connection when the speakers can express themselves without interruption. It also provides a sense of confidentiality and ownership for the personal information that is being shared.

The start of the one-to-one conversation process, the action of sharing or unfolding

PURPOSE

The speaker can establish a personal connection with me, which can alleviate feelings of being understood and heard.

INTENTION

Sharing a vulnerable aspect of oneself that is not typically revealed to others.

HOW

- Ensuring a private setting.
- Introduce ourselves again and the purpose.
- Share and welcome moments of silence.
- Do not force vulnerability, a feeling or a topic.
- Length of time differs based on the speakers needs.

5. Refer to Appendix: Conversation 02

6. Refer to Appendix: Conversation 04



RERAVELING

Reraveling is the second step of a one-to-one conversation. This stage of reraveling allows breadth for reflection, acceptance, understanding, and relation. Reraveling is similar to Unraveling in terms of requiring a private safe place.

This step took two forms: one was a speaking form when I became the speaker, and the listeners were mainly my sister, my tutor Ollie Palmer and my two close friends, Fleur and Mohammad AlKayyali. The four listeners were in the design and research field and could provide me with the emotional and intellectual support I needed to reflect on the one-to-one conversations I was having.

When I first met Zain⁷, I felt nervous and had many thoughts running through my head. I was anxious and doubted my ability to hold a meaningful conversation. It was my first-time meeting Zain and being on a boat, which made me feel out of my comfort zone. I tried to stay present and aware of my surroundings and emotions

After our conversation, I spoke to a friend and shared my concerns about feeling inadequate as a designer. I shared, “Shouldn’t my job as a designer be to solve problems? However, I am unsure which problem to tackle. I presumed that being a refugee on a boat would offer various opportunities for a designer to make a positive impact. Zain dreams of becoming a dancer, and I don’t know how to help” Mohammad AlKayyali reminded me that being a good listener to someone’s dream is often all that is needed for now.

The act of writing was the second form of reraveling; this action occurred directly after the conversation. Writing down my thoughts helped clarify my thought process and provided an opportunity for reflection and self-discovery.

The practice of writing helped me gain insights into my thought processes and behaviors. Further,

writing kept me accountable for what information I was thinking of and sharing. Each conversation was written based on a feeling I had felt. For instance, The Wind was light and poetic, while Zain was almost like two young children conversing simply with short phrases.

The stage in which a designer engages in introspection and reassessment.

PURPOSE

The speaker can establish a personal connection with me, which can alleviate feelings of being understood and heard.

INTENTION

Sharing a vulnerable aspect of oneself that is not typically revealed to others.

HOW

- Ensuring a private setting.
- Thoughtfully converse with a trusted friend or tutor while maintaining privacy.
- Engage in the practice of writing as a form of retelling.
- Introduce the conversation setting, location, feelings, and thoughts.
- Accountable and true to thoughts.

⁷ Refer to Appendix: Conversation 05



SHIFTING

The two steps mentioned above lead to a third step, which I propose as shifting. It is a realization step because it questions a designer's process, thoughts, and knowledge. Shift happens twice, one after unraveling where it is far from fathomable or easy. It is layered, personal, and individualistic, charged with emotions, uncertainties, vulnerabilities, memories, and constant questioning of oneself.

For example, for my conversation with Zain, I prepared a set of cards as probes to help me be less anxious or to help me avoid awkward silences. It was a practice I used during design workshops for various projects, similar to the Community Majlis example I mentioned earlier in this research.

The probes failed to excite Zain; she only admired the colors and the intention while putting them aside. She then casually asked me about school, research, upbringing, and hobbies. She found that what I do falls under the creative field, and that's when she shared her passion for art, music, and dance.

As a result, the shift or the realization I learned was to accept that I am an introvert that struggles to maintain a conversation with strangers. By accepting it, I allow Zain or the next speaker to define their response and interaction, preventing myself from putting up barriers. Talking with Zain made me rethink my design research approach. I hoped for the probe, but our conversation was better when we didn't use it.

The second shift happened when I shared my conversation experience with Zain on the boat with my friend Mohammad AlKayyali. This was when I realized that my visit was what Zain needed, a new face that listened to her without interruptions and understood the struggles of living away from home, missing the hugs of our mothers. The next day, I sent the coordinator of the boat a name of an eastern band in Amsterdam that plays Oud for Zain to check.

Another example I would like to give is my conversation with The Wind. She made me realize that even if our roots were cut from a place of birth, the connection is never truly gone. It exists in nostalgia, a void, a recipe, or a faint memory.

In comparison, my conversation with The Prayer Plant taught me that having a passport and a nationality are privileges that shape the narratives surrounding their holders. The history associated with a passport or nationality can make life easier or more complicated for the individual. Although one's birthplace remains a constant factor, it may sometimes cause inconveniences.

In a nutshell, the process of shifting in design is an important step that involves questioning one's approach, thoughts, and knowledge. It requires a level of self-reflection and vulnerability that can be challenging but ultimately leads to growth and new insights.

As demonstrated by the example of my conversation with Zain, sometimes the best way to shift is by being open and curious about the other person rather than relying on prepared probes or scripts. By embracing this approach, designers can create more meaningful and authentic connections with others, leading to more impactful and successful design outcomes.

The realization stage involves questioning a designer's process and knowledge.

PURPOSE

Evaluate the designer's position and approach, and carefully examine assumptions, ideas, and thoughts.

INTENTION

An iterative and flexible process that encourages designers to learn, refine, and improve.

HOW

- One shift happens after Unraveling.
- The second shift happens after Reraveling.
- A level of self-reflection and accountability.
- It lead to another unraveling conversation with the same speaker.

Where can we use a one-to-one conversation method?

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- To understand community members' specific needs, concerns, and aspirations.
- This helps formulate effective strategies and policies based on grassroots-level input.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Understand the unique challenges faced by students.
- Identify effective teaching strategies.
- Gather feedback on educational policies and programs.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

- Can provide insights into environmental challenges, perceptions, and attitudes.
- To understand the socio-cultural dynamics related to environmental issues.
- Explore sustainable practices, and develop context-specific solutions.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- To identify shared interests, concerns, and potential areas of collaboration.
- This approach can support the development of effective conflict resolution strategies based on mutual understanding.

HEALTHCARE

- One-to-one conversations with patients, and healthcare providers, can help identify gaps.
- Understand patient experiences.
- Gather input on improving healthcare delivery.

CULTURAL STUDIES

- To explore individuals' experiences, beliefs, and practices within a specific cultural context.
- Gain deeper insights into cultural identities, social norms, and the impact of cultural factors on individuals' lives.

My research focused on intimate interactions rather than generic demographic information by conducting one-on-one conversations. I explored alternative methods that emphasized the exchange of thoughts and emotions to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying emotional needs of the speaker.

Specifically, I conducted five private conversations with individuals forced to leave their homeland due to war, conflict, social, economic, political crises, or natural disasters. These conversations took place at various times and locations, and during them, the individuals shared their personal stories of living away from their homeland.

As a result of engaging in the one-to-one conversations, I proposed three methods to frame the one-to-one conversation: unraveling, reraveling, and shifting. Unraveling is the beginning of the one-to-one conversation, which involves the act of revealing in a private setting.

The next step is reraveling which is retelling the story through the designer or the research to another individual or through writing. I propose shifting, where a designer gains new knowledge or questions existing assumptions in the research process.

The methods of unraveling, reraveling, and shifting can be used as a guide to frame one-to-one conversations. These methods allowed for reflection, acceptance, understanding, and relation and helped me gain a deeper understanding of the emotional needs of the speakers. However, it's important to note that the process, experience, conclusion, or knowledge gained from these conversations may vary from one designer to another and from one research question to another.

I'm interested in knowing how other designers perceive this method compared to my own experience. The method being discussed requires the design researcher to be emotionally prepared and responsible for what

they ask, discuss or talk about. Moving forward, I believe it is necessary to create a concise ethics guide that clearly outlines the risks and responsibilities involved when a designer uses this method as a brief. This will ensure that designers are well-informed before taking on this approach.

WHY IS IT ESSENTIAL

This research methods let us embrace the fact that we do not know, let go of our biases and the information we heard, and treat each individual as their own

WHY IS IT ESSENTIAL

Ideally, design and designers' intent to do good but good is different in everyone's eyes. Design is not a template plastered on every individual and every community.

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Figure 02:
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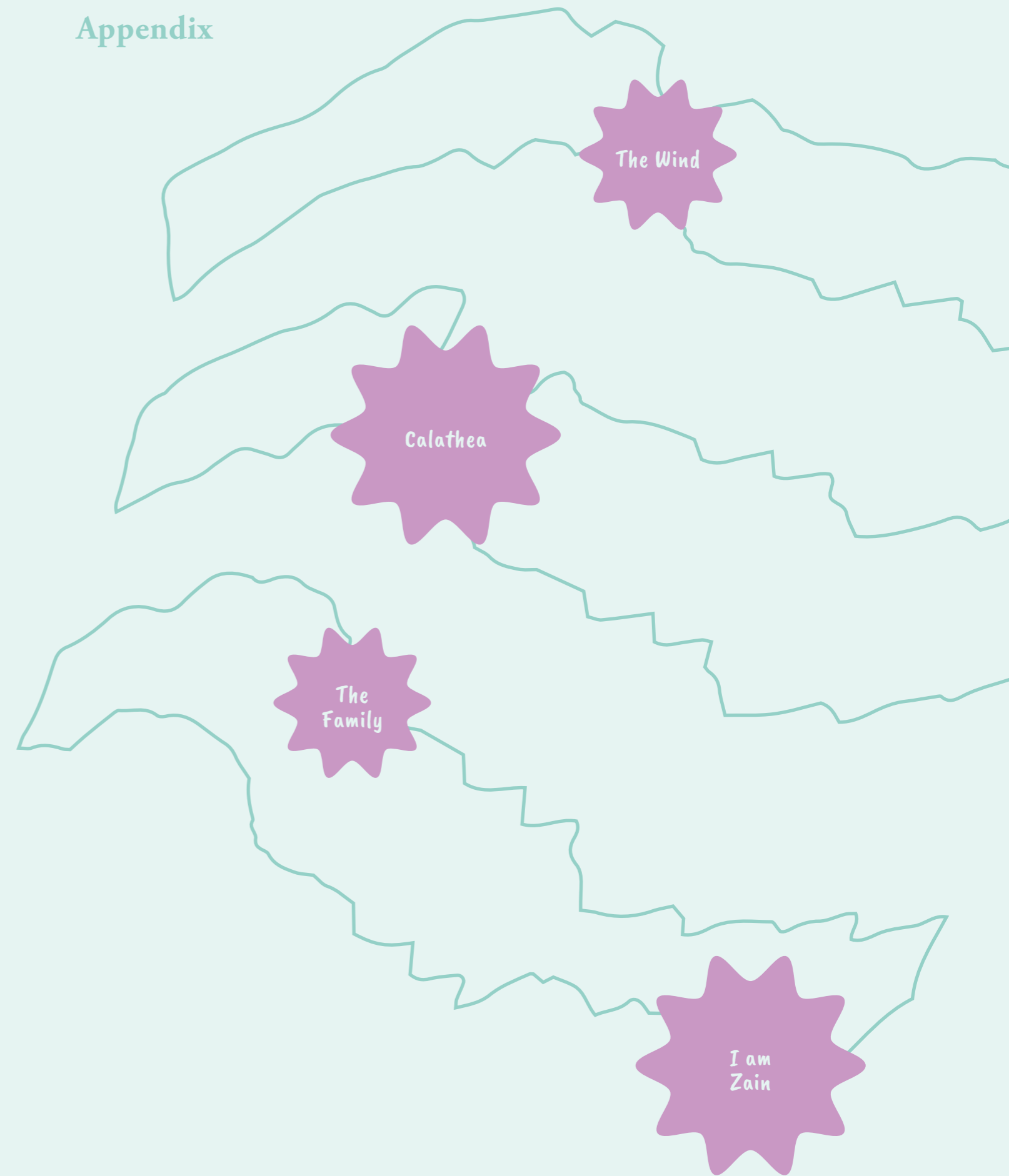
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Appendix



Reraveling

Calathea lives where the sunlight filters through the dense canopy and dances upon the emerald leaves, a captivating plant. Calathea, an enchantress of the undergrowth. It will share its tale as a metaphor for a young Iranian student living in the Netherlands.

Calathea:

From a young age, I knew that leaving Iran was inevitable. One by one, my family members departed and my cousins dispersed to various locations. I too Eventually, I graduated and decided to study in the Netherlands.

Thought, I did blame my dad for not thinking about immigrating earlier, for making us wait until we were grown up to leave. This decision makes it harder to remain as a family in one land. I am now responsible for figuring out how to bring my family here, but I am aware that it is not an easy process for them to obtain visas and travel. It may take several years before they can join me in NL.

Iran has long faced political issues, resulting in ongoing protests. It can be difficult to take a clear stance on these matters. Many expect individuals to express sadness and solidarity with the protests, causing some to feel guilty for sharing lighthearted content. This can create a feeling of not being fully supportive of the cause.

As an Iranian, it often feels like carrying a heavy burden. To illustrate, I once met a friend who was born in Iran but is now a Dutch citizen with a Dutch passport. Despite this, he faced difficulties when trying to travel to Australia. While obtaining a new passport can be helpful, your place of birth remains a part of your identity and can sometimes create challenges.

It's given that the place of birth sometimes determines the narratives surrounding me. I'm expected to feel or say certain things just because I'm Iranian or because there's a protest happening.

But I'm more than that. I'm a young student navigating life's complexity and striving for my identity. Like a plant seeking sunlight, I'm determined to grow and thrive, regardless of the soil. Remember, even in the depths of our roots, we all have stories worth listening to.

Shifting

Importance of empathy and understanding

Towards individuals who are navigating complex cultural and political situations. The metaphor of the Calathea plant serves as a reminder that everyone has their own unique stories and struggles, and it is essential to recognize and appreciate their experiences beyond the stereotypes or expectations associated with their background.

This conversation taught me to approach others with empathy, acknowledging their personal journeys, and not to reduce them to a single narrative. It reminded me that people have multifaceted identities and aspirations, just like the Calathea plant seeking sunlight to grow and thrive, irrespective of the circumstances they find themselves in.

Reraveling

Welcome, dear reader, to a journey where time and space intertwine, guided by the gentle whispers of the wind. Today, let me tell you my story.

I am a soul that floats between worlds, like a gentle breeze weaving through the tapestry of life. I was born to a Canadian mother and an Iraqi father in the heart of Austria, knows not the feeling of belonging to a single nationality. My identity dances between languages, cultures, streets, food, and people. Seeking solace in the harmonious melodies of the diverse cultures that course through my breeze.

As enchanting as this may sound. The question I despise the most is “Where are you from?” How dare people ask a wind where it came from! To reduce my story to geographic borders or to satisfy a curiosity based on exoticism. Only to Undermine the layers and layers of stories that shaped me.

But I shall share snippets with you, dear reader.

My father, was a man of few words, and carried his own sorrows, leaving the traumas of his past behind. He spoke of meals shared atop rooftops and the relentless sandstorms that intertwined with everyday life. Yet, the details of his personal history remained veiled.

As I grew stronger and more resilient, I was determined to uncover my roots. Howled my way to Baghdad, where I met the sandstorm. I have heard of its harshness and glory from my father’s stories.

I hummed to the Sandstorm that I wished to meet my father’s kin. The Sandstorm-warmed to my hum to lead me through the vibrant tapestry of the city. As we breezed, the sandstorm introduced me to the people of Baghdad, the history, and the emotions lingering in the air.

The sandstorm shared that I must continue my journey to Mosul, that was the city where my father’s family once dwelled.

At that moment I felt my heart quickening, but I took a deep breath and gust my way to Mosul. Floating amidst the remnants of what was home once, so much rubble that it was hard to locate my family’s home. I whispered to an old local to accompany me, kindly he did while guiding me he pointed out where my grandfather’s house had stood.

My conversations with elders revealed names that held stories within them. Each interaction breathed life into the past. But I had to leave Iraq and go back to Austria. As a traveler, I was grateful for the freedom to move around. However, I felt weighed down and slow. It could be because my heart was filled with emotions like love, care, compassion, and gratitude.

Shifting

Identity and belonging

The protagonist's story explores the complex nature of identity and the quest for a sense of belonging. It highlights the challenges of being from a multicultural background and navigating the question of "where are you from." It emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing the layers of stories and experiences that shape a person's identity.

Connection to heritage

The Wind's journey to uncover her roots and connect with her father's history demonstrates the significance of heritage and the desire to understand one's ancestral background. It reflects the human longing to explore and embrace their cultural origins.

Resilience and determination

The Wind's determination to uncover her family history and navigate unfamiliar places showcases resilience and a strong sense of purpose. It underscores the importance of perseverance in pursuing personal quests and overcoming obstacles.

The power of storytelling

The conversations with elders and locals in Baghdad and Mosul highlight the power of storytelling in preserving history and passing down knowledge. It emphasizes the role of personal narratives in breathing life into the past and connecting generations.

Emotions and gratitude

The Wind's emotional journey, filled with love, care, compassion, and gratitude, underscores the profound impact of personal experiences and connections. It reminds us of the importance of acknowledging and expressing our emotions and cultivating gratitude for the opportunities and freedoms we have.

The juxtaposition of freedom and heaviness

The Wind expresses gratitude for the privilege and the freedom to travel and explore, yet also feels weighed down by the emotional weight of their experiences. This contrast serves as a reminder that personal journeys, interactions with individuals can bring both freedom and emotional accountability.

Overall, the conversation invites reflection on themes of identity, heritage, resilience, storytelling, and the power of emotions. It encourages appreciation for personal narratives, cultural diversity, and the interconnectedness of individuals and their histories.

Reraveling**Thursday, October 13, 11:47 am**

Hi C, my name is Heba. I was referred to you by a friend with whom I was sharing a glimpse of my research project, struggles, and current challenges. She mentioned that you have been working as a volunteer with refugees below the age of 18.

I am currently engaging with individuals descended from war or conflict to learn how stories of identity, belonging, and history are told by and about them. But first, I would like to understand your point of view as a receiver of such stories, the role of refugee organizations, and the challenges faced by refugees in the Netherlands.

I know your busy schedule; please suggest your preferences to answer my questions. Thank you,

Friday, October 15, 12:00 pm

Hey Heba! Beautiful but complex questions. Can I think about it? Is it ok to share voice notes?

Friday, October 15, 12:20 pm

Hey C! Of course,

Thursday 20th October**11:03 am**

Hi Heba, I hope I am pronouncing it correctly. I will start rambling and thinking aloud since it is complex to answer. It is a very lovely graduation project that you are working on. I work with teenage refugees who are at this moment from Syria, Somalia, or Arteria. Each has a different background, culturally and educationally intertwined with the journey they were exposed to before arrival to the Netherlands.

It's very complex, and we must remember that notions such as fear, anxiety, memories, safety, trauma, sharing, and speaking out are very different from one person to another, let alone from one culture to another and from one language to another.

11:08 am

I want to discuss some challenges; before arrival, they face human trafficking, smuggling, exploitation, discrimination, questioning, regression, etc. I believe the Dublin agreement is one of the bureaucratic systems that cause more harm to refugees.

Many get arrested without a specific reason in Italy, Greece, or Hungary, Austria, where the fingerprints are taken. As a result, preventing the refugee from seeking asylum in another European city. Another challenge refugees face is finding a place to stay after arriving in the Netherlands; many are sleeping outside the camp, waiting to be processed.

11:12

Many Dutch are right-wing, so they are not keen on welcoming refugees. Refugees are viewed as lazy and blamed for housing shortages and for only taking money from the government. My best friend always told me she could not stand my job for two days; she was too right-oriented for this.

Many around me base their opinions on mainstream media or statements from people naively copying each other. Because I have been working with refugees for five years now, I realized the meaning of being resilient; the stories I have heard make me wonder how this person could bounce back and cope. They are not horrible people; on the contrary, what is awful is the events that they had or have to experience.

We can meet and have a better conversation; I will try to find the time.

Saturday, October 22, 7:09 pm.

Hey C! Yes, you are pronouncing my name perfectly. Thank you for taking the time to share such detailed voice notes. Agreed, I would love to meet for coffee to continue our conversation.

April 2

We never met, and C has never answered.

Shifting**Complexity of refugee experiences**

The conversation highlights the complexity of the experiences faced by refugees, including the different backgrounds, cultures, and education levels they come from. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing and understanding the diversity within the refugee population by treating each person as an individual rather than the stereotype that engulfs the label.

Stereotypes and misconceptions

The conversation touches upon stereotypes and misconceptions about refugees, such as being viewed as lazy or blamed for housing shortages. It underscores the need to challenge and counter such negative narratives by fostering understanding and empathy.

Importance of personal experiences and resilience

The conversation highlights the significance of personal stories and experiences in shaping perceptions of refugees. It acknowledges the resilience of individuals who have overcome traumatic events and showcases the importance of recognizing their strength and humanity.

The value of face-to-face interaction and limitations of on-line communication

The conversation ends with a lack of response from C, indicating the limitations of communication and the possibility of unanswered messages. It serves as a reminder that not all conversations may reach a conclusive or desired outcome.

Cultural uniqueness

Zain introduces the phrase "Allahwy," which holds personal and cultural significance. This emphasizes the richness and diversity of individual backgrounds and the value of embracing unique aspects of one's culture.

Despite the unanswered message, we both expressed an interest in meeting for a face-to-face conversation. This emphasizes the importance and the need of personal interaction and dialogue in building understanding and deepening the conversation.

Overall, the conversation provides insights into the challenges faced by refugees, the need for empathy and understanding, and the potential for personal connections to foster greater understanding of refugee or immigrant experiences.

Reraveling

Thank you for your care and for giving this story the time to truly read. This is a personal story of a family that experienced the challenges and triumphs of migration.

[Sound of door opening]

Welcome!

As I stepped into The Family house, I was welcomed by the cozy living room, the aroma of delicious food filled the air.

The Mother has prepared a mouthwatering meal for us. The sizzling sounds of pasta in the oven with chicken, cheese, and white sauce makes my stomach growl with anticipation.

[Sizzling sound effect]

The scent of lentil soup brings about feelings of warmth and comfort, reminding me of my dad's cooking back home. He always used a pressure cooker to prepare it.

[pressure cooker sound effect]

As we sit around the table, I listen intently the mother as she shares the story of their family's journey.

Mom

My husband used to work in various countries worldwide and would come to visit us in Syria every few weeks. But when the conflict in Syria intensified, we had to relocate. So, we decided to settle in a neighboring country that we believed was secure and would offer us a safe haven until the conflict subsided. Our choice was Jordan.

To manage our temporary stay, we tried to avoid buying furniture or even getting a car. Instead, we focused on finding items that could be easily packed

and sent back to Syria once we returned.

As years passed, our temporary stay turned into a more permanent arrangement. We had to furnish a house, register in schools, and make new friends. And just when we thought we were settling, Jordan implemented a new rule. Syrians were no longer allowed entry without a visa from the Emirates or Europe. My husband was detained at the airport and was asked to return to xxxx.

[sound of a dish]

Mom

Would you like some more soup?

No, thank you.

Mom

where were we?
You said that your husband detained entry to Jordan.

Mom

Correct. My husband requested his company to shift him to another country. One that would allow him to sponsor us and we would unit safely again under one roof.

This is when the company shifted him to Brunei, allowing the family to reunite and build a new life.

Upon landing in Brunei, The Family encountered a new and vibrant environment. The weather was humid, a stark contrast to their previous arid climate. The houses showcased traditional architecture with vibrant colors and intricate details. They marveled at the local fauna, encountering lizards and monkeys in their new surroundings.

Adapting to the tropical climate, they embraced

the local clothing styles and customs. The family actively engaged with the community, participating in events and celebrations, and forging connections. Brunei transformed from a landing point to a cherished experience where they navigated challenges with resilience and found happiness in their new surroundings.

Mom

Are you all finished?

Yes

[sound of a chair or dishes being removed]

The mother gestured for us to sit on the sofa while we drank coffee.

Mom

And yeah, after three years, once again we had to move. This time my husband's company decided to move us to the Netherlands. Where we needed to adapt again to a new land, language, and weather.

It was then that the Family realized the importance of applying for an immigration visa. They wanted stability and to put an end to the constant moving.

Shifting

Resilience in the face of challenges

The story of the family highlights their resilience and ability to adapt to new environments and circumstances. Despite facing challenges and having to relocate multiple times, they continue to find ways to build a new life and create a sense of stability.

Importance of community and connections

Throughout their journey, the family actively engages with the communities they encounter. They participate in events, celebrations, and forge connections, which helps them navigate challenges and find a sense of belonging in their new surroundings.

The impact of immigration policies

The conversation touches upon the impact of immigration policies on the family's journey. The change in rules in Jordan led to the husband being detained and the need for relocation. It highlights the complexities and challenges faced by individuals and families navigating immigration processes and the significance of legal documentation in providing stability.

The emotional toll of constant moving

The conversation briefly mentions the emotional impact of constantly moving and having to adapt to new lands, languages, and climates. It provides a glimpse into the challenges and adjustments that individuals and families experience when uprooting their lives and starting anew.

The search for stability

The family's desire for stability is evident in their decision to pursue an immigration visa in the Netherlands. It underscores the importance of stability and the longing for a place to call home after years of frequent relocations.

Overall, the conversation sheds light on themes of resilience, adaptation, community, immigration policies, and the emotional aspects of moving and seeking stability. It offers insights into the experiences and perspectives of a family navigating migration and highlights the strength and determination required to overcome challenges and create a new life in unfamiliar lands.

I am Zain

Reraveling

Hi, I am Zain.

One thing I hold dear is my name, although it is not my real name. For privacy reasons, I prefer to use a name that means something to me. Zain is an Arabic word that means beauty and grace. It is the name of my favorite character from a Syrian TV show I watched during the 7th grade. Additionally, Zain is also my cousin's name.

Zain and I share a special bond as we are the same age. Zain, who has Down Syndrome, has the most stunning blue eyes I have ever seen. Since childhood, he has always been by my side, protecting me whenever I went off track and inspiring me to pursue my aspirations. I frequently miss him whenever I need encouragement, and living close to the water constantly reminds me of his compassionate gaze and admirable character.

Zain.

That's my name.

Having this conversation with you is not easy. Since I don't know much about you, I can't predict your thoughts or intentions. But I trust that you care enough to stop by and hear my story, told by me, and not some organization or a social media post.

I am a young, enthusiastic person full of energy. I have long, curly black hair with blue strands that frame my face. I wear round glasses, which I adore as they add a touch of quirkiness to my appearance. I love my curly hair because it's untamed, just like my personality. Most days, my hair looks like I just rolled out of bed.

I live on a boat in Rotterdam with a group of Syrian, Turkish, and Somali women seeking refuge. Our temporary floating home has no set destination, as we await approval on our resident permit after completing the interview process.

Can you hear the muffled conversations, the sounds of people sharing their stories?

Listen
[Greetings, laughter and hugs]

Can you hear snippets of care, hopes, and dreams? Despite the hardships, we had a sense of unity, a shared understanding of our struggles. We supported each other, offering comfort and solace in this temporary floating sanctuary.

Our journey hasn't been smooth sailing. We've encountered storms, and this boat is constantly moving in its place; if it were bad weather, the boat would hit the stone wall, and I will be startled by unsettling noises in the middle of the night.

Silence

I left Syria for the Netherlands to pursue my dream of becoming a dancer. It was tough leaving my home and my mother behind. But I had a dream, a burning passion deep within me. I wanted to express myself through movement and music.

I have a deep love for the arts, dance, and music. While on the boat, I've been asking people from various nationalities to teach me their unique street-style dances. Although I don't play any instruments, I love music and enjoy motivating others to explore and express their creativity.

Here this
[Video of of a person playing Oud]

This is a snippet from my friend whom I challenged to play this piece of music when he was doubting his skills.

Allahwy! Isn't!

Oh, I must explain, Allahwy is my go-to phrase; we commonly use it in my hometown Salamiyah. I constantly use it to express admiration and support. It is a little something that sets me apart on this boat.

[sound of cigarette lighter]

My arrival in the Netherlands was both a physical and emotional journey. As a stranger in a foreign land, I felt a mixture of excitement and apprehension. The language barrier was daunting, and meeting so many new faces in such a short time added to the challenge.

Moments of solitude were equally challenging. When I was alone with my thoughts, doubts would creep in. Did I make the right decision? Would I be able to pursue my passion? The fear of failure weighed heavily on my heart, like an invisible burden.

[sound of cigarette lighter]

People assumed that I was not tech-savvy and would teach me basic functions like opening the screen and turning it on. It was humiliating and frustrating. Additionally, they would invite me to group activities like swimming and going to the cinema, assuming it would make me happy and grateful. While these activities provided temporary distractions from the stress of waiting and interviews, they weren't a long-term solution.

I appreciated their efforts but often hoped that organizations and volunteers in camps wouldn't just assume what my needs are or offer the same solution to every individual. I understand the intention is good, but what's good differs from one individual to another.

Shifting

The significance of names

Zain, emphasizes the importance of her chosen name, highlighting the personal meaning and connection it holds for her. It serves as a reminder that names can carry deep personal significance and should be respected.

The power of relationships

Zain shares her special bond with her cousin, who has Down Syndrome. This bond has been a source of inspiration and support throughout their life, underscoring the importance of meaningful connections and the impact they can have on one's journey.

Individual storytelling

Zain expresses the desire to share their story personally, rather than having it mediated through organizations or social media. This highlights the value of individual narratives and the need to listen to diverse voices directly.

Pursuing dreams

Zain left her home country to pursue her dream of becoming a dancer, displaying courage and determination. Her story serves as a reminder of the power of following one's passions and the challenges that can arise in the pursuit of personal aspirations.

Cultural uniqueness

Zain introduces the phrase "Allahwy," which holds personal and cultural significance. This emphasizes the richness and diversity of individual backgrounds and the value of embracing unique aspects of one's culture.

Understanding diverse needs

Zain raises the point that assumptions made by organizations and volunteers regarding individual needs can sometimes miss the mark. This highlights the importance of recognizing and respecting the individuality of each person's situation, rather than offering generic solutions.

Overcoming Stereotypes

Overall, this conversation sheds light on the experiences, emotions, and challenges faced by an individual on a personal journey of resilience. Further, I realized that my assumptions about visiting a refugee boat were unconsciously shaped by mainstream media, lacking firsthand experience of Syria. I understood the need for a more unbiased perception of the people on the boat, approaching each person with fairness and knowledge instead of preconceived notions. This experience taught me the importance of challenging stereotypes, embracing cultural exchange, and recognizing the power of genuine human connection beyond barriers.



GROUND SHIFTING

AN EXPLORATION OF ONE-TO-ONE
CONVERSATION AS A DESIGN PRACTICE