

**EMPOWERMENT WITHOUT EMANCIPATION. PERFORMATIVITY AND
POLITICAL ACTIVISM AMONG IRANIAN REFUGEES IN ITALY AND TURKEY**

Dr. Paola Rivetti

School of Law and Government

Dublin City University

Collins Avenue, Glasnevin

Dublin 9, Ireland

E-mail: paola.rivetti@dcu.ie

Abstract: This article examines the centrality of political activism in Iranian refugees' identity and investigates how they perform and incorporate it by considering the interlocked pressure of international politics, personal networks and civil society organisations' assistance. The case of Iranian political refugees in Italy and Turkey is of particular interest, due to the international visibility the Green movement enjoys, the Iranian people's historical experience of emigration and to the fact that Iran is a subject of great interest for a number of human rights NGOs. The article shows how the process of incorporation of "being a refugee" comes about not only through classical forms of institutional pressure but also through "unexpected" forms, such as NGOs' efforts of empowering the refugees politically. Despite the positive value attached to it, in this context political activism can force refugees into pre-established role, such as the one of "human rights defenders" or "Green movement activists." The article brings further evidence to the fact that refugees are merged in a context that dominates them, even when it paradoxically tries to empower them.

Keywords: Iranian refugees, political activism, Green movement, Italy, Turkey.

Author's biography: Dr. Paola Rivetti is Post-Doctoral Fellow at the School of Law and Government, Dublin City University (Ireland). Her research interests focus on authoritarian resilience in the Middle East and Iran and on transnational activism in the Iranian Diaspora. She published articles in *Democratization*, *Mediterranean Politics* and *Middle Eastern Studies*; she also published in the *Chaillot Papers* series (128/2012) and co-edited *The Civil Society Effect. Practices and Rhetoric in Iran, Lebanon, Egypt and Morocco* (Rome, 2010). Email: paola.rivetti@dcu.ie

EMPOWERMENT WITHOUT EMANCIPATION. PERFORMATIVITY AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM AMONG IRANIAN REFUGEES IN ITALY AND TURKEY

INTRODUCTION

Political refugees are actors of growing importance in international politics, and scholars have devoted their attention to this subject producing a rich and diversified body of studies, ranging from theoretical issues to sociological accounts of refugees' every-day life, and highlight concerns related to policy-making, international and human security.¹ With the passing of the decades, the number of people applying to receive asylum has sharply increased and the legislation has become more and more complex, distinguishing among different forms of international protection and "labels" of asylum.² Different national and international actors are involved in "managing refugees" from the application to get political asylum to the last stage of their new life in a foreign country, namely small-scale policies favouring local integration. The world refugees inhabit is highly institutionalised and governmental or non-governmental actors at both national and international level norm a massive part of their life. This is true not only for the administrative process the refugees and asylum-seekers have to go through in order to get asylum. It is valid for their personal and every-day life as well, since local NGOs and charity organisations often assist them in different fields of their lives, from job search to housing and mental health.

This article examines this institutionalised world and the relations of power that compose it by focusing on the process of identity construction among Iranian refugees in Turkey and Italy. It contends that the context refugees live in plays a fundamental role in

orienting this process and in shaping refugees' identity. With these premises, the article examines the incorporation of such an identity by the Iranian refugees through the analysis of the "microphysics of power" they are subjected to³ as well as the subversion the refugees enact against these mechanisms.

Of course, there are a number of studies that have already examined the idea of "a refugee" not as a granted definition, but as a social and political construction.⁴ This essay draws from this literature, but examines in detail the process of construction of "refugeeness"⁵ considering three different levels. First, the study focuses on the role of refugees' own network and connections, such as family and friends, in shaping a given definition of "a refugee." Second, it focuses on international politics, which has been enhancing the representation of Iranians as a politically repressed people, in particular after the 2009 contested election and consequent uprisings. Third, the research looks at the role of NGOs, voluntary and charity organisations assisting refugees at the local level, which socialise the refugees to "refugeeness" through every-day practices. In the case of Iranian political refugees, the interlocked effect of these three levels is particularly powerful in showing how "refugeeness" may be enhanced among, or imposed to, the refugees. Indeed the high number of Iranian political refugees around the world favours the flow of information towards Iran regarding political asylum and emigration, making this experience part of the collective psyche in Iran. Furthermore, the dominant idea that people from Iran flee from dictatorship informs both the public opinion and the civil society organisations dealing with them.

The article examines two different aspects of the entwined play of these levels. First, elaborating on Michel Foucault's notion of biopolitics,⁶ it contends that this complex system of national, international, governmental and non-governmental actors limit refugees' option

for an autonomous process of identity construction, making them conflating their identity on “refugeeness” which, in this case, is strongly linked to political activism.

Second, elaborating on Judith Butler’s definition of “performativity,”⁷ this research examines the mechanisms of subversion and criticism that the refugees put forth. It is observed that subversion is an option for refugees, who often claim autonomously their rights, criticise the current international policies on asylum and the NGOs’ activities. Yet these claims are performed through reiterated “scripts of refugeeness,” the ultimate element that legitimate any criticism. They do not reverse the “grammar of domination” they went through: acting as a refugee is expected to act remains what actually legitimates them and their claims.

LINKING AGENCY AND STRUCTURE IN REFUGEE STUDIES

Refugees, and in particular political refugees, have significantly changed in numbers, origins and social background over the last decades. Asylum legislation has changed along with international politics after the Cold War, and so has the way in which social sciences study political asylum and refugees, enlarging the topics under consideration and enriching the disciplinary approaches.⁸ Refugee studies are a growing body of literature under constant redefinition, due to the crucial relationship they hold with policy-making and public opinion.

Many studies underline the condition of extreme domination the refugees live in: forced to flee their own country, they are later subjugated to a tight legislation in the receiving countries and often live in harsh conditions.⁹ Others studies underline the refugee’s agency, arguing that a focus on their capacity of reaction is useful in order to avoid generalisation and an incorrect representation of refugees as passive victims.¹⁰ Following this

last strand, Moulin and Nyers defined the contestations organised by refugees as actions of a “global political society,” thus granting the refugee, “who are usually denied the status of political beings,”¹¹ with the capacity of critically review the asylum-related policies over a number of issues.

Other studies focus on legal, moral and institutional implications of political asylum,¹² exploring the opportunity for enlarging its legal definition,¹³ and examining the impact of asylum policy on the international system.¹⁴ A separated but connected body of literature elaborates on the relation between refugees’ movements and human security¹⁵ in the context of environmental degradation, where the refugees are both the cause and the consequence of environmental problems,¹⁶ poor food security¹⁷ or ethnic conflicts.¹⁸

On the one hand, the focus on refugees’ political and social agency makes the whole conceptualisation of the politics of asylum revolving around the refugees themselves. This approach underlines the refugees’ capacity of choice and strategic thinking but leaves behind the fact that refugees are merged in a context that often dominates them. On the other hand, the focus on the structure of political asylum, whether this analysis may be policy-oriented or legally driven, is very much centred on the structure of political asylum, neglecting the issues connected to refugees’ everyday life, room for action and needs.

However, far from being two distinct spheres, refugees’ agency and the political/legal structure of political asylum interact and are implicated in each other. This is particularly relevant if we consider how the refugees’ individuality and agency are managed by international, national and local legislations and actors, which compose a complex system of multi-level governance. In line with those studies arguing that the legislation and bureaucratic practices do not only norm reality but create the objects they aim to regulate,¹⁹ this article

examines how institutions and organisations working with refugees also participate in creating the subject of their action and assistance.

Political refugees and asylum-seekers deal with institutions at an international level, such as the UNHCR, with international non-governmental actors such as Frontline or Amnesty International, and with “closer” actors such as national governments, local NGOs and policy-makers receiving them in the host country. Recalling the Foucauldian idea of biopolitics, which roughly speaking refers to a set of institutionalised practices through which the people’s lives are governed and disciplined,²⁰ this article contends that it is within this context that the performativity of “being a refugee” takes shape and develops, bridging the refugees’ agency and the political and legal structure of political asylum.²¹ In particular, international politics, refugees’ personal networks, and local NGOs assisting them provide a clear definition of “refugeeness,” which is offered (if not imposed) to the refugees.

But this process does not only come about through classical forms institutional pressures, it also takes shape through the efforts of empowering the refugees politically. International politics, personal connections and local NGOs play a significant role in setting political opportunities for refugees. The internationally dominant discourse of democracy and human rights has been particularly powerful in framing the political claims of the Green Movement and of the refugees coming from that context,²² somehow promoting a superficial identification of the Iranians leaving Iran after 2009 with “Green movement activists” or “human rights defenders.” Relying on this same democratic rhetoric and political imaginary, the Iranian activists from the Diaspora, NGOs and “civil society organisations” play a regulative role as well, by providing to the refugees the necessary social capital in a new country for continuing with their political activities.²³ Although this context seems to offer political opportunities for action and criticism to the refugees, empowering them to reclaim

rights and “play strategically” with their status,²⁴ at the end of the day it forces refugees in the clothes of “democratic activists and human rights defenders.” Instead of “liberating” them through political empowerment, such a context may produce a never-ending “performance of activism,” through which refugees are acknowledged with a status. This is similar to the notion of “gender performativity” as put forth by Judith Butler, who understands gender as a social constructed identity formed and incorporated through fixed and reiterated performances or “gendered doings.” Such a performativity, Butler argues, can be subverted through a process of re-signification and reinvention of gender acting outside of the given scripts.²⁵ However, in this case-study, not the process of “empowering refugees politically” nor refugees’ criticism to the policies they are subjected to result in a re-signification or in a contestation of “refugeeness” itself, despite the positive role attached to political agency. Quite the contrary, the contestations and empowerment foster the dominant relations of power that see refugees engaged in performing what a refugee is expected to be and acting as they are expected to act.

In order to bring evidences and shed light on these dynamics, the case of Iranian political refugees in Turkey and Italy will be examined. The choice of these two countries is motivated by the different conditions they offer. The Italian government recognises Iranians as refugees, whereas Turkey still adopts the geographical limitations on political asylum. In Turkey, non-European refugees are granted as such by the local UNHCR branch only and wait for resettlement in a third country in Europe, North America or Oceania.²⁶ Furthermore, due to the roll-back of the welfare state, in Italy political refugees are assisted by charity organisations and NGOs that follow them in many aspects of their life, providing different services and expertise. In Turkey, the number of NGOs and “civil society organisations” assisting refugees is growing but still, they are less relevant to policy-making, integration and

welfare policies than in Italy.²⁷ Such differences enhance the relevance of the three levels of analysis (personal connections, local assistance and international politics) in shaping Iranians' identity as political refugees. In the case of Italy, where Iranian refugees are less in number but have a greater access to rights, the role of local NGOs is very relevant to the process of identity construction. In Turkey, where many refugees or asylum-seekers spend years awaiting for resettlement, the importance of personal connections is enhanced. Family and friends can indeed provide information, the necessary social capital for connections within Turkey or outside of it, and this can maybe speed up the process of resettlement. The relevance of the international level is present in both settings, and it acts powerfully by influencing the institutional and NGOs' attitude towards Iranians and by shaping the refugees' frames of behaviour and self-representation.

METHODOLOGY

This article rests on semi-structured interviews and fieldwork with Iranian refugees in Italy and Turkey conducted between 2009 and 2012. The fieldwork in these two countries has been preceded by fieldwork in Iran, where I had been conducted research on "civil society activism" and dissent between 2005 and 2008. Fifty-two interviews compose the main body of interviews but many refugees have been repeatedly interviewed and a significant part of my fieldwork has been characterised by participant observation, since many refugees both in Turkey and Italy have shared with me their every-day life for a number of months. Like the majority of Iranian political refugees or asylum-seekers, they share a general commitment to a democratic reform of the Islamic Republic, supported Moussavi or Karroubi's candidature at the 2009 presidential election and oppose Ahmadinejad's government.

This multi-sited field research in different countries and periods allowed me to follow the developments of successful and unsuccessful asylum applications, witness the refugees' efforts for conforming to the idea of "a refugee" and the exchange of suggestions on how to behave and what to say before the commissions granting the status of political refugee. However teaching how to perform refugeeness does not only take place within the asylum-seekers' communities, but also through the relations the refugees hold with local NGOs and UNHCR. This relation was often characterised by references to the fact that "Iranians have struggled for democracy, everyone knows."²⁸ I also witnessed refugees' contestations against local policies as well as against NGOs' behaviour. I have been working as social worker assisting Iranian political refugees for two Italian organisations between 2009 and 2012, and so I have been observing the shaping of refugees' identity closely. As a matter of fact, I have been an active part of it.

Furthermore, I conducted some interviews with privileged witnesses such as experts or social workers from organisations rescuing Iranian activists in The Netherlands and United States of America, in order to cross-verify the information I gathered in Turkey and Italy. Finally, I want to make clear that I am well aware of the ideological heterogeneity of the Iranian communities living outside of the Islamic Republic. However, the majority of the individuals I interviewed share a common support for the reformists. The Iranian Diaspora is indeed ideologically diversified and there are sharp contrasts among Marxists, liberals, monarchists and reformists. This article does not overlook this political diversity but focuses on reformists because the individuals with this political allegiance seem to be the majority of those who left Iran in the aftermath of the 2009 crisis.²⁹ However, this might not be a case. According to the dominant perception, it is the reformists and the Green movement members who suffered the most because of Ahmadinejad and the conservative's repression following

the 2009 electoral crisis. Therefore, the reformists and “Greeners” have become somehow the prototype of those forced to leave Iran because of their political beliefs.

IRANIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY: THE RELEVANCE OF PERSONAL NETWORKS AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Since the Islamic revolution, the image of refugee has been crucial in identifying Iranians abroad. Iranian *réssortissants* are normally divided into different waves, the most relevant being the one following the 1979 revolution.³⁰ The biggest Iranian population outside of Iran is in the United States, followed by Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Australia and Sweden, where it is estimated that some four millions Iranians leave in total.³¹ But beyond these Western countries, Turkey is another top-destination for Iranians. According to Koser Akçapar,³² it was estimated that 300,000 to 1.5 million Iranians entered Turkey after the 1979 and stayed there until the end of the 1980s.

Since 1979 however other flows of Iranians have increased the ranks of “exiles” both in the Western world and in Turkey. During and after the 2009 protests, many have decided to leave Iran. According to the statistics of the Iranian Refugees’ Alliance,³³ in 2009 almost 16,000 Iranians applied for asylum worldwide and in 2010 they were 19,000. Iranians constitute the highest number of asylum applicants in Turkey, and unofficial statistics estimate the number of Iranians currently living in Turkey as somewhere between 200,000 and 500,000.³⁴

The issue of Iranian migration has undergone different waves of attention by the media and public opinion. Having the 2009 protests been broadcast all over the world, they appealed to the international public opinion and constructed a stereotyped image of the

Iranian people as engaged in dissent. Those leaving the country have so been attached to the image of the opponents, generally represented as young, democratic, “modern,” and educated in contrast with a regime portrayed as backwards, anti-modern and above all illegitimate.³⁵

For Iranians, emigration stands often in between a rational investment and an urgent necessity. Activists live in a highly hostile context and risk long-term imprisonment, but at the same time share with non-activists harsh economic and social conditions of life. Family and personal connections play a relevant role in shaping and developing the idea of emigrating, and above all in addressing the *réssortissants* toward political asylum, which seems the best option available.

My family knows that I am here. But they are happy, somehow, they knew that I could not live in Iran. They educated me according to European standards. So I cannot live in Iran, and they are aware of this. My mother says I will have better chances in Europe and she is right. Before I left, we went to a lawyer and they explained me everything about political asylum.³⁶

Of course I miss my family. But they gave me so much money for leaving that now I cannot disappoint them. I would like to go back, but I cannot live according to the Islamic Republic’s standard, I never could. That’s why they supported my decision to leave.³⁷

I was a well-known activist in Iran, so my family was kind of prepared to this. Before me, my older brother left Iran because of politics [...]. So my parents knew that. I have always known that they have been saving money for the last years for this

purpose [...] I had left for a better future: university, well paid job and decent life [...]

I knew from my brother and parents that all this is easier when you are a refugee.³⁸

Considering the role of the families and financial savings, emigration seems a real investment for a new, better life outside of Iran. This consideration echoes the studies arguing that migration is more and more interlocked with human rights abuses, highlighting the problematic nature of a practical differentiation between the “ordinary migrants,” who theoretically have not been forced to emigrate, and refugees.³⁹ Indeed, the grip of the Iranian regime on society exerts a powerful pressure towards emigration by both sanctioning political activism and limiting social freedom. The poor economic performances of Iran are of course another pushing factor for emigration. The forced nature of emigration and the will of looking for a better existence abroad are two overlapping elements. Iranian refugees themselves waver between these two narrations. It is difficult to keep divided the ambition for a better life (find a good job, have access to education and language) and pure political commitment as the reason for leaving Iran. This seems more relevant if we consider that some of the most politically active interviewees stated that they would leave political activism when resettled in the third country, where they would think only to university to assure a bright professional future.⁴⁰

Within the political economy of migration, be it forced or not, the arrival in the host country is an important moment. Generally speaking, having friends or contacts arranged by the family of origin means to be hosted in a place and easily get information about the process of asylum application. In the case of Iranian asylum-seekers in Turkey, if there are not friends or relatives helping them, the smuggler plays a fundamental role by giving “survival information” about the country. But personal connections are also important to

receive the right training: behaving and saying the right things before the UNHCR commission is often a major concern for Iranians. I participated in a trip to Van (Eastern Turkey) in November 2011 with a group of Iranian refugees who wanted to document their national fellows' conditions of life after the earthquake.⁴¹ One of the most frequently discussed topics within the Iranian community in Van was the application for asylum to the UNHCR, its time-length and possible results. One of the refugees was particularly active in offering suggestions on how to perform "refugeeness" at best:

You need to know your rights [...] the UNHCR values this as an element indicating your previous political engagement. If you don't show them that you know what political asylum is, they will be sure that you are pretending to be an activist [...] And try to collect letters and statements that prove you have been doing political activities in Iran.⁴²

Another participant, a refugee waiting for resettlement in the United States, explained that:

Many people here do not have a strong *dossier* [meaning strong evidences that they were doing political activities in Iran] so they need to be the most convincing possible. For example, put forth a big name of Iranian politics is a good strategy [...] or saying that you were working for a human rights group, or reformists' electoral campaign...⁴³

The political affiliation is a very important element in determining the success and the rapidity of the decision process on the asylum-seekers' application:

It works like “bands” (*band-ha*): if you are a monarchist, you get the Pahlavi Foundation’s support and they are powerful and care about you. Marxists are practically forgotten here, their resettlement takes many years. No country in the West wants them. For reformists, it depends on your connections [...] [for] those who were embedded in high-level political circles, life in Turkey is easy because they normally have money. And they leave Turkey quickly thanks to their contacts. [But even if you were generally supporting reformists without any affiliation] it is always better to say that you are a reformist and human rights activist.⁴⁴

This “preference” is somehow confirmed by a social worker of a charity organisation based in Nevşehir: “we have precise policies and expectations [...] it is clear that our main goal is the respect of human rights [...] and the protection of human rights defenders [...] of course, we help anyone is in need.”⁴⁵ This becomes clearer considering that the protection of human rights defenders is a top concern for the European Union, the United Nations and for many other institutions elaborating policies or offering funding for humanitarian action.⁴⁶

The obtainment of the status of political refugee is not the only reason for performing the role of activist at best. Within the community of refugees, being recognised as a political activist determines inclusion or exclusion from the group. Those who benefit from such a reputation are well welcomed in the community, whereas those suspected of faking can be excluded. This is also evidenced by the internal differentiation determined by how refugees joined Turkey. Contrary to those who legally crossed the border, those who were obliged to turn to a smuggler for entering Turkey suffered harsh judiciary persecution in Iran and enjoy therefore a positive and sometimes a-critical reputation of activist.⁴⁷

Although it seems that by playing strategically with their status the refugees exert an independent agency and elaborate options, the efforts of fitting the role of activist reproduce the existing set of relations of power according to which refugees have to perform a certain role in order to be accepted or considered as worth of help. “Refugeeness” thus becomes a performative process, which is embedded and negotiated within a net of unequal relations among different actors: the families expecting their efforts to be rewarded by a successful life abroad; the institutions granting political asylum, which expect the refugees to “fill out” the pre-established role of human rights activists’; and the asylum-seekers and refugees’ communities, which internally teach how to behave and speak correctly, or in other words, how to perform refugeeness.

There are some peculiar elements helping Iranians in performing refugeeness. Considering the wide spread international representation of Iranians as activists and the world-broadcast repression against the Green movement, political asylum is quite easily granted to Iranians. For example, it is hold for true that Iranians are political refugees because it is widely known that the Islamic Republic is a repressive regime, whereas Afghans are regarded as humanitarian refugees or migrants escaping from poverty caused by the enduring war and violence. Furthermore, the flexibility of the Green Movement in terms of internal organization leaves room for claiming a role within it, and the ambiguity of jobs or activities such as the journalist, a profession which is poorly qualified in Iran, or the blogger, may offer the opportunity of pretending a role. *I am a journalist* or *I am a human rights activist* are among the most popular answers to the question “why did you leave Iran?”⁴⁸

Regardless to a real engagement in political activities, the well established representation of Iranians as freedom fighters allows single individuals to reclaim a role in and eventually feel like part of a wider, collective struggle for democracy. The relevance of

“being a political activist” is such that sometimes Iranian refugees perceive themselves as more entitled of rights and protection than “ordinary migrants.” This process of differentiation is often performed at the expenses of other national groups.

There’s a huge difference between us, the Iranians, and for instance the Afghans. Afghans are migrants; they emigrate from Afghanistan because they look for work and possibilities to earn money. We do not leave Iran for this same reason. We were obliged to leave Iran because we are politically committed and struggled for democracy in our country. [But here in Turkey the Afghans] enjoy more rights than us [...] this is not fair from the point of view of what we sacrificed: we should enjoy more rights than Afghans, and the UNHCR should grant to us the rights it gives to Afghans.⁴⁹

We were told that the Italian government would look after us... we came to Italy and though that this was a first world country. They say us that because we enjoy free accommodation, free education and a small amount of money every week, we should be happy. They compared us to Somali! They said that those people have less than us. No free accommodation, for example. But we are not like them. They should not compare us to them! We are Iranians and they black people left their country because of hunger, not because of a struggle against dictatorship.⁵⁰

I heard that a social worker compared Iranians to Somali... why she did it? It is normal that the Iranians got angry. [The social worker] must respect Iranians, she should not compare us to African people. We fought for freedom and were forced to leave Iran for this, while they did not... they left their countries because of poverty. And still in Italy Iranians enjoy less protection and respect than Somali do.⁵¹

Even if these declarations can be considered as exceptional, the examples above are relevant in showing how the international representation of Iranians can become the dominant and only frame informing the refugees' self-perception and self-representation. This mechanism is enhanced by the refugees' poor living conditions, which may loosen their commitment to universal values such as human equality and rights, highlighting the dark side of refugeeness.

THE PARADOX OF POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT. REFUGEES IN ITALY BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND NGO ASSISTANCE

Beyond being subjected to mainstream representations and peers' pressure, refugees are forced into pre-determined roles through other means too. One of these, paradoxically, is political empowerment which, under certain circumstances, pushes Iranian refugees into the pre-established category of "Green movement activists."

In Italy and many other countries, NGOs and non-state actors have over the last two decades assumed a growing importance in substituting the rolling-back welfare states in many fields of social policies. Assistance to refugees is one of them.⁵² NGOs and other civil society actors play a relevant role at the local level by mediating among the policy-makers, public opinion and the refugees' communities. They often are the direct interlocutor for refugees and play an important role in shaping their identity. NGOs continuously frame the definition of "a refugee" by offering them services and establishing dependency and implicit reciprocity.⁵³ Furthermore, NGOs often have the political capital needed in order to structure

the political field of action for refugees, thus heavily influencing refugees' political capabilities and mobilisation horizons.

This was particularly evident in the case of an Italian NGO which, in partnership with a network of European NGOs focusing on human rights, rescued some Iranian "human rights defenders" from Iran and Turkey between late 2009 and early 2010. The refugees were indicated by a human rights-NGO based in the US as politically relevant within the Green movement and in danger of life. Their survival would have eventually been crucial for the future of Iran. The NGO's reasons for rescuing the activists waved between a humanitarian concern over the lack of respect of human rights in Iran, and a more opportunistic will of "becoming an important voice on Iranian politics [...] because Iran stands at the very centre of current Western political concerns." ⁵⁴

In order to carry out a successful project, it was therefore quite important that the Iranian refugees did not abandon their political activism. Many studies have revealed how NGOs' assistance depoliticises the refugees' personal biography, turning them into mere objects of care.⁵⁵ In this case-study, on the contrary, "being an activist" was an element the NGOs wanted to protect and strengthen. For this reason, the Italian organisation provided contacts and organised conferences by making available its social capital to the refugees, setting a *de facto* field of activism and determining political opportunities for the refugees. Among the NGO's workers and leaders, indeed, the shared idea was that the refugees needed their guidance in order to know how politics works in Italy, or for changing their own conditions as refugees and influence the Italian politics towards Iran.⁵⁶

Some scholars consider the refugees' contestations, which normally revolve around issues related to asylum and welfare policy, as an evidence of growing empowerment and emancipation.⁵⁷ However, in the case-study explored, the efforts for empowering politically

the Iranian refugees have resulted in a further strengthening of the role they had to play, namely “being activists of the Green movement.” Although this role was evidently becoming a too tight and uncomfortable identity, the refugees never criticised it directly. On the contrary, they perpetuated the embodiment of the profile of activists as expected by the NGO. This is of course partly linked to the rewarding aspects of “refugeeness”: the label of political refugee may indeed grant some facilities, such as receiving financial support, education, or providing networks and contacts. However, the decision of conforming to the standard expected by the NGO in order to enjoy the connected advantages is only a pale expression of agency. Indeed, the strategy of non-cooperation with the organisation has a cost being far higher than the one of cooperation, and determines risks the refugees are unlikely to bare.

This mechanism was evident in the occasion of a conference on the Green movement and human rights abuses in Iran held in June 2010 before the Commission for Human Rights of the Italian Senate in Rome.⁵⁸ Some refugees expressed their dissatisfaction with a number of issues revolving around the political strategy chosen by the NGO. Talking of their own political biography before the Parliament was not the political action they liked the most. They would prefer, instead, organising public demonstration or sit-ins, in order to attract the people’s attention on the on-going repression in Iran. Institutions, according to them, would never act significantly against the Islamic Republic.⁵⁹ However, they were aware of the strategic importance that this event had for the NGO and, after receiving pressures and assurance by the organisation that they would also receive advantages such as public visibility and political credibility from taking part in it, the event took place.

The refugees also contested the NGO’s attempt at denying their abilities of pointing out a set of political opportunities autonomously. As a matter of fact, the NGO was very active in discouraging independent political initiatives, and even the refugees’ contacts with

media such as BBC Farsi or Voice of America were a source of tension and concerns for the NGO. The refugees expressed this discontent by repeatedly affirming their political credentials and the consideration they enjoyed in Iran as well-known activists and journalists. Further conflicts exploded because, prior the audition to the Italian Senate, the director of the NGO asked the refugees to read the drafts of their lectures. This was interpreted as an attempt of controlling what they had to say and they felt “treated like children,” whereas they enjoyed very high-level political contacts in Iran.⁶⁰

Generally, the many meetings and conferences the NGO organised were criticised by the refugees on the basis of the fact that they were not acquainted with the political *milieu* of the NGO. Conflicts erupted in December 2010, when the NGO decided to organise a charity Christmas dinner to raise funding for a project called “The Shelter,” a programme of protection for human rights defenders providing future funding and assistance to the Iranian refugees as well.⁶¹ All the invitees were people acquainted with the NGO and part of its local network. The refugees would have performed the waiters, the parking attendants and the cooks, and during the dinner, they would have told their story to the invitees. The refugees’ reaction was critical. Being at the centre of the attention made them to feel uneasy, because they did not know “who the invited persons are” and whether these would be “on my same party if they were in Iran.”⁶² Similar remarks were made after their participation in another event, the Italian 2010 Peace March, where the refugees were invited as guest stars and told their story before the numerous participants on a public stage.⁶³

Although they felt quite imprisoned in the political proposal the organisation set up for them, the Iranian refugees never subverted the “scripts of refugeehood” the NGO expected. Their claims were justified by their political past and by their present legal status, so that they did not radically review the NGO’s expectation. The refugees were well aware of

this, to the point that the few Marxist refugees assisted by the NGO never expressed publicly their annoyance with the over presence of “Green movement” and “reformist” rhetoric in the events and initiatives on Iran.⁶⁴

The discontent the refugees voiced did not take place outside the performativity of refugeeeness, and perpetrated the existing unbalanced relation of power among the actors. On the one side, the refugees did not feel entitled with the right of choice between acting politically or not. They limited their criticism to the practical aspects of the political initiatives the NGO designed for them, without questioning their activism. On the other side, the NGO kept on shaping the refugees’ field of action, “demanding activism.”

CONCLUSION

The “constructedness” of “being a political refugee” is a process working at different levels. Personal connections, international politics and NGOs assistance push the refugees towards the incorporation of what has been called “refugeeness.” In the case of Iranian refugees, this process of incorporation comes about not only through the classical forms of institutional pressure, but also through “unexpected” forms, such as NGOs’ efforts of empowering the refugees politically. Within this context, the refugees’ contestations and criticism do not result in the subversion of how they are expected to act or what they are expected to say. Indeed “refugeeness,” which in the case of Iranian is closely linked to political activism, remains the device legitimising their claims and criticism. Despite being normally associated to a positive function, political empowerment does not entail emancipation.

Beyond bringing further evidence to the fact that the refugees are merged in a context that dominates them, even when it paradoxically tries to empower them, this case study sheds light on a number of other issues. First is the influence that the rhetoric related to democracy and democratization exerts on the refugees and on the humanitarian agendas of international organisations and local NGOs. In particular, the insistence of international politics on the discourse of human rights and democratisation and the Iranian Diaspora's capability of exploiting it, have played a crucial role in defining Iranian refugees as pro-democratic activists. Notwithstanding some differences, the case of the Kurd refugees is similar to the Iranian one in that the Kurds also have re-fashioned their self-representation and ideal cause in terms of human rights.⁶⁵ The second element brought into light relates to the refugees' agency which, according to the findings of the article, is limited and does not subvert in a radical way the politics of refugeehood that dominates the refugees. Indeed, this article has pointed out that refugees are subject to a number of pressures that push them towards the incorporation and the performance of a role. Even if in this context there is room for resistance and criticism, the emancipation from the label of refugee is an overly hard task. Third, the room for dissent and voice do however change according to the strength of the ties linking the refugees and their contacts. Despite being tight and quiet silenced, in certain contexts the refugees reject and are critical about the label of political activists. It seems indeed that the performativity of "being a political activist" increases its strength in a context in which the refugees have weak ties with their respondents. On the contrary, in the context of their personal contacts and relations, the refugees seem less keen on playing the role of the activists. For instance, families are well aware that getting political asylum could trigger the opportunities of getting a better life and encourage their sons and daughters to leave the country and apply for political asylum. In a context characterised by strong ties, such as the

family, the refugees seem to be allowed to leave their identity of activists in order to put on the cloths young people willing to flee the country to have better life conditions. In the case of the peers' community, the refugees are put under two opposite pressures. On the one side, the peers are an important means to get information and to be trained for performing the right script of refugeeness. On the other side, within the refugees' communities there are some mechanisms of reward and punishment which are adopted in the case of well-known or fake activists.

Finally, this article has some relevance in terms of policies too. It suggests that the insistence on a certain element informing the refugees' identity may lead to the lack of emancipation. This is quiet relevant in this case-study because the Iranian refugees are not seen as an object of care by the NGO assisting them as, on the contrary, the NGO's programme was aimed at increasing the refugees' capability of shaping their context and actively participating in it. However, the pressure put on the refugees may lead to the paradoxical inhibition of such an agency and therefore to empower the refugees but not to emancipate them completely.

List of interviews

A: 24, former member of the Central Committee of the Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat (anti-Ahmadinejad student union), political refugee. Interviewed in Van, July 2011.

B: 26, member of the youngster section of the party Mojahheddin-e Enqelab (reformist party). Interviewed in Van, July 2011 and in Kayseri, April 2012.

C: 25, member of the Advar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat (reformist organisation) and of the One Million Signatures Campaign, member of the 2009 Karroubi's presidential campaign,

political refugee in Turin, Italy. Participant observation between March 2010 and February 2011.

D: around 45, political refugee in Van, Turkey. Interviewed in November 2011.

E: 28, journalist, member of Karroubi's campaign, political refugee in Turin. Participant observation between March 2010 and February 2011.

F: former member of the International Campaign of Human Rights in Iran, former UNFPA National Project Director in Iran, former member of the Centre for Women's Participation. Interviewed in January 2011.

G: 25, journalist, civil society activist. Political refugee in Turin. Participant observation between March 2010 and February 2011.

H: 33, activist and political refugee, Association of Solidarity among Exiles. Repeatedly interviewed in Eskisehir and Van, Turkey, between November 2011 and April 2012.

I: 24, deputy for women's affairs in Karroubi's presidential campaign, political refugee in Turin. Participant observation between March 2010 and May 2011.

L: 34, member of Moussavi's campaign, political refugee. Repeatedly interviewed in Eskisehir and Van, between July 2011 and April 2012.

M: 33, former member of the United Front of Students, former Islamic Association of Students/Tabarzadi's group, political refugee. Repeatedly interviewed in Eskisehir and Van, between November 2011 and April 2012.

N: 31, former member of the legal advisory group of the Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat, political refugee in Turin. Participant observation between March 2010 and February 2011.

O: 30, former member of the Central Committee of the Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat, political refugee. Repeatedly interviewed in Eskisehir and Van, between July 2011 and April 2012.

Social worker, human rights NGO, Nevşehir, Turkey, Interviewed on February 2012.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to the Gerda Henkel Foundation for supporting this research in the context of the programme “Islam, the Modern Nation State and Transnational Movements”. The author would also like to thank Sandro Busso for his very useful comments on the early versions of this article.

¹ Cf. Bhupinder Chimni, “The Birth of a Discipline: From Refugee to Forced Migration Studies,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22, no. 1 (2009): 11-29; James Hathaway, “Forced Migration Studies: Could We Agree Just to Date?,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 3 (2007):349-369. Douglas Massey, Joaquin Arango, Hugo Graeme, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino and Edward Taylor, “Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal,” *Population and Development Review*, 19, no. 3 (1993):431-466; Alejandro Portes, “Immigration theory for a new century: Some problems and opportunities,” *International Migration Review* 31, no. 4 (1997):799-825; Joaquín Arango, “Explaining migration: A critical view,” *International Social Science Journal* 52, no. 165 (2000):283-296; Philomena Essed, “Gender, Migration and Cross-Ethnic Coalition Building,” in Helma Lutz, Anna Phoenix and Nira Yuval-Davis, eds., *Crossfires: Nationalism, Racism and Gender in Europe* (London, Pluto Press, 1995), pp. 48-64.

² Roger Zetter, “More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007):172-192.

³ Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*, part III (Paris, Gallimard, 1975); Claire Edwards, “Cutting off the King’s Head: The ‘Social’ in Hannah Arendt and

Michel Foucault,” Centre for Social and Political Thought, University of Sussex, 1 (1999); Ciaran Cronin, “Bourdieu and Foucault on power and modernity,” *Philosophy Social Criticism* 22, no. 6 (1996):55-85.

⁴ Zetter, “Refugees and refugee studies. A label and an agenda,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 1, no. 1 (1998):1-6; Lisa Malkki, “Refugees and exile: From refugee studies to the national order of things,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995):495-523; Jeremy Hein, “Refugees, immigrants, and the state,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993):43-59; Stephen Castles, “Twenty-first-century migration as a challenge to sociology,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 3 (2007):351-371; Kevin Johnson, “Aliens and the U.S. Immigration Laws: The Social and Legal Construction of Nonpersons,” *The University of Miami Inter-American Law Review*, 28, no. 2 (1996):263-292; Gareth Mulvey, “When Policy creates Politics: the Problematizing of Immigration and the Consequences for Refugee Integration in the UK,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23, no. 4 (2010):437-462.

⁵ Alice Szecepanikova, “Performing refugeeness in the Czech Republic. Gendered depoliticisation through NGO assistance,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 17, no. 4 (2010):461-477.

⁶ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (trans. Robert Hurley, New York, Vintage, 1990); Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979* (trans. Graham Burchell, New York: Picador, 2008).

⁷ Judith Butler, “Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler,” *Radical Philosophy* 67 (1994):32–9.

⁸ Anthony Richmond, *Global Apartheid: Refugees, Racism and the New World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Nicholas Van Hear, “Forcing the Issue: Migration

Crises and the Uneasy Dialogue between Refugee Research and Policy,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25, no. 1, (2011):2-24; Richard Black, “Fifty years of refugee studies: From theory to policy,” *International Migration Review* 35, no. 1 (2001):57-78; Giulia Scarlettari, “Refugee Studies and the International Refugee Regime: A Reflection on a Desirable Separation,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (2007):36-50; Stephen Castles, “Towards a sociology of forced migration and social transformation,” *Sociology* 37, no. 1 (2003):13-34.

⁹ Barbara Harrell-Bond, “The experience of refugees as recipients of aid,” in Alistair Ager, ed., *Refugees: Perspectives on the experience of forced migration* (London and New York: Pinter, 1999), pp. 136-168; Prem Kumar Rajaram, “Humanitarianism and representations of the refugee,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 15, no. 3 (2002):247-264.

¹⁰ Philomena Essed, Georg Frerks and Joke Schijvers, eds., *Refugees and the transformation of societies: Agency, policies, ethics and politics* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004).

¹¹ Carolina Moulin and Peter Nyers “We Live in a Country of UNHCR. Refugee Protests and Global Political Society,” *International Political Sociology* 1 (2007):358.

¹² Matthew J. Gibney, *The ethics and politics of asylum. Liberal democracy and the response to refugees* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Emma Haddad, *The refugee in international society. Between sovereigns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Mayron Weiner, “Ethics, national sovereignty and the control of immigration,” *International Migration Review* 30, no. 1 (1996):171-197.

¹³ Guy S. Goodwin-Gill and Jane McAdam, *The refugee in international law* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ Daniel Joly, ed., *Global changes in asylum regimes* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002).

¹⁵ James Milner, "Refugees and the Regional Dynamics of Peacebuilding," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (2009):13-30.

¹⁶ Martin Adrian, "Environmental Conflict Between Refugee and Host Communities," *Journal of Peace Research*, 42, no. 3 (2005):329–346; Leah Berry, *The Impact of Environmental Degradation on Refugee-Host Relations: A Case Study from Tanzania*, New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No.151 (Geneva: UNHCR, 2008).

¹⁷ Emma Hooper, *Pakistan's Food Crisis. Water, Energy, Agriculture & Power: The Conflict Ahead*, Notes Internationals CIDOB no. 25 (Barcelona: CIDOB, 2010).

¹⁸ James K. Gasana, "Natural Resource Scarcity and Violence in Rwanda," in Richard Matthew, Mark Halle and Jason Switzer, eds., *Conserving the Peace: Resources, Livelihoods and Scarcity* (Winnipeg: International Institute of Sustainable Development, 2002), pp. 199-246.

¹⁹ Cris Shore and Susan Wright, "Policy: A new field of anthropology," in Cris Shore and Susan Wright, eds., *Anthropology of policy: Critical perspectives on governance and power* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 3-39; Cynthia Hardy, "Refugee Determination: Power and Resistance in Systems of Foucauldian Power," *Administration & Society* 35, no. 4 (2003):462-488; Randy Lippert, "Governing Refugees: The Relevance of Governmentality to Understanding the International Refugee Regime," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 24, no. 3 (1999):295-328.

²⁰ Thomas Lemke, "The birth of bio-politics: Michel Foucault's lecture at the Collège de France on neo-liberal governmentality," *Economy and Society* 30, no. 2 (2001):191, Mark

Salter, "The Global Visa Regime and the Political Technologies of the International Self: Borders, Bodies, Biopolitics," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 31, no. 2 (2006):167-69, 173, 178-80, 184-85.

²¹ Zetter, "More Labels, Fewer Refugees."

²² Hamid Dabashi, *The Green Movement and the USA. The Fox and the Paradox* (London: Zed Books, 2010); Ramin Jahanbegloo, ed., *Civil Society and Democracy in Iran* (London: Lexington Books, 2011); Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, "The Politics of Migrants' Transnational Political Practices," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (2003):760-786. See also <http://www.ned.org/events/democracy-award/2010-democracy-award> (last access January 15, 2013).

²³ For example, see the collaboration the Dutch NGO Hivos has established with Iranian refugees: <http://www.hivos.nl/dut/community/partner/10011166> (last access January 15, 2013). See also Paola Rivetti, "Coopting Civil Society Activism in Iran," in Paul Aarts and Francesco Cavatorta, eds., *Civil Society in Syria and Iran: Activism in Authoritarian Contexts* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2013), pp. 187-206.

²⁴ Zetter, "More Labels, Fewer Refugees."

²⁵ Butler, "Gender is Burning. Questions of Appropriation and Subversion," in Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat, eds., *Dangerous Liaisons. Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2004), pp. 381-395; Butler, "Imitation and Gender Subordination," in John Storey, ed., *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), pp. 255-265; Nayak Anoop and Kehily Mary J., "Gender undone: subversion, regulation and embodiment

in the work of Judith Butler,” *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 27, no. 4 (2006):459-472.

²⁶ Ahmet İcduygu and Kemal Kirisci, ed., *Land of Diverse Migrations: Challenges of Emigration and Immigration in Turkey* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2009); Didem Daniş, *Integration in Limbo, Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian Migrants in Istanbul*, MiReKoc Research Projects (Ankara: Koc University, 2006).

²⁷ Tiziana Caponio, “Policy networks and immigrants’ associations in Italy. The cases of Milan, Bologna and Naples,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 31, no. 5 (2005):931-950; İcduygu, “Demographic Mobility and Turkey: Migration Experiences and Government Responses,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (2004):88-99.

²⁸ Personal communication with a social worker, Nevşehir, February 2012.

²⁹ This is what resulted from the fieldwork. Marxists wait for resettlement for a longer time than “reformists” or “human rights activists,” as I could observe during my fieldwork in Turkey. The reformist affiliation may be used as a strategy but still, it is the most often cited affiliation by the refugees I met in Turkey, Italy and elsewhere.

³⁰ Halleh Ghorashi, “Agents of change or passive victims: The impact of welfare states (the case of The Netherlands) on refugees,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 18, no. 2 (2005):181-198.

³¹ Sebnem Koser Akçapar, “Rethinking migrants’ networks and social capital: a case-study of Iranians in Turkey,” *International Migration* 48, no. 2 (2010):165.

³² Koser Akçapar, “Rethinking migrants’ networks and social capital,” 163.

³³ Iranian Refugees’ Alliance, “Statistical Sheet: Statistical Data on Iranian Asylum Seekers and Refugees in 2009,” 2009, available at <http://www.irainc.org/iranref/IRA2009StatEng.pdf> (last access June 14, 2012).

³⁴ Koser Akçapar, "Rethinking migrants' networks and social capital," 165.

³⁵ Said Rahnema, "Civil Society Versus the State: The face-off in Iran continues," *The Mark*, 5 August 2009; Nazenin Ansari, "Six factors, four questions," *Open Democracy*, 22 June 2009; Jahanbegloo, ed., *Civil Society and Democracy in Iran*; Jahanbegloo, "Iran and the Democratic Struggle in the Middle East," *Middle East Law and Governance* 3, no. 1-2 (2011): 126-135; Karim Sadjadpour, "The Ayatollah Under the Bed(sheets)," *Foreign Policy*, May-June 2012, available at

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/04/23/the_ayatollah_under_the_bedsheets (last access January 15, 2013).

³⁶ Interview with O, political refugee.

³⁷ Interview with L, political refugee.

³⁸ Interview with A, political refugee.

³⁹ Van Hear, "Forcing the Issue"; Scarlettaris, "Refugee Studies and the International Refugee Regime"; David Turton, *Refugees, Forced Resettlers and 'Other Forced Migrants': Towards a Unitary Study of Forced Migration*, New Issues in Refugee Research, Working Paper, 94, (Geneva: UNHCR, 2003); Oliver Bakewell, "Research Beyond the Categories: the Importance of Policy Irrelevant Research into Forced Migration," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 4 (2008):432-453; Roberta Cohen, "Response to Hathaway," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 3 (2007):370-376.

⁴⁰ Personal communication with E, I, A, political refugees, Italy and Turkey.

⁴¹ Cf. *Strong earthquake hits Turkey, up to 1,000 feared killed*, Reuters, 23 October 2011; *Iranian refugees stranded in quake-stricken city*, Radio Zamaneh, 11 November 2011.

⁴² H, political refugee, addressing to a family of asylum-seekers, in Van, November 2011.

⁴³ Personal communication with M, political refugee.

⁴⁴ Personal communication with H, political refugee.

⁴⁵ Personal communication with a social worker, Nevşehir, November 2011.

⁴⁶ Michelle Pace, Peter Seeberg and Francesco Cavatorta, 'The EU's democratization agenda in the Mediterranean: a critical inside-out approach', *Democratization* 16, no. 1 (2009): 3-19.

⁴⁷ Fieldwork in Turkey, participant observation.

⁴⁸ This consideration is beyond my awareness of the fact that among Iranians in Turkey and Italy – and in Iran, when they start plan their journey – there is a huge portion of activists who suffer violence because of their political activities. This author does not suggest that asylum-seekers are liars or that asylum is given improperly to people who do not deserve it. My purpose is the one of highlighting the processes “behind the curtains” that are part of the politics of asylum.

⁴⁹ Address of D during a public meeting among Iranians, Van, November 2011.

⁵⁰ Personal communication with G, political refugee, Turin, December 2010.

⁵¹ Personal communication with F, Turin, January 2011.

⁵² Eve Lester, “A place at the table: The role of NGOS in refugee protection. International advocacy and policy-making,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (2005):125-142; Mark Raper, “Changing roles of NGOs in refugee assistance,” Edward Newman and Joanne van Selm, eds., *Refugees and forced displacement. International security, human vulnerability, and the state* (Tokyo, New York and Paris: United Nations University Press, 2003), pp. 350-366.

⁵³ Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy, “Managing multiple identities: Discourse, legitimacy and resources in the UK refugee system,” *Organization*, 4, no. 2 (1997):159-185; Jennifer

Hyndman, Malathi De Alwis, "Beyond gender. Towards a feminist analysis of humanitarianism and development in Sri Lanka," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 31, no. 3/4 (2003):212-226.

⁵⁴ Personal communication with the president of the NGO, Turin.

⁵⁵ Dorsh M. de Voe, "Framing refugees as clients," *International Migration Review* 15, no. 1/2, (1981):88-94; Harrell-Bond, *Imposing aid: Emergency assistance to refugees* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Peter Nyers, *Rethinking refugees. Beyond states of emergency* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Nevzat Soguk, *States and strangers: Refugees and displacements of statecraft* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Hyndman, *Managing displacement. Refugees and the politics of humanitarianism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

⁵⁶ Participant observation, Turin.

⁵⁷ See for instance Moulin and Nyers, "We Live in a Country of UNHCR," 2007.

⁵⁸http://www.flarenetwork.org/act/events_with_flare/article/iran_one_year_after_the_elections.htm (last access January 15, 2013), and also

http://www.pietromarcenaro.it/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=889&Itemid=245 (last access June 14, 2012).

⁵⁹ Participant observation, March-April 2010.

⁶⁰ Participant observation, May 2010.

⁶¹ <http://terradelfuoco.org/2010/12/cena-e-asta-di-beneficenza/> (last access June 14, 2012), see also

http://www.flarenetwork.org/act/flare_events/article/oc_corruption_and_human_rights_conference_at_the_eu_parliament.htm (last access January 15, 2013).

⁶² Participant observation, Turin, May 2010.

⁶³ <http://www.macondo.it/2010/della-marcia-perugia-assisi-2010/> (last access January 15, 2013), http://www.perlapace.it/index.php?id_article=4333, (last access January 15, 2013).

⁶⁴ Personal communication with I, political refugee, March-April 2010. The same critic was expressed by a monarchist political refugee settled in Nevşehir (February 2012).

⁶⁵ Østergaard-Nielsen, *Transnational Politics. Turks and Kurds in Germany* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).