

limited, twisted rationality can lead to. But that book becomes really chilling when the reader realizes that the logic is completely sealed within the “identity” of the society, and everybody in it. There is no escape possible from this closed totalitarian culture, and all deeds of resistance will ultimately be doomed. The self-sealing mechanism is very serious, indeed ...

Thus, there is no question that the syndromes we are dealing with here are deeply engrained, because they serve important purposes in creating stability and continuity. They cannot be “solved” or eliminated—but we will see later in this book that they can be overcome when that is needed.

Frame creation is an opportunity to approach the problems we face in novel ways, and avoid repeating the dysfunctional problem-solving practices of the past. As a first example, in the next case study the complex and deeply engrained problems of a social housing situation are approached in an original and very effective manner, bypassing all conventional problem-solving strategies.

CASE 4

Stories to connect people:

On reframing housing issues

An early project that pioneered a completely different approach to the bricks-and-mortar thinking that dominates the cultural DNA of social housing authorities took place in the late 1990s in Amsterdam. It was sparked by the pressing issues of a neighborhood that had seen a substantial influx of immigrants from Turkey and Morocco. These new communities introduced a different culture to the old area, now vibrant with “Eastern” shops and newly built mosques. In their midst still lived an aging Dutch population (Dutch families with children tended to move away from this area, to the suburbs) who were feeling more and more lost within their familiar surroundings. They perceived the neighborhood as going downhill, a feeling of unsafety that was exacerbated when some public spaces were vandalized. Everybody kept more or less to themselves, and it was clear that the influx of new people did not contribute to an inclusive social network. While there were no immediate problems, the social structure was felt to be close to collapse (De Gruijter, van Waesberge, and Boutellier 2010). From interviews, researchers learned that many of the recent (and not-so-recent) arrivals saw their existence in this cold, wet country as temporary—they intended to return to Turkey or Morocco when they were old.