Contribution of Immigrant Planners to the Planning Process in Stockholm
The Case of Planners with Iranian Background

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Abstract


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This thesis examines the contribution of Iranian immigrant planners and social practitioners to urban planning in Sweden. It evokes the researches that celebrate diversity in planning profession as a golden key to reach the just city. This study aims to test this claim as well as to explore the possible ways through which immigrant planners in Stockholm might be able to bring benefits to their workforce. Adopting the characteristics of an admired planning method in a “just city”, this thesis will outline the advantages and disadvantages that Iranian planners have faced with at their work. The empirical analysis is built on the basis of observation and individual interviews with 7 Iranian background planners and 2 non-Iranian in Stockholm. The applied method for such analysis is content analysis of the interviews. The findings show planning system in Sweden, at least at local level, is not very open that let planners act very much different from each other. The differences are mostly in process and not in result. The main contribution of immigrant planners’ local and cultural knowledge is in the field of language. However, it seems that diversity in planning profession, in long term, have influenced other planners’ attitude regarding minority communities.

Key words: Immigrant planners, Iranian, Sweden, diversity, just city
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Summary

This thesis is concerned with the issue of contribution of Immigrant planners to planning system in Sweden. In theory diversity in planning profession leads to better results in planning for a diverse society like Stockholm. This study aims at testing this assumption in reality. It is also willing to figure out the areas in which immigrant planners are contributing to the planning education and profession.

In literature background, several researches in which diversity in race and ethnicity is accredited as a tool to bring about equity in the urban context are reviewed. Then, an overview to the notion of immigrant and the history of immigration in Sweden which is followed by a section allocated to a brief history of migration from Iran to Sweden. All the immigrant planners who are the subject of this study immigrated to Sweden in 1980s. Thus, it has been tried to highlight some of the specific characteristics of this wave of immigration.

The method applied in this thesis are observation and in depth individual interviews with 7 Iranian and 2 non-Iranian planners. With using content analysis collected data are analyzed and several main themes are drawn out. The discussion will be made on the basis of these themes.

Theoretical framework of the present study contains three theoretical approaches which seemed most explanatory for the topic. Diversity is the key concept and focal point of all these theories. How this notion will be important in planning practice and how valuing diversity may help to accomplish the just city is the subject of theoretical perspectives.

Based on the findings of this research, the planning system, at least in local level, is not very much open that planners could work very different from each other. The differences are just in process and not in results. It does not seem that currently the immigrant planners’ cultural and local knowledge is used properly for planning for a diverse society. The only contribution the system accepts is in the field of language which is in informal level. Based on what has been observed and understood from the interviewees the more immigrants can adjust themselves to the Swedish system the better chance they have to escalate in their profession.

However, diversity in planning profession has had positive influence on the work place atmosphere. The least advantage of presence of immigrant planners at workforce is their ability to change their colleagues’ attitude towards immigrant communities.
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1. Introduction and Framework of Study

1.1. Context of the Research

“Vision Stockholm 2030” is the name of a development plan for a sustainable growth for the capital of Scandinavia. This project follows various objectives for the development of the city and presents a vision of Stockholm in 2030 (City of Stockholm). Equity has mentioned as one goal for ideal Stockholm, but how equity can be reached is a fundamental and difficult question needs to be answered. It is of particular importance since Stockholm is a city where lots of people with different background, social and economic levels live together. Based on Stockholm Office of Research and Statistics more than 20 percent of Stockholm citizens were foreign background in 2010. Therefore, plenty of challenges, opportunities, and dilemmas for citizens, planners, and decision makers are inevitable. But, it is mostly up to planners, according to Watson (2006:32), to deal with the challenges and conflicts to which these differences give rise.

So how urban planning can bring about equity in this society is an issue that can be the subject of so many researches. One possible answer to this question might be diversity in planning profession. Immigrant planners might reduce the conflict between community’s knowledge and those of experts. Nevertheless, diversity represents equality for all, animates innovation, and attracts human capital. Diversity is regarded as the foundation for a just city (Fainstein, 2005).

Having diversity in planning profession also might be an adequate means to gain minority communities’ trust. Moreover, there are so many conflicts that cannot be solved by communication such as cultural differences that planning skills might not be able to solve it. So Planners who had social experiences in same way and knows community values might better understand and better reflect their priorities. However, there is no claim that planners with immigrant background are more successful than natives and needless to say this is a hypothesis which needs to be tested. However, it is probable that a planning system which can not reflect diversity and equality in its own profession cannot bring about equality to the society.
More than 20 percent of Stockholm citizens were of foreign background in 2010.

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How this desirable equity can be reached in such diverse city like Stockholm?

diversity in planning profession

1.2. Aims

In today’s world an ideal city is a city that can provide equal opportunities for its all citizens. One of the emphases of this statement is on the word “all”. In fact, this simple word has a complicated meaning. Whom this “all” refers to? This “all” is very divers and contains all the complexity of the today’s globalized world. That is, it refers to all minority groups based on gender, class, ethnicity, race, and disabilities. The ideal just city should be able to offer equal rights for all these people as well as practicing equal access to cities’ facilities. Most importantly, according to Harvey (2003), such city should be able to give its citizens equal rights to change the city upon their desires.

As mentioned earlier, one secure vehicle that might drive us to the just city is to have the same diversity in planning and leading professions. A good solution for solving the complexity might be to use the same complexity in our tool. There have been so many studies (Sandercock, 2000; Sandercock, 2003; Goonewardena et.al., 2004; Watson, 2006; Thomas, 2008; Sweet & Ettienne, 2011 that endorsed this idea) paying particular attention to this issue in different places and for different minority groups. In line with those studies, this research intends to test the above mentioned hypothesis in planning profession in Stockholm focusing on Iranian background immigrant planners.

To be more specific, this research aims to explore the contribution of planning practitioners with an immigrant background to urban planning in Stockholm and shed light on the challenges they have been faced with. This particularly will focus on the interconnection of background and planning profession which yet has not been well discussed in planning studies especially in Europe. This study would concentrate to provide answer to questions that how planners from minority groups deal with their work, how they manage difference and in particular if they were successful to act as a mediator between immigrants and the host society in planning practices,
and how they use and distribute their knowledge. Worth to mention that this thesis does not intend to generalize the findings but it aims to clarify the issue.

Since the focus of the study will be on immigrant planners with Iranian background in Sweden, the following particular questions will be addressed:

- Is there any possibility or hindrances for a person with immigrant background to influence his/her work?
- What challenges does has s/he face?
- How do planning practitioners manage differences in a transformative way?
- How can they act as mediators between immigrants and the host society?
- To what extend have planners been successful in creating discursive spaces for renegotiation of collective identity?
- How different might the immigrant planner’ perspective from that of natives? Have they been inspired by their experiences?

1.3. Literature Background

There are not much studies have been done about this issue and interestingly those related researches that I could find were all conducted in north America and Canada.

Pursuing the idea of a “just city” as an objective for planning process Thomas (2012) believes that diversity in planning profession can be one possible way. She focuses on planners’ role and in particular minority race planners in this process. She emphasizes on values of a just city and how diversity in planning can fulfill those values. She made six interviews with black American African planners to support her idea with empirical evidences. These interviews show that the race of planner can have a positive effect on planning results. In her studies most of the planners were effective in the process of planning rather than the results. She also talks about the disadvantages, challenges and pressures that these planners have been faced with. Respondents mentioned various pressure regarding system demands, community accountability, and personal commitment.

Goonewardena et.al. (2004) point out that planning has not been adapted with the rapid changes in global cities. They especially remark that ethno-cultural diversity has been neglected in planning profession and pedagogy. In the article, they analyze planning practices in Canada which have been supposed to improve diversity. They intends to find out what role planning education might have in preparing planners to pay attention to socio-cultural diversity in Canadian cities.

However, the authors believe that it is not enough to be sure that demographic composition of planning schools and profession keep up that of the city but it is important to provide an environment in which various ideas and approaches could be enhanced and new ways of knowing could be created. To reach these objectives what kind of knowledge planners should have and how they utilize it are two important questions to be answered.
To analyze the existing educational practices, the authors get help from feminist theories of difference to strengthen their discussion. They offer some suggestions that involve recruiting students and professionals from various race minorities and incorporating principals to planning curricula to enhance justice.

Watson (2006) questions the current philosophical paradigm of urban planning regarding value and judgment. She discusses that focusing on the process in planning and neglecting of the outcome is one arguable aspect of the current paradigm. Moreover, she believes assuming fixed universal values are another deficit. She points to increasing gaps and challenges that are caused by cultural differences and need planners attentions. In her article she acknowledges various scholars’ ideas of the concept and source of differences and values. In this regard she concerns the issue of power as a controversial factor linked with differences. She concludes that there is a need for a new philosophical source for the issues of value and judgment in planning scholarship.

Sweet & Ettienne (2011) are the other scholars who subject diversity in planning education and practice. They attempt to figure out how diversity can be obtained in planning, to do this they review planning literature as well as examine data of planning programmes. They argue that planning programmes could not address diversity which leads to low rate of recruitment of minority planners. Similar to other scholars they also note that diversity should be improved in terms of demographics and perspectives. The authors remind that the pervious guidelines about maintaining diversity in planning should be recalled although they should be updated to address issue of class as well as gender and race in planning education and practice.

Leonie Sandercock (2003) believes having a multicultural perspective would be proper basis to think about how to deal with the challenge of differences in multicultural cities. She (2002) acknowledges, if social justice and cultural diversity are the aims, difference should become a category in planning theory. She emphasizes on the planner’s subjective role in planning practice and illustrates an ideal city in which there is no mistreatment and all are respected apart from their race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, class, and sexual orientation. She emphasizes on the importance of the local knowledge for planners. According to her discussion in the book “Cosmopolitan II: Mongrel Cities in the 21St century”, planners should be able to listen to the communities’ stories if they really want to learn from people (2003: 77).

According to Campbell (2006), value is one controversial issue in today’s world that characterized by difference and plurality. Thus planning should be prepared to answer this question. As there is no formula to measure values, planners have no way but making ethical judgment. Justice is the essential factor for such judgment. She explains key dimensions of this concept and acknowledges that the question of value is not separated from procedure. Justice, she argues, should be based on relational understanding of human existence, thus, individuals and communities should be regarded connected interdepended to each other. Planning is about making decisions and this should be “informed by relational understanding of justice”.

1.4. Overview on the Notion of Immigrants to Be Used in This Study

1.4.3. Who Is Immigrant?

Immigrants are people who, individually or in a group, have had long distance movements from their place of origins to other places for a variety of reasons for the purpose of permanent
residence (Waters, 2009). This is the historical definition of immigrants while this term, just like many other terms in social science, does not have a constant meaning and is changing through the time and depends on the social situation. Improved telecommunication technologies and easy transportation have had crucial influence on international mobility. Global changes not only increased the volume of migration but also provided various means for migrants to relate to their homelands and to study or work in distant places (Ma, 2003). Worth to mention that in this thesis “immigration” has exactly been used in its historical meaning and the scale of movement is on global scale, thus, “immigrants” has been regarded as a short term for “international immigrants”. The emphasis is on permanent immigration, hence, circular migration, transnationalism, and temporary movements would be excluded from our definition.

1.4.4. Migration in Sweden

After Second World War Sweden has become a destination for immigrants. In 2010, 19.1 percent of the Swedish populations are foreign background. Sweden has quite diverse immigrant population, with 203 nationalities represented in its 9.4 million people (The official gateway to Sweden, 2012; Ålund, 1991; Regeringskansliet, 2002). At the international level, Sweden has always been regarded as a pioneer country in celebrating social equality and gender equality (Ålund, 1991).

However, before 1960s Sweden had not any official integration policy, and just during the period 1960-1990 such those policies had shaped in relation to equality, social positions and rights of immigrants. Equality, freedom of choice, and partnership have been three principal objectives of the rhetoric. “Equality” means that people with immigrant background should have the same rights as Swedes, “freedom of choice” implied that immigrants were free to either assimilate with the mainstream society or to maintain their own culture. However, their preferences should not be in conflict with the fundamental democratic values and norms of Swedish society which stand for partnership (Westin, 2006; Ålund, 1991; Eliassi, 2010:15; Regeringskansliet, 2002). Since 1975, there have been various programmes aimed at incorporating migrants to the mainstream society. These programmes had different perspectives from assimilation to multiculturalism and integration, but they all suffer from the same problem. These programmes often consider “immigrants” axiomatically in a category completely separated from “Swedes” like a binary. The core of these programmes focus on cultural differences as the main reason for failed integration. Moreover, the perspective that sees immigrants as “problem” which needs to be solved is embedded in structural inequalities that exclude alternative voices (Ålund, 1991:73-74; Eliassi, 2010:16).

Nevertheless, there have been attempts to replace the old integration policies with one that value mutual adjustment and adaption of people with immigrant background and mainstream ethnic Swedes (Westin, 2006).

However, based on Swedish integration policy for the 21st century (2002) the disparities between immigrants and Swedes are still too large in some areas especially in labour market. Disparities in labour market regards both unemployment and employment levels. This policy statement emphasizes that general policies should celebrate cultural and ethnic diversity.
1.4.4.1. Iranian Immigrants in Sweden

Sweden has been forth destination for Iranian immigrants since 1980s. Based on Statistics Sweden (2006) the number of Iranian born people in Sweden was 55,273(Kelly, 2011:444). After the Iraqis, Finns and the Yugoslavs, Iranians are the largest immigrant group in Sweden (Ahjadi, 2001:122).

The majority of Iranian immigrants have been high educated (6percent above average in Sweden),middle classes .Basically, education for most of Iranian is considered as a means for social mobility, so higher education has been one reason for emigration (especially temporary ones) from Iran in order to gain better qualities (Graham& Khosravi, 1997:116, Kelly, 2011:444), so most of the immigrants have improved their education in host societies and it is true for Sweden too (Naghdi,2010:201). Unlike in the U.S and Canada, in Sweden the unemployment rate is quite high for Iranians .Compare to employment rate in Sweden (81.6 percent) Iranian employment rate(54.4 percent) is very low (Kelly,2011:444).

Unlike typical characteristics of refugees in Sweden, many Iranians are secular in behavior regarding to religious and cultural issues, and in some issues like education, and degree of travel abroad they are very much similar to native Swedes (Graham& Khosravi, 1997:117).

Worth to mention that although Iranian population scattered in all over Sweden, more than half live in two first large cities ,that is, 36 percent in Stockholm and 17 percent in Gothenburg (Kelly,2011:444).
1.4.4.2. Iranian Immigrants in 1980s

Remarkably a noticeable number (about 75 (Svenska Dagbladet, 20 February 2001: 13)) of Iranian immigrants are those who migrated in mid 1980s (Hakimzadeh, 2006, Ahmadi, 2001:123, Graham& Khoosravi, 1997:116). This phase of emigration from Iran had happened as a result of either oppositions of post revolution government or young men who fled the war between Iraq and Iran (Hakimzadeh, 2006). This population included large number of professionals and highly skilled people and also some entrepreneurs and academics (Hakimzadeh, 2006, Graham& Khoosravi, 1997:116).

Moreover, the forced migration for these people caused the process of separation from the home land and attachment to the new place be very difficult and also different. They were not psychologically (mentally) ready to disconnect from their country of origins. Nonetheless, most of these people had had good economic and social positions in Iran and now they had to begin from the very first level.

Nevertheless, compare to other immigrants they were mostly from different opposition groups of Iran government both before and after revolution so they had a lot of experiences, they knew how to fight and survive. So, they were able to adapt themselves to new situation. My observation endorses these facts. Many of these immigrants either are working in health care and social services or are active in cultural centres and different NGOs. Interestingly, many of them have academic jobs in humanities and social science.
1.5. Disposition of the Thesis

This Thesis is organized into 6 chapters. In the first chapter I have given an introduction to this thesis which also informs the background of the study with a contextualization of the social framework. I have included a briefing to the Iranian diaspora in Sweden which reveals the significance of the present study. I have also discussed some concepts which are of great importance in understanding the thesis objectives. Moreover I have allocated a separate part to the literature background of the thesis which includes studies previously conducted on diversity in planning education and profession.

In the second chapter I will discuss the methodological framework of the thesis and the methods that I have utilized for data collection and data analysis. I will give a detailed explanation about sampling, interview process, and ethical consideration. I will also include knowledge construction in my discussion and will discuss how the interview scene can be a site of knowledge.

I will assign chapter 3 to theoretical framework that this thesis is based on. I will outline three theoretical approaches which I found most explanatory for this study. Diversity is the key concept and focal point of all these theories. Throughout this chapter I will indicate how this concept will be important in planning practice and how valuing diversity can lead to a just city.

Chapter 4 engages with findings and empirical material of the research and analysis of the interviews. On the basis of empirical data I have distinguished four different themes frequently mentioned by the informants. For each theme I will present examples stated by informants, most of them expressed their own analysis of either their self experiences or those they had heard about.

Chapter 5 is allotted to discussion and conclusion of the thesis, and the final chapter presents the academic contribution of the thesis as well as its input to planning profession.
2. Method and Methodological Consideration

2.1. Introduction

Methodology is an important part of each research because it not only shows the epistemological background of the study but also indicates how the subjects should be interpreted in the theoretical context of the study. The critical issue is how well we conduct the conversation between our theoretical concepts and the data we uncover (Herbert, 2010). Moreover, the relation between the researcher and the research subjects are denoted by methodology (Eliassi, 2010:43).

In this chapter, I will first provide an overview to the methods of the research and then I will discuss how experiences can be used as a source of knowledge in this study. This especially is very important since understanding and interpreting the individual experiences is the basis of our inquiry for this thesis. It is the key point that guides us to understand the dominant discourses of the society and social structures. I will, then, make a discussion on methodological importance of diaspora for this research. Further, I will provide discussion of the questions of strategy of inquiry, data collection, ethical consideration, and content analysis as the technique of analyzing research material. I will then end by the issue of researcher positionality in particular referring to the relationship of researcher and research participants.

2.2. Methods

Qualitative methods are the best to be employed to fulfill the objectives of this thesis. Social world is full of complexities built on various human experiences that constantly are changing; qualitative methods are best tools when studying these complexities. They enable the researcher to learn how the world is experienced from different perspectives (Herbert, 2010). The main strategy for collecting data was ethnographic fieldwork using semi structured interviews as the principal technique for data collection. “ethnography is an intersubjective form of qualitative research through which the relationships of researcher and researched, insider and outsider, self and other, body and environment, and field and home are negotiated” (Watson &Till, 2010: 121) in fact ethnography is a kind of strategy that can be used to understand how people experience their world (Creswell, 2009: 13). Here, the focus would be on the work experiences of immigrant planners and social practitioners in their new environment. we want to know if their experience of new place could make any difference in constructing , as Harvey (2003) says, a qualitatively different kind of urban society in which all can have equal right to access and change. Thus, ethnographic fieldwork is chosen for several reasons; first because there are not so many planners with immigrant background in Stockholm to do a survey among. Second, even if it was possible to find more the time limit for this project would not let me do so. Finally according to the aim of this thesis an ethnographic study (informal interviews and participant observation) is much more suitable since it let me go in deep to explore the planners’ experiences.
2.3. Experience: a source of knowledge

This study focuses on the stories of planners and the role of their experiences as immigrant in planning. In this thesis immigrant planners’ experiences are of great importance since it is an important site of knowledge and also it can be considered as a very useful method (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2006; Sandercock, 2003: 12). Sandercock (2003 b: 12) outlines the importance of story in planning and sees it as a proper tool which enable us to translate the unrepresentable space, life and language a legible, understandable one. In her idea stories provides researcher a far better understanding of human condition. Worth to mention that stories are very important in researches, such this, that study gender, ethnicity, race and cultural diversity (Sandercock, 2003: 77; Eliassi, 2010: 47).

The intention is to know about their experiences via interview and then make an analysis based on those experiences considering the social context within which these experiences are situated in. It is crucial, according to Mohanty (1992: 88- 89), to understand experience within historical context in order to be able to generalize claims on the collectivity of shared experiences.

I am particularly interested in planners’ narrative accounts in order to understand and explore the way they had understood their positions both as immigrants and as planners in the Swedish society and how they dealt with this society. Surely the way they have been treated at work in the Swedish society have influenced the way they interpret their experiences and the way they narrate their stories.

However, we should be aware that experiences and stories are related to conditions and hence people might position themselves in different and sometimes conflicting ways. This, definitely, will be an important factor in analyzing informants’ experiences. Moreover, it is very important to understand who is the story teller and to whom the stories are narrated. In the other words the power relation should not be forgotten. I will deal with this particular issue later on when I will talk about the relationship between researcher and research participants.

2.4. Diaspora: a shortcut to improve knowledge

I, as outsider, who don’t have detailed picture of the society need help to be able to study that society. There are several ways that I can expand my knowledge, one is to interact with native people which takes a lot of time; the other is to read about the society which is not helping me very much since written information are always formal facts about the society and do not contain the hidden details of the social life; the third way is to ask people of my culture who have lived for a long time in that society and knows its invisible mechanisms. This is like a shortcut that let me study the Swedish society through the positioned members of Iranian diaspora. In fact, my cultural capital will be the most important tool.

However, this method has some weaknesses. My knowledge about this issue is limited to the information that my interviewees give me either formally in the interview or informally in chats before and after that. That’s why I decided to have some native interviewees. I wanted to minimize the bias of my analyses. The more information I have the more my judgment would endorse the
realism. Moreover, the difference between two sets of information will guide me to figure out those unrevealed facts.

2.5. Sampling

The heavy barrier of choosing a suitable method to collect data in qualitative researches is on researcher’s shoulder. And this is not an easy decision since a wrong way might break the whole research process (Mc Lean & Campbell in Noy, 2008:330; Flick, 2007).

I chose to use snowball sampling in order to select the informants. I could manage to conduct 9 interviews for this thesis. It was not very easy to find and get connected to all these interviewees. My intention was to find immigrant background urban planners in Stockholm and compare them to Swedish background ones. But it seemed like an ambitious target though I decided to limit my study to Iranian background planners since for it was easier for both the interviewees and me to conduct the interview in our mother tongue, I thought I could better understand them as we have similar cultural background. Unlike my expectation, in practice it was not that much easy to find the right people to interview with. Although I was living in Sweden for more than 1 year I didn’t have connection to Iranian diaspora in Stockholm as all my interaction were limited to my friends. The other practical problem was that there were very few Iranian in Stockholm who were involved with social work in general and planning in particular.

For these reasons, snowball sampling seemed to be the most efficient and applicable method to find interviewees. It is used when the researchers finds each informant with the help of other informants. This method is utilized widely in qualitative researches in social science; in fact it is the most applicable method in qualitative researches. Snowball method has various advantages; it is a very adequate method to access marginalized and stigmatized group in one side and social elites on the other site. In particular, snowball method can provide very good knowledge when it comes to study of social networks (Noy, 2008: 332). Thus, I started to make connection to people and for this purpose I had two informal interviews which enabled me to connect to my main interviewees and also to get a better picture of Iranian diaspora. In these two interviews I explained clearly what I want to do and who I am looking for that they could help me properly. They connected me to three informants and then I asked each practitioner to introduce me to the other planners with immigrant background.

The sample in this thesis comprised 9 (4 females and 5 males) planners and social practitioners in Stockholm. The respondents are divided into two groups; the main group contains 7 interviewees with Iranian background whom are the main focus of this study and the other (control) group in which there were two non Iranian informants. The latter group, of course, is not the subject of this thesis and that’s why I prefer to name it control group. These two interviewees were chosen for the purpose of comparison since the use of various sources would minimize the errors and might provide different results (Cope, 2010). I wanted to capture various experiences and to be aware of different approaches regarding the topic. This would help me not to just judge on Iranian immigrants’ experiences but to be able to compare their experiences with those of natives and immigrants with different origins.

Highlighting differences and commonalities, hopefully, would help me to be critically reflexive regarding both my data and my presumptions.
In this thesis empirical work and theoretical work have been entangled together from the very beginning. From the very first step of the shaping the idea for the thesis topic I have been in contact with some of my interviewees and some other people who I have not intended to interview with but they were great informants. But my formal interviews have started from January 30th, 2012 and finished in April 13th, 2012 in Stockholm. I used a tape recorder and recorded all the interviews with the permission of the interviewees. I transcribed each interview one day after the interview. I have transcribed all the interview materials word by word to increase the reliability of the study. Worth to mention, I had to translate all the interviews (except two which were conducted in English). Besides, I told the interviewees that they may not respond to those questions they don’t like and of course they could withdrew from the interview at any time they wish. One interview took place in interviewee’s apartment, one was in a quite coffee shop, one was on the phone, and the rest were in interviewees’ work places. All the research participants work in marginal areas and neighbourhoods with noticeable minority communities.

It is worth to mention that the planners who were chosen for this study, experienced migration themselves as I do not mean to study second generation migrants. I am interested explicitly in finding out the direct experience of migration and its impacts on the planners’ works.

### 2.6. The research Interviews

Interview is the most common method in qualitative approach that currently is used. According to McDowell (2010) it is the most challenging and the most exciting of methods because it involves interactions and personal contact and it has a focus on researcher as interpreter of other people’s lives. Unlike quantitative methods, interviews are usually utilized for depth understanding of details (Mc Dowell 2010). In fact, interviews seek to capture the individual experiences of selected people in order to understand those of others who are in the same situation (Flick, 2007: 79).

Moreover, interview situation and the interaction between interviewee and interviewer can be conceived as a site of knowledge (Kvale, 2007). According to Rapley (2004: 26) interview is a tool that enable researcher to understand “how the respondents produce, sustain and negotiate specific and sometimes contradictory truth”. In this sense, power relation, domination, and social context in which both interviewer and interviewee position themselves, are of great importance. Hence, there is no “objectivity” or “neutrality” in the interview situation. Even language, bodies, clothes, and gender are issues that are obviously important matters in the sorts of exchanges that happen in interviews (Mc Dowell, 2010). In this study, the way my interviewees dress, how they design their office, their living place, the way they talk, and even the number of Swedish words they used while talking in Persian affected my judgment.

The Persian language was used during the interviews with two exceptions when respondents werenone-Persian speakers. The use of Persian in conducting interviews had one certain benefit; it changed the interview to a friendly discussion. Most of the interviewees had never been interviewed about work related issues in Persian. This made them feel free to talk about untold issues and the hidden mechanism of the working relations. Moreover, our discussion mostly turned to personal issues at the end. They were eager to know me more and they often had

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1 For detailed information regarding these areas see appendix II
a couple of questions about my experience of study in a foreign country. I also gave them some information about my background, my educations, and the reason behind my choice of Sweden as a place to study. Almost all of them asked me which area I was living in Stockholm. This curiosity was especially very interesting for me since I could see my answer had a great influence on our discussion. As I revealed that I lived in a rich area in Stockholm, which was totally accidentally, they formed their responses with a different attitude considering me as a rich foreign student. In one case, the interviewee consistently used this to compare different types of immigrants.

All the main research interviews were conducted with an open framework and with a two way communication. However, as mentioned earlier they were semi structured interviews in which we started with a brief immigration background of the planner and I always explained about what this thesis really about to assure that they clearly understand what I would like to know about them. Then, I was bringing up my main questions.

2.7. Ethical Consideration

According to Creswell, ethical practices involve much more than merely following a set of static guideline, such as those provided by professional associations. Writers need to anticipate and address any ethical dilemmas that may arise in their research (Creswell, 2009: 88).

Interviewing has always been seen as moral inquiry so there are ethical concerns that underpin both philosophical and practical issues in different stages of the research. This involves the issues regarding identifications, contacts, interactions, confidentiality of the participants, interpretation and representation at entire research process (Kvale, 2007). Moreover, the issues of equality, power and responsibility are important throughout the whole research process.

My contact with the interviewees was mostly via email and sometimes via telephone through which I gave a briefing about my thesis topics and its aims. Before the interviews I asked them if it was all right to record their voice and assure them that I know the importance of ethical issues. In the interview session I emphasized on their right to refuse to answer the questions they are not comfortable with and their right to withdraw from the interview at any time. Moreover, I informed them that they could ask me to turn the recorder off at any time during the interview. I also assure them that I would secure their confidentiality by using numbers or pseudonyms and their sex instead of their real names and their company names. Nonetheless, securing informants’ confidentiality is a difficult task in this thesis since planners and social practitioners with the Iranian background in Stockholm is a very small group. To avoid this risk I would not state the informant’s expertise throughout the thesis and instead I would refer to them as planners and social practitioners in general.

There are also ethical considerations related to translation of the interviews in this thesis. I personally translated the interviews and I tried my best to cover as congruous to what they had stated in Persian as possible. However, I informed them that I was going to translate all the material in English and told them that we can carry out the interview in English if they prefer. I also informed them that they would be more than welcome if they want to review the translation of

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2 The main and frequent debated questions of the research interviews are available in appendix III.
their quotes.

2.8. Content Analysis

It seems that the most challenging part of a research is transforming data into a clear, understandable, and trustworthy analysis (Gibbs, 2007: 1). Qualitative content analysis demands a creative process in which researcher investigates “patterns, themes, and categories” and makes judgments about what information is important for the purpose of the study (Patton, 2002:453). Thus, according to Patton (2002: 453) content analysis is “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings.” Thematic analysis is the most common approach in content analysis. In thematic analysis, the coding scheme is based on categories designed to capture the dominant themes in a text (Franzosi, 2003 :186 ). In this thesis first I have transcribed interviews and then based on the interview data I extracted the themes. Themes are central parts of a content analysis which entail fundamental meaning of the text “which explicitly or implicitly expressed by research participants” (Eliassi, 2010: 58). I tried to sort the themes considering research questions which were mainly around the issues of if planners’ experience of migration have had influence on their profession and, in particular, in what way.

I have discussed the findings and themes that I have extracted from the data with two experts with whom I had previously interviewed to ensure the credibility of my research findings. These discussions gave me the chance to be aware of limits and the strengths of my interpretations. Moreover, it was very useful in the case of ethical consideration because the number of planners with Iranian background in Stockholm is very small and it was very hard to achieve total anonymity. I learnt some hints to protect the confidentiality of the research participants.
3. Theoretical Perspectives

3.1. Introduction

Most of the previous works have been conducted in this area of study, either explicitly or implicitly, have a binary perspective that put a line between minorities and majority, black and white, or immigrants and natives. During the field work I realized that in reality there is no certain line which put minority planners in one category and majority planners in the opposite. I think in real world, at least in the level I am conducting my thesis, judgments are more individually both from immigrant sides and the natives although there are some factors such as language that make differences much more visible. Thus, I am trying to avoid seeing everything as black and white.

The idea of the ‘just city’ is the main theory that I would like to apply in this thesis. So many scholars have noted this theory in different terms such as ‘the right to the city’, ‘social justice’, mongreal city’ and so on. The difference between different ideas for the just city comes from having different, and sometimes opposite, perspectives. But before going any further, there are two frequent key terms to be defined.

3.4.1. Equity

Equity is defined as fairness, impartiality, and justness (Arnaud, 2001: 4729). It is described as a concern to reduce the discrimination and marginalization in society (Wiles & Kobayashi, 2011: 580). Some have acknowledged equity as “inclusiveness and the affirmation of opportunities for all”; it also can be defined in relation to human rights. Equity should be considered in relation to distribution of resources, of access, and of outcomes in the society (Wiles & Kobayashi, 2011: 584).

3.4.2. Diversity

Diversity is a term that has various (multiple) meanings and definitions in urban literature. However, for urban planners it may mean concerning heterogeneity in class, ethnicity, and race in planning for the city (Fainstein, 2005: 4).

Jane Jacob (1961) discusses city planning should be based on multiple uses to bring about economic and social diversity. In her idea diversity is the source of economic productivity, it stimulates creativity, and it can make the city more attractive (Fainstein, 2005: 4).

Like Jacob, Richard Florida (2002) emphasizes on the connection between social diversity and economic growth. He acknowledges diversity and creativity as two main factors that promote innovation and economic growth.

Iris Marion Young (1990) focuses on the concept of social justice in relation to diversity. She refers to an ideal city in which freedom leads to social and spatial differentiation of groups without exclusion. The variety of urban spaces, she believes, accomplishes safety and interest for residents. Moreover, in such this city public spaces will be places where different ideas can be
expressed and “anyone can speak and anyone can listen” (240).

Leonie Sandercock (2003) also regards urban diversity as a basis for a just city; she illustrates an ideal city in which everyone is treated with respect apart from race, ethnicity, and gender. In this ideal city, that she names it cosmopolis, all people have equal rights to the urban spaces (Thomas, 2008: 231; Fainstein, 2005:5).

Although scholars have consensus about the benefits of diversity in contemporary era, they have different ideas about how to make a divers city in which all communities equally take advantage of the city. They are not unified about the characteristics of the environment they should provide (Fainstein, 2005: 6).

Fainstein (2005: 13) Sums up various ideas about the merits of diversity: “Diversity underlies the appeal of the urban, it fosters creativity, it can encourage tolerance, and it leads city officials to see the value in previously underappreciated lifestyles”. However she underscores the role of national policy context and says “without a national regime which is committed to equity……diversity may result in rivalry rather than tolerance”.

According to Goonewardena et al (2004: 6), diversity has two dimensions; socio-economic (class) and cultural (identity). As diversity closely relates to justice and equity, to have diversity in these two dimensions we should ensure of changes in both areas that are political-economy restructuring for economic disadvantage and recognition and cultural pluralism for cultural injustice.

3.4.3. Equity of outcomes and Equity in process in planning

Equity of outcome and equity of process are two key concepts in relation to the just city; how these two perceived and got value is the point of departure for various perspectives. In communicative and collaborative planning the focus is on the process and the means of the just city. For communicative planners, planning is a tool by which various interests and values of multiple parties can be addressed. These perspectives have been criticized for not considering power relation in dialogues in particular in societies which suffer from deep inequities (Watson, 2006 and Thomas, 2008: 232).

Advocacy and equity planning approaches focus both on equity of process and equity of result but they have not focused on the social structures which shape uneven distributions (Thomas, 2006).

Political economists such as Harvey point out equity economic considerations affect the outcomes. They believe social justice should be seen in the broader way of life (Fainstein, 2003: 186, Thomas, 2008: 230). They blame decision makers for making policies in favor of business interest. Therefore, there is a need, as Harvey says, for new modes of urbanization by democratic management of urban resources (Harvey, 2008: 23). Furthermore, providing a different order of rights upon different political-economic practices would help out imagining a more inclusive city (Harvey, 2003: 941).

It seems to me among all the perspectives toward the just city Fainstein has a more comprehensive view point. Her definition of the just city includes both process and products. She notes a theory of just city that values participation in decision making by relatively powerless groups and equity of outcomes (Fainsten 2003: 186). Applying the theory of the just
city, Fainstein (2003:188) argues, results should be judged and planners should consider that equity in results stem from public policy which itself constrained by economy. In what follows, I will go through some of these theories:

3.2. Communicative and collaborative planning

Communicative planning is about considering multiple parties’ concerns who have competing and sometimes in contrast values (Thomas, 2008: 232). Within this approach planner has one main function that is to listen to people’s stories and assist them to get to an agreement apart from the socio-economic positions of the participants i.e. planners are seen mostly as communicators (Fainstein, 2003:175).

Collaborative planning has developed as a planning method in the 1990s mainly referring to Healey’s work (1997) which focused on how politicians and decision makers can control and organize planning practice in a democratic way (Harris, 2005:22). Therefore, the outcome of such planning is an action all participants have consensus about (Fainstein, 2003: 178) since the decision would be made after a discussion over the topic.

According to Healey key emphases in communicative planning paradigm are:

- Recognition of social construction of knowledge
- Acknowledgement of the different forms for the development and communication of knowledge (analysis, storytelling, expression)
- Acknowledgment of development of individual’s viewpoint through social interaction
- Recognition of diversity in values and interests
- provide public policy with a broad range of knowledge from various sources
- shifting from competitive interest to collaborative consensus building

(Fainstein, 2003: 176; Harris, 2005:26)

Communicative and collaborative planning seems to have been criticized for different reason. First, there is an over emphasis on planners’ role and neglecting neither the context nor the outcomes of planning. That is, instead of concentrating on what should be done the focus is on what planners should do. And even this question is not well answered. Therefore, communicative planning has become subjective interpretation rather than the identification of causes, constraints, and substantive outcomes (Fainstein, 2003:177). Second, communicative planning does not serve any solution to deal with the situations that open process in inefficient system might produce unjust results and desirable outcomes especially in societies with long standing inequalities (Watson, 2006 ; Thomas, 2008: 232; Fainstein, 2003: 178). Third, in case that there are deep differences between the attitudes of people especially

those who are from opposite political parties, forging consensus and resolving dilemmas would not easily achieved. Forth, communicative planning requires a long time for such participatory dialogues (Fainstein, 2003: 179). Fifth, collaborative and communicative planning have deficit regarding power relations and dominations , in these approaches those who are already in power apparently continue their dominance over the rest of the participants(Harris, 2005 :26; Fainstein, 2003: 197; Thomas, 2008: 232; Watson, 2006). Finally, they over emphasize on equity in process and pay insufficient attention, unlike their expressed commitment
to equity and diversity, to the outcome of planning practice. Thus, there would be a conflict between the aims of planning and the outcomes of the dialogues (Thomas, 2008: 231- 233; Fainstein, 2003:180).

Despite all these critiques to communicative and collaborative planning, I would like to assign it in this study for several reasons. First, It is one of the fewest planning theories that explicitly acknowledges the significance of planners’ role in planning practice. According to Sandercock (1998) collaborative planning is a development in planning that demands new knowledge, skills, and competence on the part of planners. Second, during my field work I realized that this perspective is being employed currently in some municipalities in Stockholm, e.g. Botkyrka municipality. Some of the interviewees, 4 out of 9, explicitly pointed to this perspective as a useful method specially regarding physical planning of the area. However, they also mentioned its weak points several times. For instance, only those people participate in dialogue forums who either are very interested in the issue or have enough times and not those who are the targets of the discussion such as the youth.

3.3. The right to the city

“The right to the city” is a frequent concept in urban literature which founded by Henri Lefebvre (1996) then, provoked by other scholars. Harvey (2003:941) uses that in relation to social justice and the issue of dealing with difference. This right, he explains, is not a right of access to what exists but a right to change it upon our interest. He believes the right to create and recreate different society within which we can remake ourselves is one of the most valuable rights. However, he argues, in today’s heterogenic societies with current shape of urbanization it is very hard to reflect precisely on this right. Therefore, we need new modes of urbanization by democratic management of urban resources; thus, the right to the city means to have power over the use and distribution of urban surpluses (Attoh, 2011:676). Nonetheless, this right, he says, is a collective right which “depends on the exercise of collective power to reshape the process of urbanization” (Harvey, 2008: 23). He believes structured economic power affect current outcomes in cities (Watson, 2006, Thomas, 2008: 230).

Building on Young’s (1990) ‘five faces’ of oppressions, he provides a set of suggestions in relation to social justice including creation of social organizations and economic systems that minimize the exploitation of labor, confronting marginalization, empowering oppressed groups, eliminate the imperialist attitude, and performing non-exclusionary forms of social control. But, he goes further and adds a sixth proposition to Young’s concerning the need for recognition of the ecological impacts of all social projects (Harvey, 1992: 598-600, Watson, 2006: 43). Social justice, according to Harvey, is not a constant universal concept which is valid for everyone (Harvey, 1992: 595). Therefore, he notes that his suggestions are not universal but

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3 Lefebvre (1996:158) defines the right to the city as “transformed and renewed right to urban life”, that is, “the right to inhibit the city, the right to produce urban life on new terms, and the right of inhabitants to remain unalienated from urban life”(Attoh,2011:267).

4 “These five faces are: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence” (Watson, 2006:47).
they can be seen as first steps of transformative politics (Watson, 2006: 43). Providing a different order of rights upon different political-economic practices, he says, would help out imagining a more inclusive city (Harvey, 2003: 941).

Sandercock (2000: 15) has the same perception of “the right to the city” but names it as “the right to difference” and “the right to a voice in decisions”. She believes that different people have different claims on their surrounding environments. She identifies several challenges that multiple public pose to planning. First, the legislative framework of planning is affected by the values of the dominant cultures. Second, these majority’s values are also embedded in the attitudes and practices of the planners. Third, in intercultural neighbourhoods there are always some form of racism and xenophobia, in most cases this racism and xenophobia penetrates to the planning system as well. Forth, planners often are against the cultural practices that are different from their own values. Then, she serves four answers for responding to these challenges which are court, anti discriminatory legislation, market mechanism, establishing dialogue. The last way was discussed earlier under communicative planning. Sandercock focuses on this solution as the possible way to illuminate the said challenges.

3.4. Just City

A theory of just city values participation in decision making by relatively powerless groups and equity of outcomes (Fainstein 2003: 186). According to Fainsten (2003: 186) just city theorists can be divided in to two groups; radical democrats and political economists. They both have a similar assumption that “any distributional conception of social justice will inevitably be linked to the broader way of life in which people engage” (Smith in Fainstein, 2003: 190). Radical democrats believe empowering excluded groups is the only way to make progressive social changes happen. They see participation as a tool, through which power asserts itself, whereas, political economists concern the distribution of social benefits. They blame decision makers for making policies in favor of business interest (186), hence, they think of mobilizing public in their vision. Political economists note that the crucial point is, economic interest is the only answer to the question that “who dominates?” and “who benefits?”. But, Fainstein (2003: 186) argues, the outcomes can also be analyzed in relation to different groups characterized by race, gender, and sexual orientation. To Fainstein (2003:187), “a persuasive vision of the just city needs to incorporate an entrepreneurial state that not only provides welfare but also generates increased wealth, moreover it needs to project a future embodying a middle-class society rather than only empowering the poor and disfranchised”. Participation in decision making is a very important part of the just city theory. Fainstein (2008) argues rather than emphasizing diversity as the principal goal of urban planning we should seek a model for the just city considering that there are inevitable conflicts among equity, diversity, growth, and sustainability.

5 differentiated by criteria of age, gender, class, dis/ability, ethnicity, sexual preference, culture, and region (Sandercock, 2000: 15)
4. Findings and Analysis

4.1. Language

I allocate a separate section to language as it was the most explicit theme that all the interviewees mentioned. It has been noted frequently associated with different issues. It was also an important matter for me since not only it was a limit in my thesis but also it was, and still is, a limit for me to deeply connect to this society. Language is the most important means to communicate with people, and once its significance would unfold more, that one wants to penetrate to deeper layers of social life in a society. Almost all the informants acknowledged it as a disadvantage of being immigrant in their work, either as a self experience or talking in general. One who was the head of her department stated it is a very crucial factor when she wants to employ staff for her department and she cares not to employ a person with weak Swedish language knowledge.

The quality of employees are very important to me, it doesn’t matter if they are immigrants or Swedes but unfortunately weak Swedish language knowledge of majority of immigrant job seekers make me to refuse them even unlike their professional merits. If I employ an immigrant who cannot talk or write Swedish fluently I should ask some other people to help them with language which reduce the quality of their job. (Interviewee N₄)

Two interviewees noted that they had to work hard in order to cover their deficiency in language. They both acknowledged immigration in adulthood (When their personalities have already been shaped in their country of origin) as the reason of their weaknesses. One mentioned that she knew the academic language quite well but in order to communicate in a way that people understand her she had to change her way of talking.

The significance of language was also indicated associated with other issues such as power, conflicts, and misunderstanding. One interviewee noted

Language is very important in making misunderstandings in particular between colleagues when you are not very fluent in Swedish language it affects others’ judgments about your qualifications, they even might say that you are not working good. In the other hand you would be annoyed that they ignore your qualifications, and this will be the first step of Conflicts. (Interviewee N₃)

They all stated that weak language knowledge weaken the person’s self confidence and even

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6 In order to complete the interviews I intended to do a participant observation and to follow my interviewees at their work for a couple of hours but not knowing enough knowledge of Swedish language prohibited me.
make uneven power relation between the immigrant and his/her colleagues.

In your country you have had a high social position you have never had a trouble to communicate with people, you knew the language and the culture while here you realize that you cannot understand even the simplest codes and you are not able to do primary tasks. It affects your self confidence. (Interviewee N₁)

Nonetheless, language was also denoted by some of informants as a merit in their job. All the interviewees who mentioned this point were able to talk at least two different popular immigrants’ languages. They all noted that this is one area that their knowledge is being used by their colleagues. However, they, except one⁷, did not emphasize on this aspect of language as if they did not think this was a noticeable advantage neither for their professional sake nor for the immigrant people.

4.2. Self experience of migration

Generally for most of interviewees, the immigration experience had leaded them to choose this type of job. Six out of seven had studied or worked in different majors in their home country and then in Sweden they shifted to social fields like social planning and social work. They all talked about how the experience of migration shaped their identity and their perspectives towards diversity. They all stated they respect diverse values both at their works and their social and personal lives. When I asked my interviewees if the experience of migration have had any influences on how they conduct their jobs they told it had helped them very much to do social work. They believed this experience have given them flexibility, conciseness, and openness towards different ideas. Experience of being in minority groups in society has thought them to be aware of cultural differences.

in my experience of immigration I realized that one strong human can easily change to a weak one, I mean the conditions are very important in shaping one’s identity and self-esteem, so you should let some beliefs away and try to build some other values from the very early step or in better words you have to look at your characteristic your values and your beliefs and try to adjust yourself with new condition. And this is a very valuable experience that not everybody can have. (Interviewee N₁)

In response of my question that if they see any differences in how they conduct their jobs and how their Swedish colleagues do. They mostly mentioned the difference, if there is any, is because of their different perspectives towards different issues and not because of their background and the experience of migration. One mentioned he has his own way of working that

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⁷ She mentioned as the municipality does not have enough budget to employ translator, those who knows immigrant languages are preferred to be employed as social workers. Thus, knowing two main immigrant languages have been an advantage for her.
is even different from his Iranian peer. When I asked the same question from my two non-Iranian interviewees they also answered in same way. However, none of the interviewees provided me with a clear specific answer when I asked if they see any differences between the result they gain and those of their Swedish colleagues. I could recognize that the differences are not product oriented. I mean none of the differences ended in different results.

Sometimes differences might not be in the way immigrant planners conduct their job tasks or the result they get, but it might just simply be on people’s attitude about them. I mean being an immigrant itself might bring advantages or disadvantages for people. The issue of “trust” for instance is associated with people’s image about an immigrant planner or social practitioner. For example, when immigrant people know a planner with foreign background they might think s/he can better understand and help them even if in reality that might not differ so much i.e. the immigrant planner does exactly what a native one does. In the contrary, people might think an immigrant planner does not have the same power or the same knowledge as a native does. This has been indicated also by some interviewees, both Iranian and the control group, that sometimes people think Swedes knows the rules better or have more ability to help.

Nonetheless, when I directly asked my interviewees what their contribution in planning a diverse society is and how they contribute, they offered me detailed answers. Several mentioned their effort to encourage immigrants and especially the youth to participate in dialogue forum and ensure them to deliver their needs to the politicians.

I tried a lot to encourage the youth to build up an active group in this area through which they can gain a practical power that give them a voice in participatory planning practice. To do this I employed a young person who could talk to the youth in school and aware them of their rights. After a while this group had developed very much. The amazing point is the people who were the first members of that group now graduated from university and now are back to this area and have assembled a new group that intends to encourage teenagers to pursue their education after school. I think that former group was a very good experience for these people and now they want to develop that idea. (IntervieweeN6)

They affirmed that they were successful in reducing the conflicts between planning system and people. They emphasized very much on their role as a bridge that connect people to the system. But they did not believe that their Swedish peers were less successful in this regard. They tried to define that their professional role was in nature a connector role.

Notwithstanding, those who had more face to face interactions with people narrated stories about how they helped individuals to integrate in Swedish society. Two of them noted that they sometimes make examples about how they themselves could integrate in society and get a high level social position for those people who come to them and ask for help especially for those young people with great potential. One said that she feel she is much more successful than her colleagues in communicating and building relationship with vulnerable strata and added that her colleagues also confirm this. She said being an immigrant middle age woman is the reason for being successful in her job.
4.3. Diversity at workplace

The concrete advantages of a diverse workplace\textsuperscript{8} have been asserted by so many scholars (Sweet & Ettienne, 2011; Goonewardena et al, 2004; Wise&Tschirhart, 2000; Thomas, 2008). It is claimed that not only it brings about so much benefits for the organization but is very beneficial for the society. Diverse workplace can bring new ideas to the organization; it also increases creativity and functionality (Thomas, 2008:237).

In this regard, I asked my interviewees how they got their job, how they perceived their workplace atmosphere, and if they have ever had conflicts with their colleagues. They all assessed their workplace quite good and they did not feel any pressure by their colleagues in planning or working for minority groups. Several mentioned that as their job is a cooperative job in nature and it demands particular characteristics such as high level of sympathy besides they all are working in segregated areas with the majority of underrepresented communities they have never been under the pressure for assisting immigrants.

Concerning the question that if it was difficult to get this job or did they face to any discrimination, two directly pointed to difficulties of being foreigners in the very first step. They said the problem was until before the interviews or having face to face contact.

They [employers] are very suspicious when a foreigner applies for a job maybe that is just for the foreign name [my italic]. I experienced it several times that I didn’t receive any response but when I was invited for interview I have never faced any problem or mistreatment. (IntervieweeN\textsubscript{5})

One interviewee told the story of her first employment in Sweden when she had experienced discrimination.

One Swedish friend and I both applied for a job. While she was admitted I had not received any response, after two weeks the company contacted me and told me they need a secretor and asked if I’d like to take this job. I was annoyed because I had applied for a job that was my profession and now they offered me another that did not demand any specific qualification. But I accepted the job since I knew that they did not invite me for they could not trust me and now I should make them realize that I am a person beyond my ethnicity [my italic]. Indeed, I was successful since after three weeks they asked me to cooperate in a professional project. Years after, I asked my boss what the reason was that she did not employ me at first place and she said I did not trust you. (Interviewee N\textsubscript{1})

\textsuperscript{8} worth to mention that human diversity at workplace does not only concern ethnic diversity and it has different dimensions including race, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, profession, education level, political party, and so on(Wise&Tschirhart, 2000:387).
The interesting point in her narrative of her experience was that she analyzed the discriminatory behavior herself by looking to it from different angles. She was confident that this discriminatory behavior was due to insufficient acquaintance and lack of trust. She believed that if her ex-boss knew people of her background she would have employed her at the first place. Almost all the interviewees, directly or indirectly, pointed that they had to try to win their colleagues’ and, in particular, bosses’ trusts and to change their attitude towards foreigners. To my knowledge, they have been successful to some extent. They were able to change their colleagues’ attitude not only towards themselves but also towards Iranian in general. Whenever I talk to the Swedes about Iranian immigrants, I receive positive feedbacks. The native interviewee told that before coming to Stockholm he was living in a small town in Sweden where there were very few migrants. Consequently, he hadn’t had any specific interaction with immigrants. He believed working in a diverse atmosphere was a great chance for him to better know people of other backgrounds. This is a good reason to say having diversity in profession has advantages for society. Let’s assume there is a very homogenous planning group of native planners who are planning for a heterogeneous society consisting different minority groups. It is very difficult for planners to know the needs of various communities. One might say that they might have studied about different cultures but there is very improbable that one person can study deeply the details of several cultures in a few years. Therefore, their knowledge is limited to what they studied. In the best case, they might have interaction with people of different backgrounds out of work. Now let’s consider a different scenario in which there is a heterogeneous planning group who are making decisions for the above said society. Now, there is an extra option since in addition to all source of knowledge of pervious scenario, planners can learn from each others. This might be the best way that they can know various communities and their culture for they spend noticeable time together and their knowledge exchange will be in professional areas as well as other day to day issues.

However, not to forget that when the interviewee N1 says she had to prove that she is a person beyond her ethnicity or when the other interviewee says the problem might be having a foreign name, it means that even they confirms that their ethnicity is a disadvantage in this society. Or when the other (interviewee N4) says she had to try extra hard as she was an immigrant woman, her self-image is influenced by the reality that being an immigrant and woman is still a matter. Four (out of seven) remarked each society has a specific codes and when an immigrant can be successful that s/he figures out these codes. They believed that the key point to be successful is to adjust properly to the system. And I could observe it in their behavior, the way they dressed, and even the way they talked. The most successful one in professional life was the most similar to a Swede. Hence, for immigrants the adjustment degree seems to be one of the key measures of being successful in current Swedish system.

According to what the interviewees said, the conflicts are the unavoidable elements of co-working. These conflicts apparently were derived from having different professional roles and stated by most of the respondents. Nonetheless, these types of conflicts were not intended to be studied in this thesis. I was interested to know if they have ever had conflicts due to their immigrant background. None of the interviewees could remember any conflicts or mistreatment of this category. I asked how they deal with the professional based conflicts but I have not received clear answers. They just said that they will discuss the issue and try to solve it. But

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9 The control group interviewees also responded in same way and pointed to different professional role as the main cause of conflicts.
when I asked them to explain more about how in these cases the discussion ends. The answer was exactly that I expected, they had to convince each other otherwise the one who had power decides. Those interviewees who were working as developers of specific areas in municipality had experienced this issue several times. These kinds of conflicts, of course, may happen very often regardless people’s ethnic background; however, still ethnic background might be a significant issue regarding how these conflicts are resolved and who wins the discussion. One of the planners precisely pointed to this affair and explained:

The differences exist all the time but the condition and the context are very important I think in conflicting circumstances differences would be more critical whereas in normal situation they would never matter. (Interviewee N4)

She added that language, gender, and culture might be the reason for misunderstanding and conflicts.

I think Sometimes since I am a foreign woman I am asked to fulfill more requests. (Interviewee N4)

Associated with this issue, one interviewee stated very different experiences. She said as her job demands cooperation among colleagues she has rarely encountered conflicts with others at work. In contrast, she believed the conflicts and discomforts happens interval the working hours such as coffee or lunch time. In her idea, this is because they do not understand each other as if they belong to different worlds.

In response to my question that if their cultural competence is being used by the system and their colleagues, they all said the first thing they help their colleagues with is in language issues. However, some told that they usually answer to their colleagues ambiguities about Iranian communities’ reactions in particular. Thus, as far as I understood their cultural competence is mostly used informally by their colleagues and is not something that the system planned for.

One interviewee said that she has always seen as an expert in Iranian related issues and she argued that she is not an Iranian cultural expert since she had never studied in this field and she could not be representative of Iranian culture. She emphasized on the economic and social class and believed she cannot understand all different layers of different Iranian subcultures.

I can talk about the experiences I have had but I can not generalize them to all Iranian people. It is very probable that my talks are not true since I have never studied Iranian culture comprehensively. What I say is completely depends on my values and not based on reality. (Interviewee N4)
4.4.  Dilemmas and obstacles the immigrant planners are facing with

I asked the interviewees what obstacles and dilemmas they have been facing with and how they deal with these issues. Most of them mentioned that the municipality’s policies might be in contrast with their personal idea and they are supposed to conform to these policies even if sometimes those policies do not seem helpful for the community. They said they see themselves first as the agent of municipality so they do whatever they are supposed to. A few of them remarked that they would express their oppositions although they comply with the policies. For example, one planner said the municipality allocated a budget for local project of an area and the routine was that we were supposed to invite people to a dialogue and ask them how they want this budget be spent. The idea was very good in nature but it had some fundamental problem e.g. in addition to individuals there were different communities participating in these dialogues, those communities who were more organized usually won the discussion and this makes those weaker communities or individuals lost their voices since they did not have practical power. Hence, although he disagreed with the way of implementing the idea, he had to work with that. One other interviewee said that in her job the important issue is to work according to the law and not after the personal priority. She believed that she should adjust herself to the system.

I always say this to my colleagues that we are working with politicians from different parties, we might not agree with all the decisions they make but we should be neutral as the system demands. (Interviewee N4)

One other interviewee said he should work on the basis of law and this is a “must” and is equal for everyone. But how to formulate an issue is the important hint that let the planner be subjective and also be alongside of organization policies. He stated that he could help some low-income immigrants with this method.

I have never done something against the law but it happened that I formulate the issue in a way that I could satisfy the municipality’s policies and also get the intended results. It is of course very important to know the law very well. (Interviewee N3)

The other issue that appeared to be a pressure for these social practitioners was the conflicting demands on their accountability to the immigrants’ communities, in particular Iranians, on one side and to the municipality on the other side. My impression was that these people had high level of commitment to their organizations and they see themselves accountable to the municipality. In the contrary, when I asked about their accountability to the immigrant communities their answers were not strongly “Yes”. They saw themselves representative of the municipality and not minority group advocates. Their answer to my question was both yes and no. One said that people are not aware of her function but those who are ask her for help in variety of subjects that might even unrelated to her job. Some of them noted “trust” as an important factor in assessing their accountability to different people. They said that for some people that know them they are accountable and for some other they are not. They pointed that some immigrants have unjustifiable demands in spite of their work situation and their commitment to the municipality. Two of them directly declared that they have advocated the
organization’s interests against those demands. And they regarded this attitude as their privilege in comparison with Swedes who might be accused of being racist in same situation.

Worth to mention, the control group provided me almost the same answers regarding the issue of accountability. One of them said, the accountability is very much related to the professional role that they have in their organization both for people and for the organization. He said they receive some especial questions e.g. questions related to physical planning of the area and for other more important questions including education and security people prefer to go directly to politicians. He added:

we do not have a common profession so I do not surprised that some people even don’t know that we exist, however I think I am accountable for those who are aware of my function…But the municipality is very slow in implementing the projects meanwhile people ask us for an adequate answer, thus, we should mediate these conflicting situation and sometimes not everybody is satisfied. (IntervieweeN7)

It seemed to me that these planners and social practitioners choose the organization’s side if they have to choose between their organization’s demands and those of minority communities. A reason might be to advance their personal careers (Thomas, 2008:239) but I think it is more probable that they don’t think that they are able to change anything and this is the same for all of them no matter if they are immigrant or native.

Concerning obstacles of working as immigrant social practitioners, the informants noted some Swedish clients’ unpleasant attitude towards them. Some of them offered several examples they can not accept an immigrant to plan for their life and their living area I was quite surprised with two contrasting interpretation that the respondents had towards different types of mistreatments they had faced with. The interviewees had mistreated by immigrant people in a way and by Swedish people in another way. Although they had been offended by both, they vindicated Swedes and tried to find a hidden reason while accused immigrants, and in particular Iranians, without doubt. They had a simple explanation for Swedes’ mistreatment that “It is hard for them to see a foreigner should decide about their lives.” In the contrary, they interpreted the immigrants’ mistreatments as “They think this is their absolute right to behave so.” As I explained previously I think the immigrants do not see themselves, maybe unconsciously, at the same level as the natives, as if the inequality has been consolidated in the people’s identities.
5. Discussion of results and conclusions

To answer the questions raised in this thesis, ethnographic methods such as interview and participant observation have been employed. I have conducted the total number of 9 interviews from which 7 were with the Iranian background planners and social practitioners and the other two were with those of different backgrounds as control group. The interviews were semi structured with open ended questions which gave the interviewee freedom to talk about the issues s/he wants.

These planning practitioners asserted that they were highly motivated to enter the profession to be able to help the people and they claimed that the experience of migration had been the reason for this choice. One of them mentioned they wanted to be able to contribute in the planning system in his home country. According to the interviewees, the way conducting their works is related to their different perspectives which might be a result of so many factors that the migration experiences might be one of them. None of them emphasized on migration as a very strong effective factor although they referred to it as a merit which gave them, at least, more flexibility, consciousness, and openness in the way they conduct their works regarding ethnic minority communities as well as low income Swedish communities.

Their main contribution to the planning system seemed to be in the areas of language and culture. Most of the immigrant interviewees saw themselves more open to different cultures in compare with their Swedish colleagues. They perceived this as a merit which provided them a unique perspective concerning the special demands of minority communities. These planners also saw themselves effective for the system in gaining minority communities trust. They expressed that immigrants’ participation have been very low in dialogue forums and participatory processes, and therefore they were trying to encourage them to participate.

They affirmed that they were successful in reducing the conflicts between planning system and people. They emphasized very much on their role as a bridge that connect people to the system. But they did not believe that their Swedish peers were less successful in this regard. They tried to define that their professional role was in nature a connector role. But, concerning the issue of “accountability” they saw themselves more committed to the organization they work for rather than being minority communities’ advocate. Most of the interviewees mentioned that they faced discriminatory behaviors before they got the job and at the first stages of their career but after they win their colleagues’ and their boss’s trusts they hardly approached offensive behavior. They believed that the “attitude” towards immigrants should be changed and some of them acknowledged this can be done via education and media. They also pointed to structures that resisting against any change. This issue confirmed also by control group.

Overall, my perception is that the planning system, at least in local level, is not very much open that planners could work very different from each other. The differences are just in process and not in results. I do not think that currently the immigrant planners’ cultural and local knowledge is used properly for planning for a diverse society. The only contribution the system accepts is in the field of language which is in informal level. Based on what I observed and understood from my interviewees in this thesis the more one immigrant can adjust him/her self to the Swedish system they better chance s/he has to escalate in her/his profession.

Nonetheless, worth to mention that not all the immigrant respondents acted in similar way or served me same answer. I realized that how they experienced immigration and for what reason they left their country was a very significant factor in shaping their perspectives. I could see
this difference even in details of their behavior. As far as I understand those who migrated for political reasons had had different attitude both about themselves as immigrants and towards the society. They seemed to be more motivated to help people without any prejudgments. They looked to be more committed to respect to diversity in compare to those who migrated for other reasons.
6. Contribution of the thesis

Despite the benefits that diversity in planning profession for the multicultural planning and reaching a just society minority groups have rarely represented within the planning profession (Thomas in Campbell&Fainstein eds., 2003:357). Therefore, I think there should be some clarification about how beneficial planners from minority groups can be for creating a just city. Worth to mention is that this area of research has mainly been unexplored in Sweden compared to other countries such as in the US, Canada, and the UK. There have been some researches, of course, conducted in other disciplines such as social work and sociology. This thesis can be regarded as a basis for further research aimed to find out possible ways of reaching the just city in which all people have equal rights.

To my knowledge the issue of diversity in profession has not been addressed by any planning association in Sweden as it is, for instance, in American Planning Association and the American Institute of Certified Planners. This study might also be seen as a pilot study for more applied studies in order to considering diversity in Swedish planning acts.
7. References

7.1. Reference List (Books, Articles, Reports)


City of Stockholm,


Fainstein, S., (2005), Cities and Diversity: Should We Want It? Can We Plan For It?, *Urban Affairs Review* 41: 3.


Inc.


Stockholm Län Landsting,

http://www.tmr.sll.se/Kartor-och-GIS/Omradesdata/Botkyrka/

http://www.tmr.sll.se/Kartor-och-GIS/Omradesdata/Sodertalje/

http://www.tmr.sll.se/Kartor-och-GIS/Omradesdata/Stockholm/

http://www.tmr.sll.se/Kartor-och-GIS/Omradesdata/Stockholms_lan/

http://www.tmr.sll.se/Kartor-och-GIS/Omradesdata/Sundbyberg/


Stockholm Office of Research and Statistics,


Södertälje Municipality,


7.2. **Interviews**

7.2.1. **Main Interviews**

Interviewee N1, Female, Immigrant, Iranian background, Interviewed on 10 February 2012, at her office.

Interviewee N2, Female, Immigrant, Iranian background, Interviewed on 9 February 2012, on the phone.

Interviewee N3, Male, Immigrant, Iranian background, Interviewed on 16 February 2012, at his office.

Interviewee N4, Female, Immigrant, Iranian background, Interviewed on 17 February 2012, at her home.

Interviewee N5, Female, Immigrant, Iranian background, Interviewed on 20 February 2012, at a café.

Interviewee N6, Male, Immigrant, Iranian background, Interviewed on 21 February 2012, at his office.

Interviewee N7, Male, Immigrant, Non-Iranian background, Interviewed on 21 February 2012, at his office.

Interviewee N8, Male, Native, Swedish, Interviewed on 27 February 2012, at his office.

Interviewee N9, Male, Immigrant, Iranian background, Interviewed on 13 April 2012, at his office.

7.2.2. **Other Interviews**

Khosravi, Shahram, Associate Professor at social anthropology department of Stockholm University, Interviewed on 2 September 2011, at Stockholm University café.

Mafan, Masoud, Local Officer at ABF Stockholm, Interviewed on 15 November 2011, at his office.

Pooya, Faramarz, Freelance writer, Interviewed on 7 February 2012, on the phone.

Kamali, Masoud, Professor at Department of Social Work of Mid Sweden University, Interviewed on 20 February 2012, on the phone.
Appendix I: Background information of interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Background</th>
<th>The Reason for migration</th>
<th>Work in the same major as home</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N1</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>Political refugee</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Botkyrka Kommun (Botkyrka Municipality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>Political refugee</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Södertälje Kommun (Södertälje Municipality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N3</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Sundbybergs Kommun (Sundbybergs Municipality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N4</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Stockholms Stad Kommun (Stockhom Municipality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N5</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>Political refugee</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Transkulturet Centrum (Transculture Centre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Iranian</td>
<td>Political refugee</td>
<td>Different</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>N7</td>
<td>Native</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Botkyrka Kommun (Botkyrka Municipality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N8</td>
<td>Non-Iranian immigrant</td>
<td>Other Reason</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Botkyrka Kommun (Botkyrka Municipality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N9</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
<td>Political refugee</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Botkyrka Kommun (Botkyrka Municipality)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix II: Information of the selected municipalities in which the interviewees work

Stockholm County Map
Source: Stockholm Län Landsting

The selected municipalities have been colored in grey by the author for this thesis
Botkyrka Municipality

Botkyrka is the fifth largest municipality in Stockholm County and has five districts: Alby, Fittja, Hallunda-Norsborg, Tullinge, Storvret, Tumba-Grödinge. It has a population of 84,700 (in 2011) from which 53.2 percent are from foreign origins. The large number of foreign origin people makes this municipality very unique for its multicultural atmosphere (Botkyrka Municipality, 2012).

Botkyrka map – Foreign Background Population

Source: Stockholm Län Landsting
Södertälje Municipality

Södertälje has 86,246 inhabitants from which 37,993 people have foreign background (in 2011). It is the 20th biggest municipality in Sweden. The largest groups of foreign background communities respectively are: Iraq, Finland, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Poland, Germany, Chile, and Former Yugoslavia. The important characteristic of this municipality is that it is the region where city meets the countryside; it is also an important trading place (Södertälje Municipality, 2012).
**Stockholm Municipality**

More than 850,000 people of different origins live in Stockholm municipality. This large population makes Stockholm the largest municipality of Sweden in terms of population while it is one of the smallest in terms of area. It has 17 districts (see below picture). (City of Stockholm, 2012)

Stockholm Stad Map – Foreign Background Population

Source: Stockholm Län Landsting
Sundbybergs Municipality

Sundbyberg municipality is the smallest municipality in Sweden in terms of area but it is the second densely (39,000 people in almost 9 squares Kilometer) populated one. It has a population 39,000 people and it is very close to the city of Stockholm (Stockholm municipality). Circa 40 percent of the population are of foreign origins (Sundbyberg Municipality, 2012).

Sundbyberg Map – Foreign Background Population

Source: Stockholm Län Landsting
Appendix III: Main Questions raised during the interviews

- When did you immigrate to Sweden and what were the reasons for such a decision?
- How long have you had this occupation and what made you choose this job?
- What are you thinking of your immigration experience?
- What are the particular advantages or disadvantages related to being an immigrant at your work?
- Has it ever happened that your work benefited the needs of Iranians or other minority communities in Sweden?
- What do you think your contribution is to the process of inclusion for minority communities?
- Do you see yourself as an advocate of minority communities?
- Have you ever experienced mistreatment from your colleagues? If yes how serious was it? What was your reaction in such situation?
- What do you do when you face with some policies that are in opposition of minority people rights?
- How do you rate your commitment to your organization compare to others?
- Do you think your organization support you when you are making decision about minority communities?
- What do you think should be done in social planning system in order to improve cultural diversity?
- Do you recommend this job to the other foreign backgrounds?