



Refugees in Istanbul

Lost between Policy and Practice



ABSTRACT - Turkey is hosting one of the largest resettlement programs for refugees worldwide. The purpose and main objective of this research is to create a bottom up analysis of how the theory and practice of the Turkish asylum policy influences the every day lives of the refugees. The findings are based on an internship of three months at the Ecumenical Refugee Centre (ERC) in Istanbul during which in- depth interviews with refugees from different countries were conducted. Who are the people whom we are talking about? How do they experience the procedures? How do they think about possible solutions? How could they make suggestions, and what do they think about their environment? How and where do they see their future? By making use of the social capital theory, a social network analysis and the capability approach, the livelihoods of the refugees will be unfolded. It will turn out that refugees are mainly dependent on the NGOs, whereas the UNHCR and the government lack capacity to regulate the extended refugee issue. Furthermore, Turkey's wish to join the European Union (EU) demands major adjustments of its migrant and asylum policy. Although most of the projects to align its policy with EU standards were launched years ago, direct results in the everyday lives of the refugees remain absent.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Turkey is in different aspects a unique country concerning refugee issues. The country is hosting one of the largest resettlement programs worldwide. These extensive resettlement programs are a result of the geographical limitation Turkey retains on the 1951 United Nations convention on the rights of refugees¹. This implies that only those fleeing as a consequence of events occurring in Europe can settle in Turkey on a permanent basis. The country is facing an inrush of refugees from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan and other African countries and although this phenomenon is not typical modern, the increase in numbers is. Internal debates are related to the governments' challenges concerning the increasing inflows (Kolukirik, 2009). According to the UNHCR Global Report 2010, more than 9,200 people in Turkey approached UNHCR to seek asylum, an increase year of eighteen per cent compared to the previous year. These non European refugees are, due to the limitation, restricted in their options; they are repatriated voluntary, or eventually resettled to a third country. These resettlement procedures are lengthy and uncertain during which the refugees are restricted to live in so called satellite cities in Turkey assigned by the Ministry of Interior (MOI). Accommodation for this group, adaptation and adjustment problems, future settlement and assigning the status of refugee are problems faced by the government.

The conference on 'current developments in the field of migration and asylum' held in Istanbul the 5th of May 2011 organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) was ambitiously planned. Among the speakers were the governor of Istanbul, several professors, representatives of NGOs and the UNHCR and delegates of the MOI and the Committee on inspection of human rights. At the conference the problems and possible solutions of the refugee/ migrant issues were discussed. Surprisingly only one Congolese refugee attended the meeting, any other representatives of the refugees and migrants themselves were absent. In a certain way the NGOs in the field can be seen as representing this group; however the total picture cannot be sketched without all actors' attendance. The young Congolese refugee told me the only people he was missing were the refugees and migrants themselves.

Where are the people whom we are talking about? How do they experience the procedures? How do they think about possible solutions? How could they make suggestions? What do they think about their environment? How and where do they see their future?

Outside of Turkey, and even among Turkish citizens themselves, there is little awareness of the situation of refugees in this transit country. The theory and practice of the asylum policy have a major influence on the everyday lives of the refugees, who have limited means and options to structurally improve their situation. The problems refugees face in the satellite cities are mostly related to unemployment and the lack of social support. Therefore many opt for an illegal life in the bigger cities. Istanbul is among these cities one of the most logical options, because it is geographically located on the route to Europe, by crossing the border with Greece. The purpose of this research is to create a bottom up analysis of the situation of refugees in Istanbul; to explore the influence of the procedures and policies on their everyday lives. Insight will be created in the problems they face during their, often lengthy,

¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf>

stay in Istanbul. In order to analyze what can be done to structurally improve the situation of refugees in Turkey, the resettlement programs will be the subject of discussion. Possible solutions to decrease the length of the process and social and financial improvement during the time the refugees wait are difficult to apply in the Turkish context, since both the government and the UNHCR lack capacity.

Turkey's wish to join the European Union (EU) is a very important contextual aspect when discussing the current asylum and migration debates and policies. The Turkish government is launching different projects to adjust their asylum policy to the standards set by the European Union. The perfect example is the National Action Plan (NAP) launched in 2005. The purpose of the NAP is to align the Turkish asylum system with the standards set by the EU (NAP, 2005). However since Turkey wants to join the EU the government tries hard to make efforts, which in most cases only succeed on paper.

The UNHCR has a long history in Turkey and is needed because of the extensiveness of the problem. UNHCR's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well being of refugees. In its efforts to achieve this objective, the organization strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state, and to return home voluntarily. By assisting refugees to return to their own country or to settle permanently in another country, UNHCR also seeks lasting solutions to their plight. UNHCR submitted more than 6,800 refugees for resettlement in 2010, the highest number of submissions ever from Turkey (UNHCR, 2010:3). Resettlement programs may cover several years, which means that the refugees are stuck during that period in the first country of asylum. Although the overwhelming majority of those recognized as refugee continue to be resettled in third countries; resettlement is not a right to be claimed, and the process itself is long and uncertain. Resettlement continues to be the main durable solution available to non-European refugees in Turkey. Opportunities for voluntary repatriation or local integration are rare. As noted, more than 6,800 individuals were submitted for resettlement and some 5,300 departed for third countries. Despite an increase in the number of resettlement places offered to refugees in Turkey, at the end of 2010 there were more than 10,000 recognized refugees still in need of resettlement (UNHCR, 2010: 311).

By making use of a bottom up approach, the situation of refugees in Istanbul in the context of these lengthy resettlement programs and the Refugee Status Determination (RSD), which takes place in advance, will be analyzed. Their economic, social and institutional position will be elaborated. In short: an analysis of their livelihood strategies within a transit context will be presented. The RSD procedure covers the process by which states or the UNHCR determine if an asylum seeker meets the refugee definition. In Turkey both the UNHCR and the Turkish government are involved in the RSD. Because the resettlement process is lengthy and the final resettlement is not guaranteed and is dependent on many different factors, some choose not to apply with the UNHCR. These refugees are included in this research as well. Their experiences with the procedures and asylum policy in relation to their living conditions and the choices they make will be the main focus. The restriction of living in a so-called satellite city appointed by the Ministry of Interior is for many refugees a barrier. These cities are often located in the lesser-developed regions of Turkey. Due to the massive inflow and lack of capacity in the cities the number of these satellite cities is increasing. Refugees have very limited resources and support networks in these cities, therefore many choose to

stay in Istanbul illegally (Biehl, 2008 in Icduygu and Biehl, 2009). The consequence of this decision is that the procedures will be stopped; this is one of the reasons why many refugees are no longer in the running for resettlement and instead live illegally in Istanbul.

This research is based on the opinions and experiences of refugees in Istanbul; an analysis of their situation will help to answer the questions asked at the beginning of the introduction and describe their vulnerable position in the society. By making use of a bottom up approach, the problems as defined by the government and larger institutions are analyzed from a different angle whereby different causes of and solutions for the problems will be exposed. The results of the structured and unstructured interviews, informal chats and life story interviews held with refugees from Iran, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Congo and Sudan will illustrate the difficulties they face, their struggle to make a living and their future expectations concerning resettlement. It will become evident that most of the refugees in Istanbul are victim of the refugee policy in Turkey. This policy is representative on paper, but poorly executed in practice. This vulnerable group is mainly dependent on local Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operating in the field. Therefore much attention will be given to these NGOs, which serve as a safety net for refugees due to the lack of efficiency and (financial) capacity of the government and the UNHCR. At the same time it must be kept in mind that the analysis is sketched in a city of a country that is facing several internal challenges; this places the lack of capacity in a different light.

As already noted, the objective of this research is to analyze the everyday lives of refugees, by making use of a bottom up approach, in the context of the Turkish asylum policy. The following main and sub questions embrace the different aspects in the research, in order to create a well-balanced analysis.

How does the theory and practice of the Turkish asylum policy influence the everyday lives of refugees in Istanbul?

- *How are the Turkish asylum policy and resettlement process presented on paper and how is the policy executed in practice?*
- *Who are these refugees and what are their main limitations in the context of improving their livelihood strategies?*

To answer the latter sub question, it is practical to use the areas of institutional, economic and social aspects in the context of the refugees' situation in general. The latter refers to the social contacts that members or institutions of a minority have with the rest of the society. The cultural aspect in this will be the degree in which they culturally adjust to the society. The institutional aspect covers equal and full participation in societies' institution, and is in this sense closely related to access (to participate). Examples of institutions are religious meeting points, the UNHCR's resettlement program and the different NGOs involved. The economic concept is related to the labor market and the financial aspect in making a living. All three are analyzed at a multidimensional level, since all are interrelated and may influence one another.

- *What is the influence of social capital flowing through the refugees' social networks*

on their livelihood strategies?

Social networks and social capital are two important concepts in this research, because as will be illustrated in the empirical section, refugees depend mainly on their network in order to sustain their livelihood. Social capital refers to qualities inherent in or deriving from peoples' social relationships; these qualities can have important implications for other dimensions of social and economic life (Bebbington, 2008). To answer this question it is necessary to analyze the social relationships inside and outside the group. Social capital in this research can derive from four different types of social networks, which together form the overall social network of refugees. These four different types of networks cover; (1) A network within the same ethnic group (In-group in Istanbul). (2) A network outside the own group (Out-group in Istanbul). (3) An international network inside the ethnic group (In-group international) and (4) an international network outside the own group (International out-group). The fact that the refugees are expected and expect to continue their journey again in the (near) future can influence their transnational network. In order to answer the main question it is necessary to incorporate their transnational position in life and how this is related to their livelihood strategies during their temporary stay in Istanbul.

- *What has been achieved to improve the situation of the refugees and related to that, what are the future expectations and visions of the refugees (concerning the resettlement)?*

To answer this sub question, first the focus will be on the efforts made by the government and if and how this influences the future expectation of the refugees. Secondly the influence of their status within the resettlement process will be analyzed in the creation of the future visions and expectations of the refugees. The expectations of those who chose to not apply at all will be analyzed without the context of the resettlement process. There will be special attention for the reason why they chose to avoid the procedure of the Refugee Status Determination (RSD), or why they are not in the running for resettlement anymore. The focus will be on how and where they expect to make a living in the future.

Several theories will serve as a lens through which the refugee issues in the field will be analyzed. One of these is the already discussed social capital theory; the opportunity of actors to secure assets by being member of, or participate in a certain social network or social structure (Portes, 1998 in Weijters & Scheepers, 2003; Bebbington, 2008; Akcapar, 2009; Coleman, 1988). The reason this theory is so important is because most of the refugees depend mainly on their social network. Often these connections are the only sources through which they get little access to assets in order to improve their situation. The capability approach of Amartya Sen (1999) can be helpful in analyzing the access to resources/ assets refugees have (Faist, 2009). The approach leads us to look at the range of life options people have, their 'capability set', and the actual things they do and achieve, their 'functioning's (Des Gasper, 2000). The notion of capability has become closely related to that of freedom, which Sen defines as 'the real opportunity we have to accomplish what we value'. Agency is the ability to pursue goals that one has to value (Deneulin & McGregor, 2009: 2). The fact that the refugees have a lack of agency and are not able to unite themselves decreases their ability to pursue their goals. Their capability set and related to that their functioning in the society is minimal. In the light of Amartya Sen's freedom; these

people struggle for freedom, but their opportunities to accomplish what they value are very limited.

In this research the everyday experiences of the refugees will be presented. Difficulties caused by the dual RSD procedure, taken by the UNHCR and the government, are only a tip of the iceberg when discussing the complex legal context of a refugee. It is the beginning of a long period in which many will discover their inability to structurally improve their lengthy temporal stay in Istanbul. It is a period of uncertainty; unaware of the time they will spend in Istanbul and what their next destination might be. The experiences of the refugees will illustrate their struggle to make a living during their stay in Istanbul, their uncertain future perspectives and their battle for hope.

The following second chapter will cover the theoretical background. Important concepts and definitions will be discussed in relation to the main focus of this research. Chapter three elaborates further on the qualitative methods used in the field. The informants will be introduced and the conceptual model deriving from the theoretical background is presented. The chapter discusses the methods used in order to answer the three sub questions individually.

The fourth chapter sheds some light on the regional background in which the research took place. The policy and working area of the Turkish government, the UNHCR and the different NGOs are explored and in relation with that, the claim that Turkey is a logical option to do refugee related research is being substantiated. Following this line, chapter four answers the first sub question.

Chapter five discusses the first half of the second sub question; who the refugees are whom we are talking about. By making use of statistical data from the UNHCR and data obtained in the field from the NGOs, an overview of refugees in Turkey will be given. The second part of the chapter focuses on the policy of dispersal and elaborates on the situations in the satellite cities.

Chapter six discusses the second half of the second sub question; what the main limitations in the context of improving their livelihoods are. The economic, institutional and social aspects are elaborated and the latter is a logical bridge to the second part of the chapter which focuses on sub question three: the influence of social capital flowing through networks on their livelihood strategies.

Chapter seven answers the last sub question: what has been achieved to improve the situation of the refugees and related to that, what their future expectations are. This will be a logical step towards the comprehensive conclusion of this research (chapter eight). This conclusion will discuss the most important findings in the field, in relation to the main question of how the theory and practice of the policy influences the everyday lives of refugees in Istanbul. The conclusion will also discuss optional recommendations to improve the situations of the refugees in the short term.

Chapter 2 Theoretical and Thematic framework

2.1 Refugees and Asylum seekers; some definitions

Before turning to the theoretical backbone it is important to define the term refugee as it will be used in this research. One very significant aspect when discussing this concept is the legal context in Turkey. Due to the geographical limitation (which is discussed in the previous section), the Turkish government uses other criteria to define who is a refugee and who is not. A refugee is defined as a foreigner or stateless person of European origin that has been recognized as such according to the criteria within Article 1 of the Refugee Convention by the MOI. An asylum seeker is defined as a foreigner or stateless person of non-European origin whose status as an asylum seeker has been recognized by a decision of the Ministry Of Interior that this person meets the criteria within Article 1 of the Refugee Convention (Amnesty International, 2009: 8). Following the international standards, the term asylum seeker refers to a person who is seeking international protection as a refugee, but who has not been formally recognized as one. The term normally applies to a person waiting for the government or UNHCR to decide on their claim for refugee status (Amnesty International, 2009: 7). The United Nations describes a refugee as a person who:

'As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 (is referring to a migration period that began during the Second World War) and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. In the case of a person who has more than one nationality, the term "the country of his nationality" shall mean each of the countries of which he is a national, and a person shall not be deemed to be lacking the protection of the country of his nationality if, without any valid reason based on well-founded fear, he has not availed himself of the protection of one of the countries of which he is a national.' (Article 1)(Kolukirik, 2009: 71)

In this research the term will be used following the international standards, so refugees in Turkey refer also to people from non-European countries. The fact that the Turkish government itself defines these concepts differently than the international standards causes some confusion; this will be elaborated on further together with the legal context in the section that focuses on the regional background of this research.

In order to create a well balanced chronological overview of the concepts and theories used, the section below will first elaborate further on the concepts of assimilation, segregation, acculturation and integration and if these are relevant in the context of refugees in transit. After this explanation, the meta theory/ approach of transnationalism will be discussed. The second part of this theoretical framework will cover the other important theories of social capital, social networks and the capability approach.

2.2 Acculturation, Assimilation, Segregation and Integration; Refugees in Turkey

Cross-cultural contact in a society can result in four different scenarios: acculturation, assimilation, segregation and integration. First of all, acculturation comprehends those phenomena, which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups. This model is called uni- dimensional because it assumes that maintenance of one's own culture and adoption of the majority culture are mutually exclusive options, or opposite poles of one dimension (Chrysochoou, 2004). The acculturation approach is therefore rather idealistic compared with the reality in most receiving countries. Furthermore, until the past few decades, minority groups were typically expected to assimilate into majority cultures, at least in Europe. This assimilation expectation is now often considered oppressive (Okin, 1999:9). A third imaginable discourse is segregation, which holds strict divided groups within a society, following different rules and beliefs. The processes of acculturation, assimilation, segregation and integration are often analyzed through the perspective of permanent migrants; those who have decided to settle definitive in a society. This research population covers refugees who expect or are supposed to be resettled. It is therefore necessary to analyze the above-mentioned theories related to cross cultural contact through the perspective of refugees who are only a temporarily member of the society.

Although the concept of integration is misplaced in this research, the argument that, due to the lengthy procedures, the refugees stay in Turkey for a long time or get stuck, makes the concept interesting to reflect upon during the research. Therefore the section below will briefly discuss the subject in the context of this research.

Weijters and Scheepers are dividing the concept of integration in on the one hand structural integration and on the other socio- cultural integration. The first covers equal and full participation in societies' institutions (for example education and the labor market). The latter refers to the social contact which members or institutions of a minority have with the rest of the society. (Weijters and Scheepers, 2004). If a migrant or refugee has a job or participates within different institutions, it is logical that this may have a positive influence on the degree of social contacts outside the own ethnic group. However this process can also be analyzed the other way around; for example social contacts within society can have a positive influence on one's language skills, which in turn increases the opportunities to participate in other societal institutions. This will be analyzed in chapter six of the empirical section that reflects upon the social, economic and institutional aspects of the livelihood of refugees.

Due to the refugees temporarily position, it is important to discuss the subject of livelihood strategies in a transit context. Livelihood refers to the totality of resources and agency that people draw upon to make a living (Mazzucato, 2004). This must be analyzed within the Turkish context in which the access to these resources is limited for many refugees. One important overarching concept that cannot be excluded, due to the transit context is transnationalism. Increased international migration and new technological developments have made it possible for migrants and refugees to sustain transnational social relations and networks, which have contributed to the creation of transnational social spaces (Wahlbeck, 2002: 223). Faist argues that there are favorable conditions for the reproduction of

transnational social ties. These include modern technologies, liberal state policies that include anti-discrimination policies or the opposite; discrimination towards minorities and social exclusion of these groups. And the last condition is changing emigration state policies (Faist, 2006). These four conditions increase the possibilities and usefulness of transnational social contacts. Transnationalism can therefore be seen as a process of cross-border social relationships that link together the society of origin and settlement and in this research also Istanbul as a transit society. By paying attention to cross-border networks, people's livelihood strategies within the context of mobility are becoming visible.

Transnationalism emphasizes the institutions and identities that migrants create by being simultaneously engaged in two or more communities (Van Amersfoort 2001 in Mazzucato, 2004). The concept of identity in relation to transnationalism and the locality in which refugees live in Istanbul is therefore important to include in this theoretical chapter. A transnational perspective is necessary in this research because it enables to highlight the effects of the phenomenon of globalization on people's everyday lives. This is possible by focusing on individuals embedded within networks, or groups forming new institutions and new identities as a consequence of cross-border flows (Mazzucato, 2004:134). Therefore it can be stated that a transnational lens forces us to pay attention to questions of how people create new social, cultural and economic spaces in order to make a living. In his research Shepherd discussed the difference between 'transnationalism from below', and 'transnationalism from above' in which the first is a more empowering perspective on the daily and counter hegemonic practice of ordinary people. Because the macro-analysis of globalization (or transnationalism from above) works off the ground and abstracted from the field (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:1 in Sheperd, 2006: 9), it is insufficient for analyzing the refugees' agency within the experience of making a living while being in transit.

The question of why people migrate is placed in the background and therefore it can be argued that the conceptual distinction between migrants and refugees becomes blurred, however refugees often do have a more complex relationship with their homeland. They may have another emotional association with the country they have been forced to flee from and the country in which they have involuntary settled (Wahlbeck, 2002). Transnationalism is closely related to the concept of Diaspora. In which the first covers the latter, whereas a diaspora can be seen as a form of social organisation (Wahlbeck, 2002). It can be claimed that in the case of refugees, the term transnationalism is not specific enough, because it neglects specific experiences of a group, in other words; the diversity within the group and between groups who share the same ethnicity is underestimated. The term diaspora encompasses the transnational social relations and outlines the specific refugee experience. Analyzing refugees, as living in a diasporic relation is a way of comprehending the relationships that refugees have with both their society of origin and the society of settlement (Wahlbeck, 2002). In the case of the refugees who are expected to be resettled in the near future, the third country of resettlement can be added to the countries in which refugees might have relationships. In this research the concept of diaspora will be part of the transnational perspective, because the refugees in Istanbul have multiple cross-border relationships and these go beyond the diaspora.

Faist divides the concept of transnational social spaces into four different types. The first covers small groups like households and kinship systems. The second is labeled transnational

issue networks, which are sets of ties between persons and organizations in which information and services are exchanged for the purpose of achieving a common goal. The third covers transnational communities that comprise dense and continuous sets of social and symbolic ties, characterised by a high degree of intimacy, emotional depth, moral obligation and sometimes even social cohesion. The last form is related to transnational organizations from small groups like transnational families by virtue of an even higher degree of formal control and co-ordination of social and symbolic ties (Faist, 2006: 4-5). The empirical section will illustrate that especially the first and third type of social spaces are relevant when discussing the livelihood of refugees in Turkey.

The spaces 'in between' states have multiplied, therefore more fluid lifestyles and modes of action have appeared. The lives of migrants are not necessarily characterised by one-time settlement and commitment to one society. Dichotomies like temporal versus permanent and economic migrants versus refugee are no longer relevant if the goal is to map trajectories of mobile populations (Faist, 2008:36). However in this research the distinction between refugee and migrant is an important one and mapping trajectories is not the main objective. The purpose is to explain the options refugees have and the choices they make within the context of the strict asylum policy of Turkey. The cross-border social ties and sources deriving from these ties will be analyzed by using the term of social capital. It is the purpose to analyze how these social networks, and the social capital resulting from it, are used as livelihood strategies during the refugees' temporal stay in Istanbul. Or in terms of this research, how transnational social capital is used in order to structurally improve the position during the lengthy stay in Istanbul.

An interesting debate can be mentioned; the relation between transnationalism and integration, or adaptation in a new setting. The modern transmigrant is at home in several different social worlds, speaks several languages, participates in cross-border social networks and political movements, and sometimes makes a living with transnational economic activities. Transmigrant refers thus to people who live their lives across national borders (Snel, Engbersen and Leerkes, 2006: 285-6). The question whether transnationalism can be seen as a barrier to integration in a new setting is examined by Snel et al in the article 'transnational involvement and social integration'. The article examines how transnational involvement of immigrants living in the Netherlands relates to their incorporation or integration into Dutch society. The study is based on a survey of 300 immigrants from different countries of origin (Snel et al, 2006: 285). The main findings generally support the assumption that transnational involvements not necessarily impede integration. Another finding states there is no correlation between the transnational activities among migrants and their social position, however it must be stated that the transnational activities between poor and well to do migrants differ (2006: 304).

The main findings of the research carried out in the Netherlands are in line with the assumption in this research that transnationalism does not necessary has to be an obstacle in the integration process. Having transnational relations can even have a positive added value when integrating in a new society. Refugees who are in a transit context and have contacts in their country of origin, in Istanbul and perhaps in their settlement country may, due to their experience of being transit, adjust faster in a new setting. Besides that, having an elaborated cross-border social network may have a positive influence on the range of sources on which

people can rely when adapting in the new environment. However, people do live in very concrete localities with their own social structures and inequalities (Wahlbeck, 2002: 233). The fact that Turkey has a very strict policy towards refugees and migrants does of course have an influence on their ability to fully participate in the society.

The next section will focus on the role of social networks and capital in this research. How is social capital used and generated in the context of livelihood strategies in a transit setting? And how does social capital flow through the transnational social spaces of refugees? The sources upon which the refugees rely and the contacts from which these derive will be analyzed in the empirical section, the part below will discuss the theoretical background of these concepts.

2.3 Refugees' Social capital and Networks

Social capital is a difficult concept to grasp, whereas it embodies many different things to many different actors/ people. Despite these differences, some general conclusions can be drawn when discussing social capital. First of all it is taken to refer to qualities inherent in or deriving from peoples' social relationships. The second conclusion is that these qualities can have important implications for other dimensions of social and economic life. The third assumption is based on the belief that there is no simple relation between the structure of one's social capital and the social, economic position of that person in society (Bebbington, 2008). The differentiation made below between structural- and cognitive social capital will shed some more light on the concept of social capital and how it is used in this research.

Bebbington refers to Uphoff's (1999) differentiation between cognitive and structural social capital in order to extent his definition of social capital. The first covers the concept of trust, which is seen as a 'measure' of social capital. There is a close connection between the quality of social relationships in any given relation and the extent to which people trust both each other and social institutions. Such trust is labeled by Uphoff as cognitive, social capital; the domain of values and perceptions. Akcapars' research on Iranians in Turkey also uses this concept of trust. Many Iranians confirmed that they were victims of their own community as there was disloyalty, lying, misguidance and exploitation among the community (Akcapar, 2009). The concept of trust is therefore not a given within the own ethnic group. The concept of structural social capital refers to the social relations, networks and loose associations and formal organizations. Social capital in this context refers to resources such as information or financial aspects that flow through a social network. From this point of view the questions of how and why particular networks are constructed can be answered and in relation to that what the consequences are for being a member or not from this social network (Bebbington, 2008: 133).

Coleman, another important writer on social capital, is focusing more on functional social capital. This can be described as a variety of entities that all consist of some form of social structure and facilitate certain actions within the structures. Actually from this point of view social capital is anything that facilitates action, generated by networks of relationships, reciprocity, trust and social norms (Coleman, 1988). Portes also has put his stamp on the discussion on how to define the concept. He notes that social capital is a product of embeddedness and may carry hidden, or explicit costs, this is in relation with the reciprocity discussed by Coleman.

Before turning to the social networks, which may result in social capital, the confined relationship between the two has to be elaborated. Although the two concepts are closely linked, it is priority to state that social networks do not automatically result in social capital. As already illustrated by the research of Akcapar on Iranians in Turkey, individuals may not automatically assist each other simply because they are friends or relatives (Akcapar, 2009: 174-175). However following Coleman; what makes social networks convertible into social capital is not only access to desirable resources/ assets but also obligations of trust and expectations that adhere in relationships (Coleman, 1988: 101). Again the concept of trust and reciprocity within relations becomes evident and at the center of analysis when discussing networks.

A network analysis is in itself a rather simple concept. It consists of two things; nodes and links between those nodes. In social network analysis the nodes of concern are people, groups and organizations. The links may be social contacts, exchanges of information and political influence, money, joint membership in organizations, joint participation in events or many other aspects of human relations (Davies, 2003: 4). Davies refers in his article on network perspectives to Burt's analysis of the network structure of social capital. This analysis distinguished two aspects of social capital, as it exists in network form. The first is the form of a dense set of interconnections between network members, which is seen as the basis of trust. The second covers the form of individual members' own particular linkages beyond the network, their means of brokering access to influence or resources between the network and the wider world (Davies, 2003: 7). Combining macro and micro-analysis of the refugee through the filter of network theory, provides a deeper understanding of how migration flows are perpetuated. These macro and micro variables affect the organization of social networks among migrants. Examples at the macro level are migration and asylum policies of destination and transit countries and the absence/ presence of a UNHCR office. At the micro level, these variables can be sited as religion, gender and ethnicity (Akcapar, 2009).

To illustrate the use and importance of social capital and networks among migrants in a transit setting, Akcapar conducted an ethnographic study on Iranian transit migrants in Turkey. He argues that it is falsely to assume that social networks of migrants will automatically result in social capital. Although these networks may be used to lower the initial costs, they cannot be relied upon for support. The main reason for this is the absence of resources among Iranians already living in Turkey, but also due to a lack of trust among community members. However it should be noted that these 'weak ties' could result in 'strong ties' after a period of time spent in Turkey. These weak ties can also be the origin of the search for support elsewhere and the creation of new social capital in the transit country, and in the meanwhile trying maintaining the links with the own group.

Another very important aspect when discussing social networks and capital in transnational social spaces is the influence these aspects have on the migration patterns and image creation of the people involved in these networks. The access to the resources/ assets resulting from these networks may also have an impact on the migration selectivity (Akcapar, 2009).

An interesting aspect, which must be included in this research, is the role of religion within the context of social capital. Akcapar wrote an article about the strategic use of religion within a migration context. He argues that religion can be seen as a form of positive social

capital. Refugees and migrants turn to their new religious network to gather information, to get in touch with people from the same ethnic group and to get assistance in all kinds of forms. Religion plays an important role in the formation of personal and social identity, not only during the integration process, but also during the transit period in Turkey before resettlement in a third country. In religious activities, a person finds himself in a world shared by others; one of constant interaction (Akcapar, 2006: 818). The empirical section will reflect on the importance of religion in the lives of refugees in Istanbul.

A concluding remark on the previous part focusing on the relation between transnationalism, social capital and networks and livelihood strategies can be made. Social capital is not logically deriving from social networks, but if so these can be useful sources for the improvement of the livelihood in the transit society but also for the further migration process. Social ties/ networks may have a major influence on the image creation and decisions made in the migration process. This may in turn have an influence on the willingness and ability to participate locally in Istanbul. There is however another important theory, which needs attention here and that may offer a framework by which the refugees livelihood in the transit context can be analyzed.

The capability approach of Amartya Sen (1999) can be helpful in analyzing the access to resources/ assets refugees have in the integration process (Faist, 2009). The capability approach leads us to look at the range of life options people have, their 'capability set', and the actual things they do and achieve, their 'functioning's (Des Gasper, 2000). The notion of capability has become closely related to that of freedom, which Sen defines as 'the real opportunity we have to accomplish what we value'. Agency is the ability to pursue goals that one has to value (Deneulin & McGregor, 2009: 2). This can be related to the livelihood strategies of the refugees. Their assets can be their vehicles to achieve further economic, institutional and social progress, which may increase their amount of agency.

In order to create a complete analysis of social capital in general terms from a transit point of view, the subsequent part examines the notion of resettlement and related to that, the use of social capital and networks within the context of resettlement. The regional background and empirical section of this research will discuss the different stages of the resettlement process and it is important to keep in mind that the struggle to make a living does not end when one is being resettled. The whole process starts all over again in the new country of asylum, however it must be noted that the legal context of the refugee in the third country increases their opportunities and options.

2.4 Social capital and Networks in the context of Resettlement

Resettlement should be seen as an important tool for protection, providing durable solutions and as an element of burden sharing. Resettlement therefore needs to be approached in an integrated manner, from policy formation, through selection, to the integration of resettled refugees in their new countries. Over the past fifty years, millions of people have been provided with the opportunity to build new lives for themselves, and their families, through resettlement. Resettlement is seen as making permanent residence available in a third country, on a voluntary basis, to a refugee. The purpose is to let the resettled person enjoy civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to nationals (UNHCR working group

on resettlement, 2004). The United States, Canada and Australia provide most resettlement places, a major difference compared to European countries. In recent years the UNHCR and these countries have been taking active steps to encourage expansion of this so-called burden sharing (Taylor, 2005). However there are some European countries that provide temporarily places (Belgium, Germany and others) but the fact is that the need for resettlement places far exceeds the present supply (Taylor, 2005). Upon resettlement, refugees must carry the burden of the past while facing current and often novel challenges such as being resettled in the poorest neighbourhoods and facing limited economic opportunities. As a consequence of this dual burden, a family's ability to cope in their new environment may be undermined (Hadley and Sellen, 2006: 369).

The whole process of adaptation is starting all over again. Besides the dual burden of the refugees, there is another important concept which should be taken into account when discussing social participation: the concept of identity. An interesting argument related to identity is made in the article of Marlowe, focusing on resettled Sudanese in Australia. Marlowe argues that the concept of 'refugee-hood' within resettlement contexts can become a master status that defines a person above and beyond any other form of identity. Resettled refugees can find themselves in a contested landscape whereby political, economic, social, cultural and media-driven forces influence the wider public's perception of them (Marlowe, 2010). Following Marlowe; refugees have to cope with an ascribed social status, which may decrease their opportunities to participate socially.

A few of the Iranian informants of the aforementioned research had been resettled to a third country. Akcapar discovered that most of them, however, engaged in secondary migration within the destination country in order to be closer to their social networks. This illustrates the ongoing process of social networks and social capital (Akcapar, 2009: 185-187). Although social networks and capital are ongoing processes, it can be argued that the refugees' social networks have been declining, since their first migration move. Two main types of social capital may be influential in relation to diaspora. These can be described as bonding (family and friends) and bridging (institutions and communities in the host country). These two can work together, or against each other and may influence the immigrants' attitude towards the host country and home (Ionescu, 2006: 49). A refugee can also use his/her social capital to create a migration nexus within the same ethnic group, for example by institutional and financial support. Unfortunately as already claimed, in reality the refugees are confronted with a loss of social and support networks (Hayden and Sellen, 2006).

Due to this loss, it may take more time and effort from the refugee to build up a new life and participate fully in society. The question then remains, how much time exactly and what exactly are the burdens refugees have to face within a resettlement context? A case study conducted by Carter, Polevychok and John Osborne based on refugee households in Winnipeg can give more insight. Key socio-economic characteristics important to successful resettlement were analyzed and documented during a longitudinal study. The results show that after three years, the housing, neighbourhood and socio-economic circumstances of the refugee households present a 'glass half empty, half full' scenario. Incomes have improved but after three years are still far below the average of the host population. With most of the refugees who are working in unskilled service and sales positions, significant improvements in income in the immediate future are unlikely. Although the income of some households is

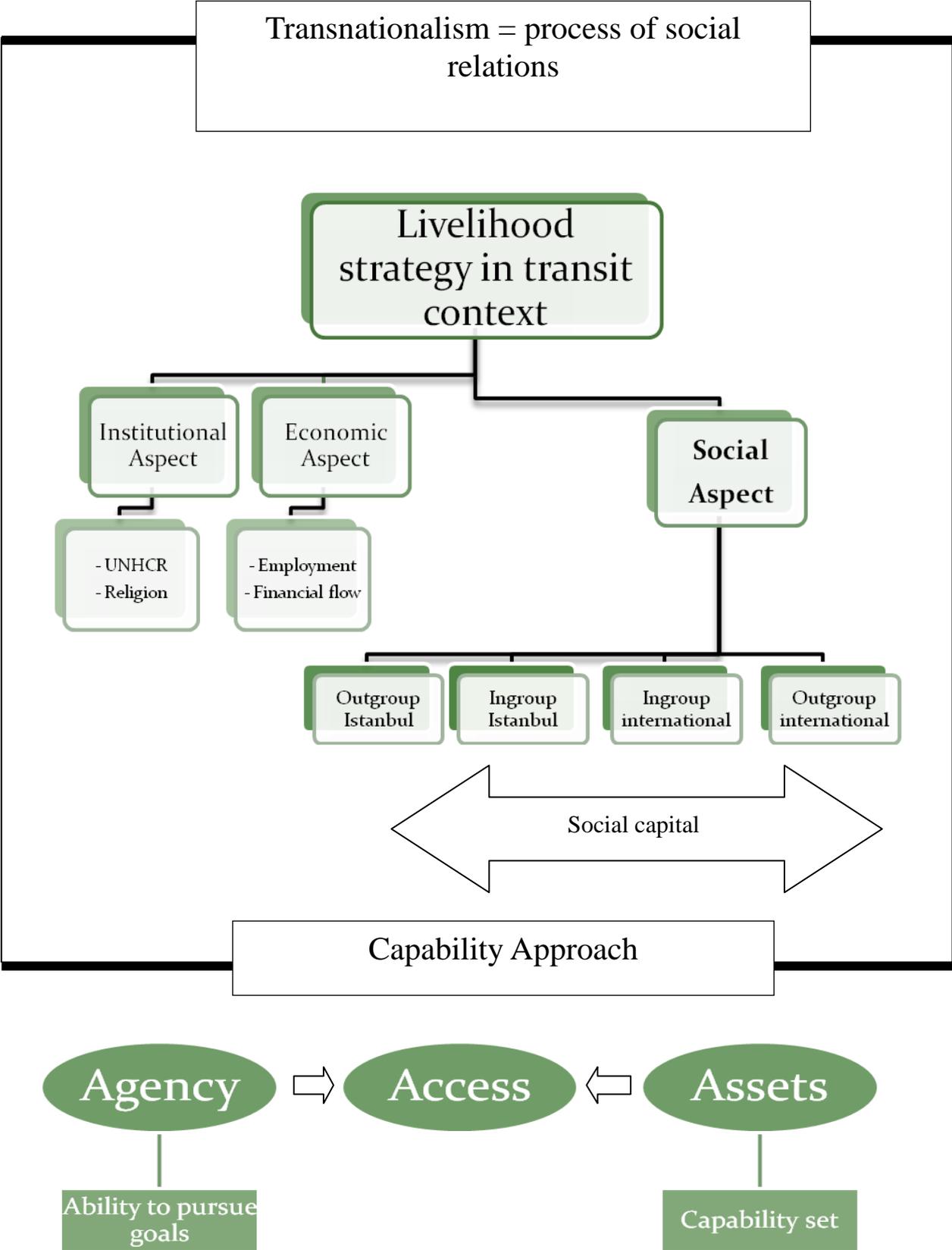
still dependent on government transfer payments, by the third year employment is the major source of household income. Poverty levels are still very high compared to the level for all households in Winnipeg (Carter, Polevychok and John Osborne 2009: 320). A concluding remark on these results is that although refugees are facing improving conditions concerning key indicators (e.g. housing, employment), they still have to cope with difficult circumstances. This condition might negatively influence the resettlement process and the effective integration of refugee households. In the empirical section the future expectations of the refugees are discussed in the context of resettlement. And the example of a resettled refugee to Canada will reflect on the results of the research described above.

The theoretical background discussed the most important concepts and theories of this research. The livelihood strategies of the refugees in the context of their transit position in Istanbul will be elaborated in the empirical section. The definitions of social capital, networks and transnationalism were discussed. The capability approach, which is an important theory in this research, is seen as a useful tool to analyze the capital potentially deriving from social networks and the access refugees have to these sources in order to improve their position.

Before turning to the empirical section which analyses the situation from the perspective of the refugees, the methods as used in the field and beyond will be discussed. Chapter three starts with the conceptual model of this research and will convert this model to the research setting. Then the contents of the internship will be discussed, followed by the methods used in order to gather the information based on the experiences from the refugees. The methodology is followed by the empirical section, which will start with an overview of the Turkish asylum and migration policy, resulting in a bottom up analysis of the consequences this policy has on the everyday lives of refugees.

Chapter 3. Methodological Framework

3.1 Conceptual model and Operationalization



The conceptual model illustrates the most important concepts used in this research and explained in the theoretical background. In order to analyze the main focus of the livelihood strategies in a transit context, a division of three sub groups is made; attention will be given to institutional, economic and social aspects. The institutional aspect refers to the membership and incorporation of refugees in different societal organizations. The examples of being visitor of religious institutions and the position within the UNHCR processes are used in order to analyze the incorporation. The economic aspect covers employment; the position at the labor market and thus focuses on the financial flow in which the refugees participate or not.

The social aspect is the main focus of the three subgroups and is divided into four different groups itself:

1. Social networks within the own ethnic group in Istanbul (In-group Istanbul)
2. Social networks outside the ethnic group in Istanbul (Out-group Istanbul)
3. Social networks inside the own ethnic group at the international level (In-group International)
4. Social networks outside the ethnic group at the international level (Out-group international).

In development aid programs, a social network representation enables attention to be quickly focused on who is influencing whom, directly and indirectly. A social network analysis is therefore a very useful method to create an image of the social human relation on which refugees depend in order to expand or adjust their livelihood strategies during their lengthy temporal stay within the society (Davies, 2003). The arrow of the social capital refers thus to the social capital flowing through these different networks. Social capital refers to qualities inherent in or deriving from peoples' social relationships. These qualities can have important implications for other dimensions of social and economic life (Bebbington, 2008).

It is important to include the multidimensional aspect of the three categories. For example if a refugee is a regular visitor of the church, then this might have a positive influence on his social networks in, and outside the own group in Istanbul. These networks may be expanded, due to the institutional visit. The same accounts for employment. But also the other way around, if a refugee has widespread social networks, crossing group boundaries, then his opportunities to get a job due to these contacts grow. Therefore all three aspects must be approached with a multidimensional perspective.

The two Meta theories or concepts serving as a lens through which the analysis of this research is based are transnationalism and the capability approach. Transnationalism is seen and used as an ongoing process of social relations (especially in the context of resettlement), whereas refugees have multiple social relations and connections; their country of origin, the transit society in which they reside at the moment and the next (unknown) destination. The social relations which refugees might have with friends and family residing in another country is here included as well. The capability approach leads us to look at the range of life options/ assets people have (their capability set) and their ability to pursue certain goals (the amount of Agency). These two combined are used to analyze the access refugees have in order to improve their livelihood strategies structurally during their stay in Istanbul.

3.2 Qualitative Methods and Informants

This research is based on an internship of three months with the Ecumenical Refugee Centre (ERC), which is located at the main street 'Istiklal Cadessi' in Istanbul. The centre provides mainly social services to the most vulnerable refugees, who are as discussed women and children. Every Monday they host a program where pregnant women get advice and training related to their labor and pregnancy. In the meanwhile children get the chance to participate in the English class. This program provides reading and writing and mathematics. In advance the families get a hot meal and several creative and medical services are provided. On Wednesday there is a clothing cupboard, every family or single women may enter for ten minutes and they can get cloths, shoes, bags and supply for their baby. However other things like blankets, tableware and baby buggies are provided as well. In the meanwhile every visitor to the centre gets a hot meal. On Thursday the men are welcome at the ERC as well. They can come to the office for advice, financial support for their transportation to the UNHCR in Ankara, clothes and medical issues. Every Saturday the ERC is hosting a soup kitchen at a church in the neighborhood. Here are men and women both welcome, however this kitchen is visited by almost only men.

The internship created the perfect opportunity to get in touch with all the different refugees and migrants at a weekly basis. After a few weeks and many informal chats, the basis of trust was founded and thereby the first step towards the qualitative methodology was taken. The data collected is based on nineteen in depth- interviews, ten surveys, two interviews with employees of NGOs in the field, many conversations with employees from the ERC, literature gained from the ERC and other NGOs, two attended meetings of the NGOs in the field, a congress in the field of migration and asylum hosted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and of course the experience of working four days in the field. Besides my stay in Istanbul, I travelled to one of the satellite cities (Eskisehir) for five days where I visited the foreigner's police and talked to two refugees.

The visit to Eskisehir was useful in the sense that the experience created more insight in the circumstances in a so called satellite city. The city is accessible by bus, and the trip takes eight hours from Istanbul, during which the contrast with Istanbul becomes very obvious. It is therefore very important to keep in mind that this research is mainly conducted in Istanbul, and the results are contextual. The experiences of the refugees in this city cannot be generalized to the rest of Turkey. However the theory of the procedures and the Turkish policy is of course implemented on a national level. Because many refugees visited their designated satellite city and this aspect could be included in the interviews, the results of this research are useful to create an overview of the situation of refugees in Turkey, due to the policy. The experiences of the informants in the satellite cities and their argumentation why they came back to Istanbul illustrate the difficulties faced in these cities and therefore several conclusions can be drawn. This research has the purpose to analyze the situations of refugees in Istanbul, by making use of their stories, opinions and experiences.

A bottom up approach will illustrate how the theory of the policy influences the everyday lives of the refugees and their livelihood strategies in order to sustain themselves and their families during the lengthy and uncertain transit period. The importance of the social networks and social capital deriving from these networks was analyzed by making use of

social mapping. Each informant was asked to explain the different connections they have within (family, friends) and outside its own ethnic group (for example colleagues) in Istanbul and on an international level in a hierarchical structure. This created an overview of the social aspect divided into the four different discussed subgroups. The refugees had to place themselves in the center and how further they moved outwards the center the weaker the tie/ connection. By making use of this method, it became very obvious with whom the refugees maintained the strongest ties and related to that why they put some much effort in this relationship. This created a logical bridge towards the social capital resulting from these networks.

Now that the most important concepts, definitions and methods of research are discussed and their function in this research is elaborated, the next step is to explain who the informants on which this research is based are. Table 3.1 and figures 3.1 and 3.2 on the next page discuss their different ethnic background, sex and age group.

The diversity among the population is well covered in this research, whereas both male and female of different age groups were interviewed. The informants were in different stages of the procedures. Two had the prospect to be resettled, one within six months. One is already resettled to Canada. Only one of all the informants obtained a temporal residence permit for six months. Some are in Istanbul for several years already, whilst some had just arrived. Most of the refugees were acknowledged by the UNHCR, some have chosen to not apply at all and others were waiting for an answer or date for the interview. As illustrated by figure 1 Most of the informants were in the age groups of 18- 25 and 26-33. Most of the male informants were traveling alone; most of my female informants had children, in different age groups, mainly babies. Four informants are ex minors; aging eighteen and nineteen. Two of them have lived in a shelter for minors. The diverse background of my informants allows for an overview in which the different aspects of the procedures can be analyzed through their eyes.

Besides the in depth interviews with my two key informants (one from Sierra Leone and one from Iran), the interviews, questionnaires and informal chats, I managed to arrange interviews with two spokes persons from organizations (Caritas and Union of Young Refugees, the last one with the founder). Besides these interviews I had contact with organizations like Helisinky Citizens' Assembly and Asam on a regular basis by email and they provided me with documents and statistics related to satellite cities. Besides this I visited two meetings (one in the end of February and one in the beginning of April) of NGOs who work with refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants (representatives of HRDF, ASAM, IOM, UNHCR, HCA, IIMP, Caritas, ICMC were present) These meetings provided me with much background information in relation to procedures, resettlement, social assistance and the working relation with the Turkish government.

COUNTRY (Refugees)	NUMBER	SEX*	Age Group*
Ethiopia	2	2 F	1
			2
Eritrea	5	4 F	2
			2
			3
			4
		1 M	1
Congo	2	1 F	1
		1 M	1
Iran	2	2 M	3
			4
Ivory Coast	1	1 M	2
Sierra Leone	4	4 M	1
			2
			3
			4
Somalia	1	1 M	3
Sudan	2	1 F	1
		1 M	2
Total	19	8 F 11 M	
COUNTRY (Migrants)	NUMBER	SEX	Age group*
Ghana	3	1 F	2
		2 M	3
			3
Nigeria	6	2 F	1
			3
		4 M	2
			3
			4
Total	9	3 F 6 M	

Table 3.1

* Sex: F= Female M= Male

* Age group: (1) 18- 25, (2) 26- 33, (3) 34- 41, (4) 42- 50.

Fig. 3.1

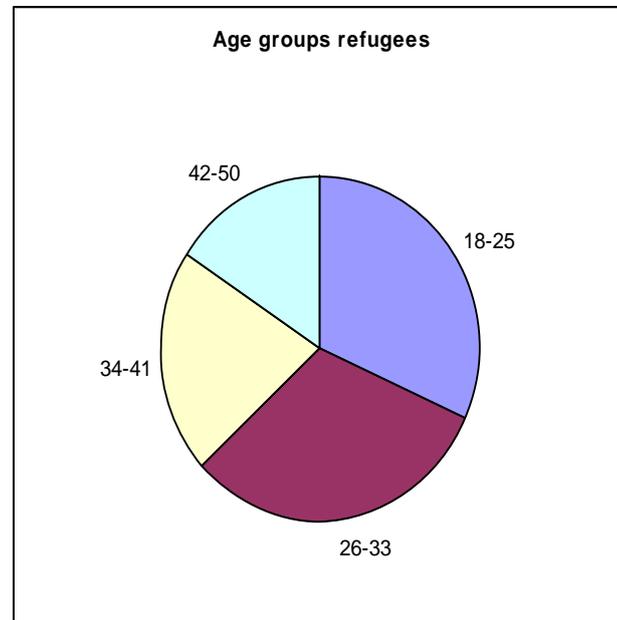
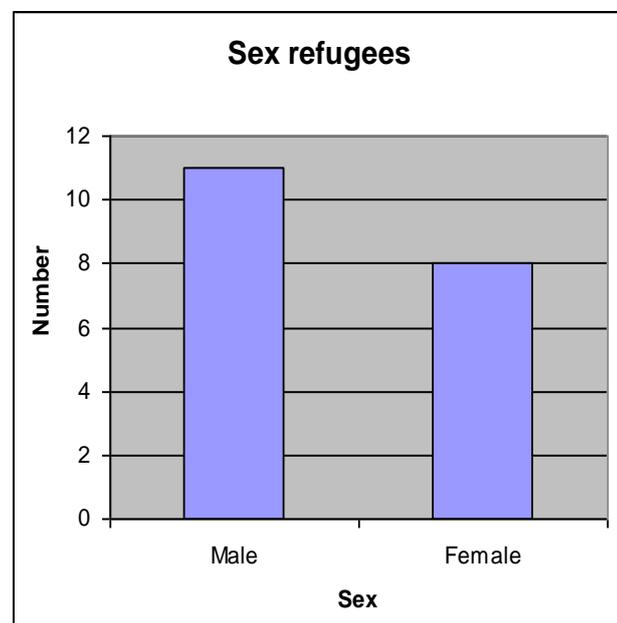


Fig. 3.2



The congress on migration and asylum policy hosted by the IOM provided much information for the research. The speakers at the congress were very interesting, because it was not possible to interview them, due to the Turkey's research policy. It was obligated to obtain a special permit from the government if you wanted to have access to statistical data and other governmental documents. Among the speakers of this congress were representatives from the UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior, important actors whom you would not have the chance to speak with otherwise. This congress therefore had an important added value for the research; it enables to create a more complete overview of the actors. There are three important groups to define: Those who discuss and prepare the policy (government in collaboration with the UNHCR and several NGOs), people who execute the policy (local authorities, employees of NGOs and the UNHCR) and those who are subject to the policy (the refugees and migrants). The first two groups will be discussed in the next chapter, which provides the regional context. The latter will be given a voice in chapter five, six and seven which present the bottom up approach of the refugees in the context of the asylum and migration policy.

The research is based on qualitative ethnographic methods, whereas this is the best technique to apply when analyzing the experiences of refugees by using a bottom up approach. Only by using in depth interviews and life stories their position in society can be revealed. A proper definition of the ethnographic method is given by Potter and Desai (2006) who describe it as a research method which attempt to study social life as it unfolds in the practices of day to day life. Within this method several tools will be used in order to create a complete picture. The first one which actually begins directly after arrival will be the one of *participant observation*. Participant observation is a way of approaching the fieldwork experience, gaining understanding of the most fundamental processes in social life (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002: 2). Although this is not a very concrete method in this research, it should in this case mainly be seen as a way of approaching the field and the participants. It allowed me to push my position as a researcher to the background, which as already discussed may have a positive influence on the level of trust and creation of a more equal relationship. During my days at the ERC the position of participant observer was indeed useful. Much information, especially related to social interaction among refugees and thereby their social networks could be gained by observing with whom they mainly talk and analyze their attitude in different situations.

Other key elements of the ethnographic method which will be applied are the *use of every day conversations as an interview technique, actively participating in a wide range of the refugees' daily activities, informal observing* (as already elaborated previously) and *recording observation in field notes* (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002: 4). Although the use of ethnographic research within development studies has lost some of its acknowledgment during the previous years, it is now gaining back its position within the development field. One reason is that the answers gained by focus group discussions often lack depth; a deeper understanding can be created by using ethnographic methods (Desai and Potter, 2006). Therefore the qualitative method is the best suitable in the context of this research. It enables to give a voice to the refugees, to analyze the situation from their point of view.

Chapter 4 Regional Context

4.1 Turkish Asylum Policies; the government and the UNHCR

The brief definition of refugees, related to the previous discussed extended one, currently used by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the one used in this research is phrased as follows:

'All persons who are refugees within the meaning of the 1951 Convention as well as those who are outside their country of origin or habitual residence and unable to return there owing to serious and indiscriminate threats to life, physical integrity or freedom resulting from generalised violence or events seriously disturbing public order, and who, as a result, require international protection' (Zieck, 2009: 611).

The introduction discussed the position of Turkey in relation to the 1951 UN Convention on the Rights of Refugees, and the geographic limitation it retains to its ratification of the Convention. This means that only those fleeing as a consequence of "events occurring in Europe" can settle in Turkey on a permanent basis. This implies that people fleeing from Non European countries only have limited options when discussing the three durable solutions applied by the UNHCR. Voluntary repatriation and resettlement are the two main options, whereas local integration in the Turkish context is almost impossible and seems to be irrelevant. However, and this is argued in the theoretical chapter, there will be a reflection on the concept of integration, which refers to the opportunities and initiatives to participate in the society. The reason why the concept is not totally misplaced lies in the lengthy procedures and the fact that the refugees are stuck during these years in the transit country.

The article of Daniş (2006), who analyzed and compared the integration of Iraqi, Afghan, Maghrebi and Iranian Migrants in Istanbul illustrates that the concept is used before in refugee related research in Turkey. According to Daniş, the legal status plays a major role in the flexibility and ability to maneuver, change or improve their conditions of life in the country. She goes on by discussing the limited range of options Afghani have concerning settlement. One option has been to remain in the country regardless of legal status. A second option has been to apply for refugee status through the UNHCR and since the mid-1990s, the local authorities, hope for recognition and a short term residence permit until the eventual resettlement to a third country, based upon the 'geographical limitation' clause. This option of course runs the risk of not obtaining refugee status and therefore facing the choice of deportation or remaining in the country with no legal status (Didem Daniş, 2006: 72-73). The example of the Afghani claims that the options are limited and this is a result of the refugee policy. The section below will focus on this strict refugee policy and discusses the failure of the government and UNHCR to fulfill its obligations. The context of Turkey's internal challenges can be seen as the source of the lack of capacity among the government and the UNHCR.

The complicated and punctual asylum policy in Turkey has been a topic of debate and research at the national and international level. Both scales have experienced a growing awareness of the problem; one of the most obvious incentives is the desired European Union (EU) membership. Due to Turkey's wish to enter the EU the 'rules of the game' keep changing on a regular basis. Although this keeps it an interesting research topic, it also brings many

complications related to the information newcomers get, or do not get. The section below will shed some light on the problematic situation Turkey is facing as a transit country for migrants and their battle to join the EU. Turkey is put under growing pressure to cooperate with the EU and control the flow of illegal transit migrants and introduce an asylum system that allows recognized refugees to stay in Turkey (Kirisci, 2003: 100). By comparing different actors and resources in the field of asylum seekers and refugees, it can be argued that the practice in the field of the policy is not a logical sequence of the theory. The gap between the policy on paper and execution in the field is significant and the most important intermediaries are the NGOs, who will be discussed at the end of the section. The part as follows is mainly based on information obtained in the field. The authors differ from research departments of the University, to Human rights organizations like Amnesty International and official documents of the Ministry of Interior (MOI).

The 1994 Regulation

Until 1994, Turkey did not have its own national regulation on Asylum. Critics argued that Turkey was violating the rights of asylum seekers and refugees by denying them access to asylum procedures or failing to provide them adequate protection (Kirisci, 2003: 87). The 1994 Regulation titled 'regulations on the procedures and the principles related to mass influxes and foreigners arriving in Turkey requesting residence permits with the intention of seeking asylum in a third country' (Icduygu and Biehl, 2009) was intended to bring status determination under the control of the Turkish authorities and to introduce strict procedures for asylum applicants. Kirstin Biehl relates the increase of the strictness to security reasons, whereas the previous practices were too liberal and life threatening to Turkish security. In the past the UNHCR had a 'good' working relation with the Turkish authorities; they conducted the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) for Europeans as well as non-Europeans. They also made sure these refugees were resettled in Western countries, or repatriated to their own country as soon as the living conditions improved (Biehl, 2009).

The MOI (Ministry of Interior) which is responsible for all the cases related to foreigners in Turkey prepared this 1994 Regulation, because of the growing in- and outflows of migrants; in short the situation was getting out of control for the Turkish government. As already noted, the Asylum Regulation aimed to bring status determination under the control of the Turkish government and also introduced strict regulation governing access to the asylum procedures (Kirisci, 2003:86). Besides the securization measures, growing international criticism against Turkey of various human rights organizations and Western governments related to deportations measures lay also at the heart of the 1994 regulation (Icduygu and Biehl, 2009). Another major problem was the difference between the UNHCR and the Turkish government on how to define an asylum seeker. Who can be labeled asylum seeker, refugee and irregular migrant? The definitions as already discussed in the theoretical section, will be repeated briefly after which the problems resulting from this differentiation will be highlighted.

In Turkish regulations the terms refugee and asylum seeker are defined differently from the established definitions based on international law. A refugee is defined as a foreigner or stateless person of European origin that has been recognized as such according to the criteria within Article 1 of the Refugee Convention by the MOI. An asylum seeker is defined as a

foreigner or stateless person of non-European origin whose status as an asylum seeker has been recognized by a decision of the MOI that this person meets the criteria within Article 1 of the Refugee Convention (Amnesty International, 2009: 8). The international definition for the term refugee is already defined previously. The term asylum seeker (in the context of the international standards) refers to a person who is seeking international protection as a refugee, but who has not been formally recognized as one. The term normally applies to a person waiting for the government or UNHCR to decide on their claim for refugee status (Amnesty International, 2009: 7).

The problem here is evident; although there are international standards related to defining who is an asylum seeker/refugee, the terms used by the Turkish government are not in line with this. Following their description, only a European citizen can be a refugee, and although the UNHCR grants non-Europeans with a refugee status, the Turkish government does not underline this. The different definitions are thus in the first place resulting from the geographical limitation, which is an important strategic trump in Turkey's negotiations with the European Union concerning their membership.

Let me now return to the actual changes occurred due to the 1994 Regulation. The dual procedure is one of the most important occurred changes. This implies that all Non-European refugees who arrived in Turkey and applied to UNHCR with a view towards being resettled in a third country were required to file a separate 'temporary asylum claim with the Turkish government' (Biehl, 2009: 4). The result of this is the already discussed confusion by which the Turkish procedure grants non-European asylum seekers the status of 'asylum seeker' (only temporal residence in Turkey is granted) and the UNHCR grants the status of 'refugee' (right to seek resettlement in third country). The 1994 regulation was intended to bring refugee status determination under the control of the Turkish authorities and to introduce strict procedures for asylum applicants. The period from the new regulation until 2001 can therefore be identified by a sudden shift of the Turkish government from one of nonchalance to that of excessive control (Icduygy and Biehl, 2009).

The National Action Plan

As already stated above, the potential membership of Turkey to the European Union has a major influence on the efforts made by the Turkish government on its migration-asylum policy. However, Turkey is far from implementing its own refugee status determination and currently the quality of the protection to asylum seekers and refugees falls short of EU Acquis² standards (Kirisci, 2003). The National Action Plan, established by the Turkish government in 2005, consists of 50 pages and has the purpose to create an asylum and migration policy that is more in line with international standards. The purpose of the plan is described as follows: To align Turkish legislation and system on asylum, migrants and aliens with the EU. The National Action Plan (NAP) covers the legal arrangements that should be put into force within the harmonization process and measures and investments essential for finalizing administrative set-up and physical infrastructure in order to align Turkish asylum/migration legislation and system with the EU (NAP, 2005:3). The series of measures that are confirmed in this document to align its asylum and migration policy include administrative, technical and physical capacity development, the training of specialized staff

² http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/doc_centre/main/main_law_en.htm

and changes in legislation (Icduygy and Biehl, 2009).

In order to increase the capacity, institutional set-up will be realized to establish a specialization unit in the field of migration and asylum; this existing unit will be expanded and strengthened for guaranteeing that asylum and migration procedures are enforced in harmony with the EU Acquis (NAP, 2005: 30). This statement is followed by a list of projects, which need to be carried out. One of these projects is the plan to shape policies for the integration of aliens in the society. This will be elaborated further later on in this section, first an overview of different projects is given to create a general impression of the set up of the Plan. The MOI has supported a series of seminars, workshops and working programs jointly organized with the UNHCR in order to *develop an Asylum System* in Turkey. Another project is related to the *support of Turkish authorities* responsible for migration in the field of Asylum. EU legislation, a comparison of the best country practices, interviewing and decision making techniques, vulnerable groups, country of origin information, admission and integration, expiration of stay in the territory, return and specific procedures and the principles of the EU Acquis were among the topics discussed in this project related training seminars (NAP, 2005: 11-12)

There also is a project for *increasing police capacity* in the fields pertaining to refugees/ asylum seekers. The overall long-term objective hereof is to increase the capacity of the MOI and the security personnel working under Turkish legislation in line with the international standards. The purpose of the project can be described as developing an asylum system in Turkey. The MOI and security personnel working for the protection of refugee and asylum seekers will be trained and they contribute to the capacity building area of training and technical support (NAP, 2005: 13). The project for *country of origin and asylum information system* has the purpose of ensuring that the MOI establishes and utilizes a country of origin information system, has complete knowledge on the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure and develops a training program of its own for the personnel of the future asylum authorities (NAP, 2005: 14).

Before turning to the project related to integration it must be stated that all the efforts serve to improve the conditions of the migrants' temporary stay only and, therefore, cannot be seen in the framework of a more permanent integration policy (Icduygy and Biehl, 2009). A national program should be drafted for the integration of refugees, including a schedule, responsibilities and those who are in charge. Refugees and asylum seekers should be allowed access to cash and assistance provided by the local governments (social, material, fuel, clothing education). These local governments should be equipped with authority to ensure this integration and thereby be able to deliver the social assistance in the most effective way. NGOs are expected to play a major role in this asylum system and should therefore be involved in the integration process. The state may therefore allow institutions, which carry out integration activities to play a role in implementation and let them for example benefit from tax deduction. Besides this, financial funds should be granted to parties involved in organizing integration projects. The state should also promote and create awareness in relation to social and cultural rights, for example by using the media (NAP, 2005:41).

In the following chapter institutional, economic and social aspects of the refugees' livelihood will be elaborated further, by making a critical comparison of how their situation is presented

on paper and how this is reflected in practice in their everyday lives. Theory In this sense refers to policies induced by the government and procedures carried out by the UNHCR. Practice is related to the influence of these policies and procedures on the livelihood of the refugees in transit. The section below will create an overview of the asylum procedure as it functions at the moment in Turkey, by doing so it becomes even more evident why refugees and asylum seekers are limited in the context of access, participation, and agency.

RSD Procedures, Deportation and Satellite Cities

As already stated, since 1994 a foreigner who enters turkey and wants to apply for a refugee status needs to register with the national authorities first before going to the UNHCR. Those who enter the country irregularly must present themselves to the governorate at the point that they enter the country (Amnesty International, 2009). After establishing their identities and taking their photographs and fingerprints, the respective governorship conducts interviews and cases are referred to the MOI with the opinion of the governorship concerned. Turkey informs the UNHCR about applicants coming from outside Europe and ensures that they are registered and interviewed by the said office. In contrary to the Amnesty International report, the NAP states that the decisions of the UNHCR and the MOI are parallel to one another (NAP, 2005). So in short: In all cases RSD interviews are carried out by provincial governorates and the decision making process is conducted by the MOI in Ankara (Amnesty International, 2009). After people are registered they are referred to a so-called satellite city.

All asylum seekers are obligated to pursue their temporary asylum requests with the foreigners' police in the province to which they were sent and must stay until their asylum application has been finalized. Once they have registered and provided fingerprints, they must go to the local police to give their signature proving they are residing in the designated city (Biehl, 2009). As will be proved in the next chapter, this is the phase in which the most problems and errors in procedures occur. Because one of the 'rules of the game' is that if people do not register themselves (and their families) in the designated satellite city, their procedure will be stopped. It can be stated that the whole satellite city policy is another attempt of the government to control the massive inflow of migrants. The reasons given for the choice of the satellite cities by the MOI are related to areas where there is no public-related problem and the temporarily asylum seekers are transferred to be controlled more easily (NAP, 2005:9).

The daily life in these satellite cities is far from ideal, accommodation is a major problem in these cities, although the National Action Plan promises improvement. According to the plan, the state has the responsibility to provide shelter and physical reception conditions to asylum seekers according to the EU council directive on reception conditions. Shelter centers with a capacity of approximately 750 people will be established in seven different provinces in Turkey and serve as regional centers. The following aliens shall have priority in taking shelter in the said centers: Applicants who have applied for asylum and who have not yet been granted the status and those who have been granted, but who cannot freely reside in Turkey (NAP, 2005: 33).

Nevertheless refugees are allowed to leave their satellite cities for two to fifteen days (to

earn some money elsewhere or to get medical assistance), however they have to ask permission of the local authority first. If they get the permission, the authorities are 'obligated' to pay for the transit (ERC, 2011). People may also apply for another city if they have serious medical issues that cannot be treated in the designated city, or if they have a relative elsewhere. However this does not happen very often, due to unawareness among refugees and the amount of time that this process will cover (ERC, 2011).

If the MOI finally decides that the person cannot be granted with the temporary status, the applicant must submit a written application to the responsible governorship and the MOI within fifteen days requesting the review of negative decision in accordance with article 6 of 1994 Asylum Regulation³. He or she shall be informed of the requirement to submit a petition and supporting documentary evidence, if any, to the MOI in a swift manner (NAP, 2005: 9). Applicants who do not appeal, and do not leave the Turkish territory, will be deported, if possible. Amnesty International is convinced that this appeal is neither effective, nor independent. This can be underlined by the fact that between 2002- 2007 only 123 asylum seekers had lodged an administrative appeal against a negative first instance decision. While all administrative decisions can be challenged by the administrative court, the results that during the period of 2002- 2007 the scarce number of 22 asylum seekers had lodged a judicial appeal through this court system reveals again the lack of information which consists among asylum seekers (Amnesty International, 2009: 21).

Within the context of deportation measures the National Action Plan states that the two main reasons for deportation and preventive police authority are related to public security and violation of public order (NAP, 2005). Deportation in this sense can be seen in the light of the securization discussed by Biehl (2009). The NAP goes on by claiming that a person subject to deportation is initially invited to leave the Turkish territory and if this person fails to do so within the period granted, the deportation is carried out by the administration. Another important fact noted in the Plan is that the person who has to be deported but cannot leave Turkey due to passport or some other reasons are obliged to reside in places determined by the MOI. Interesting is the sentence in which the costs of this deportation are discussed, people need to cover these themselves, however, transfer of those failing to afford such expenses is carried out by the state (NAP, 2004).

However if the decision is positive, other problems related to temporarily residence permits arise. In 2009 the cost of a one month, six months, one year and five year residence permit was set at 70, 306, 636 and 2890 Turkish Lira respectively, however some countries have agreements and pay lower fees. Those who cannot pay the fees, which counts for most refugees and asylum seekers are supposed to be exempt. Except the practice is far less idealistic and local authorities are generally not generous in making exceptions (Icduygu and Biehl, 2009). All social, medical and economic rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Turkey are dependent upon holding a valid residence permit (Biehl, 2009). As will be discussed in the next chapters, due to the high costs of obtaining this permit, and the lack of the promised financial assistance, most refugees and asylum seekers prefer to overstay illegal. In case an asylum seeker finds means to obtain a permit, they must pay an additional fee for the time they have spend illegal in Turkey. And unless these fees are paid, even recognized refugees who are about to be resettled are denied an 'exit permit' to leave the country

³ <http://www.ir.metu.edu.tr/iom/pdf/tr3.pdf>

(Biehl, 2009). The problems as discussed have a major influence on the everyday lives of the refugees and their capability and agency concerning economic, institutional and social aspects in the context of their livelihood. Although people are accepted to be resettled and therefore in the 'final stage' of their procedures, the overstay fees are the last barrier and sometimes the hardest one, because the amount of the fees is in many cases outrageously high. However in some cases the Turkish government is tolerant and a part of the fees is being remitted.

The National Action Plan was submitted in 2005, however the 21st Reform Monitoring Group Meeting held in July 2010 states: Work is ongoing on "Law on Asylum", "Law on Foreigners", "Framework Law on the Fight Against Human Trafficking" and "Law on the Establishment of the Administration of Asylum and Migration", which will redefine basic policies and significantly develop the system in the areas of asylum and migration. These laws will also introduce new arrangements on matters referred to in the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights in the areas of migration and asylum. The draft laws will be made available to the public in order to obtain the views of relevant international organizations, civil society organizations and academicians (Prime Ministry Secretariat General for EU Affairs, 2010: 6). Chapter seven, which discusses the efforts made by the government, illustrates that the new country report of Amnesty International is less enthusiastic about the new draft laws. Immigration detention regulations ruled unlawful by the European Court of Human Rights in 2009 remained in force at the end of the year. Civil society organizations were consulted over three new laws relating to asylum but the drafts had not been published by the end of the year (Amnesty International, 2011).

4.2 Intermediaries – The NGOs

The previous section discussed the Turkish political context related to refugee issues. After the brief overview of the working relation between the government and the UNHCR, the different aspects of the RSD procedure and the resettlement process were elaborated. The difficulties faced by the refugees during these procedures are clearly set out and the gap between the theory and practice has become evident, partial due to the critical notes made by Amnesty International. The introduction of this chapter claims that the NGOs can be seen as intermediaries in the field. Because of their importance, the next part will focus on their objectives, tasks and outcomes. In order to keep it a briefly overview, only the largest NGOs and those with whom contact was made in the field will be elaborated further. These include Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, Caritas, ASAM (Association for Solidarity with Asylum seekers and Migrants), the HRDF (Human Resource Development Foundation), The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and International Organization for Migration (IOM). The main objectives and targets of the Ecumenical Refugee Centre are already elaborated in the previous methodological chapter, and will therefore be skipped in the next section.

Helsinki Citizens' assembly (HCA) - 1988

The purpose of this organization, which is only located in Istanbul, is to advance fundamental human rights and freedoms, peace, democracy and pluralism. The organization is connected with other European 'Helsinki' organizations and HCA has advocated for the rights of refugees for more than seven years. In 2006 HCA established the Refugee Advocacy and Support Program (RASP) which focuses on:

- (1) Providing legal assistance and psychosocial services to refugees in ways that will empower them to advocate for their own rights: HCA provides free legal advice to refugees regarding the refugee status determination of the UNHCR and the Turkish administrative requirements by making use of individual counseling and legal representation. Those who suffer from effects of trauma are provided with intensive psychological counseling and rehabilitation.
- (2) Raise awareness and sensitivity in society about the situation and rights of refugees in Turkey.
- (3) Improve refugee protection by capacity building of NGOs and professionals in Turkey: Supporting the coordination and expansion of services to refugees provided by NGOs and professionals, through coordination meetings and trainings, including 3-day workshops for NGOs, refugees and government agencies in six satellite cities.
- (4) Advocate for the development and implementation of laws, policies and practices that reflect the highest standards under international refugee and human rights law: Monitoring and reporting on Turkish state practice regarding the ‘temporary asylum’ procedure, the living conditions of refugees in satellite cities and access to the asylum procedure by asylum seekers in detention and transit zones. Monitoring and reporting on the RSD practices of the UNHCR and their compliance with the own legal guidelines and procedural standards of the UNHCR (NGO Directory UNHCR, 2008 supplied by HCA).

Helsinki Citizens’ assembly is a very important organization related to the legal context of refugees. Many of the clients who visited the ERC for social services were clients of the HCA as well in order to improve and defend their legal status. Another organization with whom the ERC had contact on a regular basis is Caritas.

Caritas Turkey

Caritas works together with caritas partners from other countries in carrying out humanitarian work. One of the guiding principles is that the poor are not object of pity, but the authors of their own development. Caritas helps to provide assistance in the fields of health, education, social adjustment and employment. Among its activities are projects for developing micro projects for livelihoods, assistance in securing personal documentation and providing food aid for the needy. Especially refugees from Iraq have received considerable support from Caritas. Especially medical and food assistance, legal aid and education opportunities for children are provided (Caritas, 2011). The language courses which are offered by the ERC are established and (financially) executed in cooperation with Caritas.

Association for Solidarity with Asylum seekers and Migrants (ASAM) - 1995

The purpose of the Association is to manage the problems of asylum-seekers, refugees, temporary asylum-seekers and migrants, to provide them help, to seek for solutions to their problems within the framework of Turkish Republic law and to work for harmonization of Turkish Refugee Law with international standards (UNHCR, 2008). ASAM conducted 61.860 interviews with 31.023 people in total in 2010, of which the average number of interviews in all cities rated 5.155 interviews in a month (exact numbers are given in the table below). The counseling, advocacy and protection activities of ASAM in many target cities are also supported by additional activities towards integration and social activities. These activities have the prospect of alleviating the integration process and promoting self-reliance of the refugees and asylum seekers. In total social needs assessments for 492 cases have been

performed; these assessments are made with the assistance of sociologists (ASAM, 2011).

Working Area	No. Interviews	No. of people
Afyon	4433	2139
Amasya	3852	1333
Ankara	1441	1304
Burdur	875	626
Corum	1096	468
Gaziantep	5882	3426
Isparta	985	731
Karaman	300	193
Kastamonu	896	347
Kayseri	9750	5989
Kirşehir	13.607	3465
Konya	3709	1907
Nevşehir	4821	2666
Niğde	4800	3376
Sivas	642	388
Tokat	4771	2665

Table 4.1 (ASAM, 2010 data obtained from ASAM, March 2011)

ASAM has a close working relationship with the UNHCR and the government. They for example shared their field experience with the authorities during the legislation (new asylum law) development period. Beside this, personal information of vulnerable cases is shared with the authorities in question to ensure this group is given priority in terms of receiving assistance. ASAM shares this information with the UNHCR as well, to ensure prioritization in the context of the legal procedures. ASAM also receives information from security authorities in the target cities regarding illegal migrants, and is therefore in the position to act as a representative for these people and defend their asylum rights.

Human Resources Development Foundation (HRDF) - 1988

This NGO is dedicated to the empowerment of vulnerable groups. Women, youth and children are the main target groups, through advocacy, training and service provision in areas of population and sustainable development. Their work in Turkey focuses on promoting reproductive health and family planning education, information, training and services. Since 1988 there is a special department/ program to support refugees and asylum seekers (Ariadne, 2008). An example of such a refugee related program from the HRDF is: the program for supporting refugee women residing in Turkey before departing for a third country (HRDF, 2011)

International Organization for Migration (IOM) – 1951 *Turkey member since 2004

IOM established its first office in Turkey in 1991 due to the Gulf war crises. Program activities of the IOM include improving remittance management, building human capital through labor migration programs, return and reintegration of qualified nationals, capacity building for governments and empowerment of female migrants. The IOM works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and NGO partners. The IOM states that refugees and displaced persons are a distinct category of ‘people on the move’ deserving special attention.

IOM cooperates to facilitate resettlement of thousands of refugees each year for whom resettlement in a third country is the approved durable solution. Beside this IOM is active in assisting refugee populations during and after emergencies (IOM, May the 5th 2011).

Most of the resettlement processes to third countries are arranged with The United States, Canada and Australia. In Turkey, IOM Turkey runs regular US Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) movements to the United States in close cooperation with the Turkish Government authorities, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC). IOM Turkey has also provided assistance since 1991 to refugees accepted under the Canada Refugees Bound Program, as well as family reunification cases. They are working closely with the Canadian Embassy in Ankara to ensure smooth processing of migrants resettled to Canada. On behalf of the Government of Australia, IOM facilitates medical screening to make sure that refugees and special humanitarian entrants to Australia are fit to travel. Migrants destined for Australia also participate in the Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program. The IOM also facilitates resettlement of refugees to and family reunifications in “Other European Countries”, which include: Finland, Belgium, Denmark, France, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Norway, and Ireland (MOI, 2011). The figures below illustrate the trends between 2005 and 2009 concerning all movement arranged by the MOI, resettlement and family reunification.

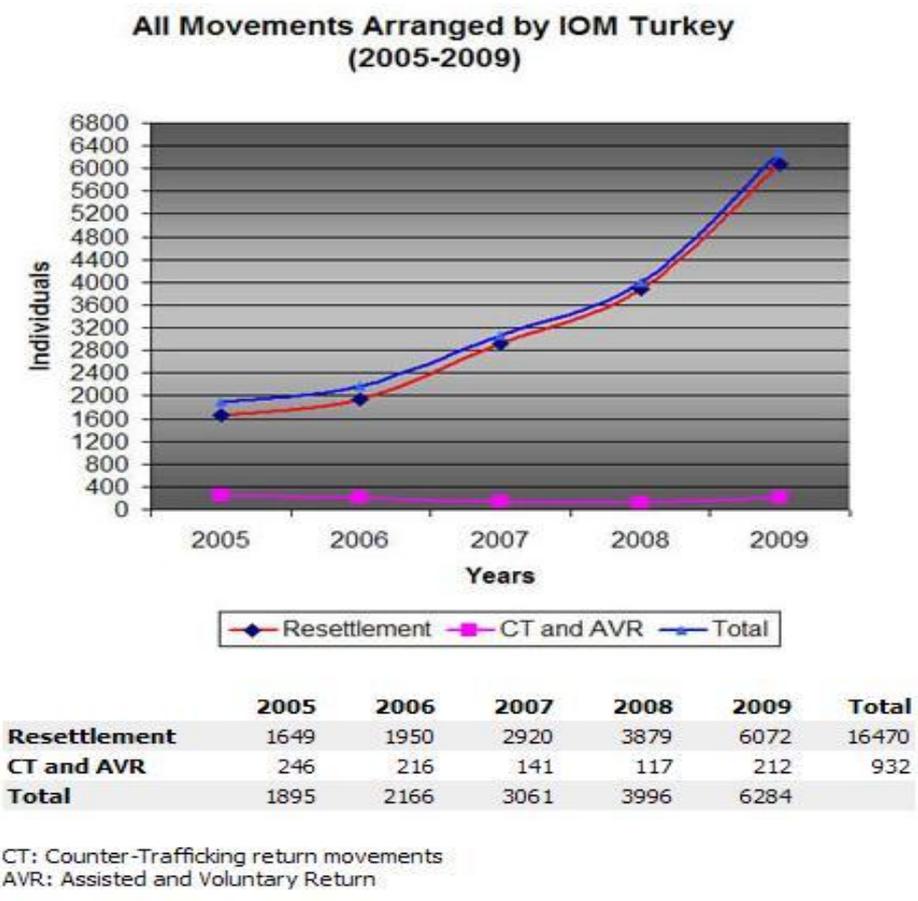
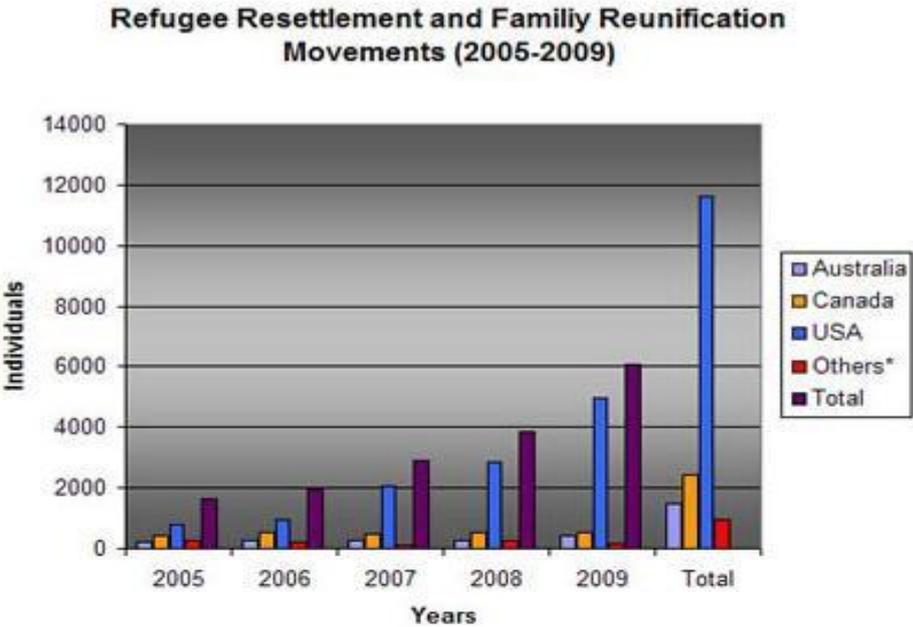


Fig. 4.1 (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2011)

The figure above illustrates the importance of the presence of the International Organization for Migration in Turkey. Due to their capacity and financial resource, efforts can be made in the context of resettlement. The numbers on individual resettlement indicate a yearly increase, with a peak between the years 2008 and 2009.



	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
Australia	199	280	280	285	411	1455
Canada	411	540	477	506	502	2436
USA	797	927	2051	2838	4991	11604
Others*	242	203	112	250	168	975
Total	1649	1950	2920	3879	6072	
Finland	149	119	61	123	47	499
Belgium	3					3
Denmark	7		5			12
France	29	5	12	25	30	101
Sweden	9	6	25	80	68	188
Switzerland	25	53	2	19	9	108
UK	20	2			1	23
Netherlands		18	7	2	4	31
Norway				1	7	8
Ireland					2	2
Total	242	203	112	250	168	

*Finland, Belgium, Denmark, France, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, Netherlands, Norway and Ireland.

Fig. 4.2 (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2011)

The figure illustrates the importance of Canada, Australia and the United States in the context of the need for resettlement. The United States offer among the three the most places for resettled refugees. Finland is within Europe the largest receiving country for resettlement and family reunification for people coming from Turkey.

International Catholic Migration Commission – 1951

ICMC employees working alongside refugees in UNHCR offices are convinced that resettlement remains a practical solution for restoring dignity and hope for those who suffered. ICMC directly assists refugees in need for resettlement by preparing their cases for presentation to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and facilitating pre-departure processes, such as cultural orientation sessions and medical examinations. Since the early 1980s, more than 25,000 refugees have been resettled by the ICMC Resettlement Support Centre in Istanbul (formerly known as the Overseas Processing Entity). Of the more than 18,000 Iraqi refugees resettled to the U.S. in 2010, more than 5,000 were supported by ICMC in Turkey. Over the course of the coming year, educational and psychosocial assistance will be made available to Iraqi and non-Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers, including language classes to both improve their day-to-day life in Turkey, and prepare them for life in their future country of resettlement. (ICMC, 2010: 4-6).

Some of the most prominent NGOs in the field of refugees and asylum in Turkey (and Istanbul at the local level) are elaborated. The overview of their tasks and purposes illustrates how important these organizations are in the lives of the refugees. They can rely on the NGOs for social and legal assistance and there are special programs to prepare approved refugees for eventual resettlement. The beginning of the chapter discussed the regional background and thereby elaborated the Turkish asylum policy and resettlement process. This section elaborated the theory and practice of the policy and concludes that there is a major gap between these two. The policy, which is especially in the National Action Plan tempting described and presented, is unfortunately poorly executed in practice.

The next section will focus on the refugees themselves, the fifth chapter will discuss who these refugees whom are subject to the policy are and where they are located. First the situation of refugees in Turkey in general is sketched, followed by an in depth analysis of the situation in Istanbul. Statistical data and demographic indicators illustrate their average age and ethnic background. The geographical dispersal due to the satellite city policy, will be mapped and in relation to that the problems encountered by refugees in these cities will be discussed.

Chapter six will enlighten their main limitations in the context of improving livelihood strategies. As already discussed, this will be analyzed by using the three areas of social, economic and institutional aspects in relation to the refugees' position and wellbeing in general. The social aspect, which will be discussed at the end of the chapter, is a bridge towards the next subject in the analysis, which embraces the influence of social capital deriving from networks on the refugees' efforts to sustain their livelihood.

The last chapter (7) will reflect on the main limitations of the policy as described in chapter five and by doing so illustrate what has been achieved to improve the situation of refugees. In order to somehow evaluate these efforts, the future expectations and visions of the refugees, if relevant in the context of resettlement and the Refugee Status Determination (RSD), will be discussed.

Chapter 5 Refugees in Turkey

5.1 Facts and numbers

The 'global appeal 2010- 2011' of the UNHCR and the 'update of 2011' is providing some information and statistical data on refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey. Statistical information, also in the context of satellite cities, is difficult to obtain in the field and often incomplete, whereas the many not registered refugees are not included. UNHCR estimates that up to 10,500 people from more than 40 countries will approach its office in Turkey for assistance during 2010. Many will continue to come from Afghanistan, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Somalia (UNHCR, 2010). The number of Iraqi refugees who were resettled at the end of 2010 is 3564 according to the UNHCR global trends report 2010. Table 5.1 and 5.2 below discuss the planning figures of the UNHCR. The data from January 2010 are included as well to illustrate the increase of the number of refugees in Turkey assisted by the UNHCR, with refugees from Iraq being an exception.

TYPE OF POPULATION	ORIGIN	JAN 2011		DEC 2011	
		TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHOM ASSISTED BY UNHCR	TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHOM ASSISTED BY UNHCR
Refugees	Islamic Rep. of Iran	3,000	3,000	4,800	4,800
	Iraq	6,600	6,600	6,700	6,700
	Afghanistan	2,200	2,200	3,300	3,300
	Various	2,200	2,200	2,100	2,100
Asylum-seekers	Islamic Rep. of Iran	1,800	1,800	3,000	3,000
	Iraq	1,700	1,700	300	300
	Afghanistan	2,500	2,500	2,000	2,000
	Various	1,800	1,800	1,700	1,700
Returnees (refugees)	Turkey	500	500	500	500
IDPs	Turkey	964,000	0	964,000	0
Stateless	Stateless	5,000	0	5,000	0
Total		991,300	22,300	993,400	24,400

Table 5.1 (UNHCR, 2011: 264 Global appeal: Planning figures)

TYPE OF POPULATION	ORIGIN	JAN 2010	
		TOTAL IN COUNTRY	OF WHOM ASSISTED BY UNHCR
Refugees	Islamic Republic of Iran	2,230	2,230
	Iraq	7,930	7,930
	Afghanistan	370	370
	Various	1,240	1,240
Asylum-seekers	Islamic Republic of Iran	2,860	2,860
	Iraq	1,010	1,010
	Afghanistan	3,480	3,480
	Various	1,460	1,460
Returnees (refugees)		10	10
Internally displaced		964,000	-
Stateless		5,000	-
TOTAL		989,580	20,580

Table 5.2 (UNHCR, 2010- 2011: 35 Global appeal: Planning figures)

Other relevant statistical information related to refugee issues in Turkey is given in the refugee statistics of 2011 of the UNHCR. It must be noted that the numbers in table 5.3 below are based on registered refugees only.

Origin	REFUGEES	ASYLUM SEEKERS (pending cases)	Refugees per 1,000 pop.
Turkey	10,032	6,715	0.14

Table 5.3 (UNHCR, Global trend, 2010)

5.2 Policy of dispersal; the satellite cities

The previous chapter explained that the policy related to the assigned satellite cities is an important contextual aspect in the research. The number of satellite cities is growing every year; in 2009 these cities were Adana, Afyon, Ağrı, Aksaray, Bilecik, Burdur, Çankiri, Çorum, Eskişehir, Gaziantep, Hakkari, Hatay, Isparta, Maraş, Karakam, Kastamonu, Kayseri, Kirikkale, Kirşehir, Konya, Kütahya, Mersin, Nevşehir, Niğde, Sivas, Şirnak, Tokat, Van and Yozgat (Biehl, 2009). These cities are often located in the lesser developed regions of Turkey. Map 5.1 below shows the geographical location of these satellite cities and the cities in which the UNHCR offices are represented as well. The figure shows that the UNHCR has a country office in Ankara; this is also the city in which the interviews take place for the Refugee Status Determination (RSD). Besides the National office, there is a Field office in Van, near the Iranian border and one UNHCR field office is located in Istanbul.



Map 5.1 (UNHCR, Global appeal 2010-2011: 34)

Statistical information on the exact number of refugees in the different cities is difficult to obtain, whereas these do not include the illegal refugees and those who do not register with

the local authorities and the UNHCR. However to give an impression, the number of refugees who are registered with the UNHCR at the end of 2010 and the demographic composition are presented in table 5.4 below. The data indicates that the number of people of concern to the UNHCR is the highest in Istanbul among whom a slight majority is male. This makes Istanbul an interesting location to sketch an image of the refugee population. Another city which is ranked high is Van. This city is geographically located in the south west, which makes it one of the first cities in which refugees from Iraq, Iran and even Syria enter and register. Both the cities with the highest numbers are located near the borders; Istanbul in the West, which makes it an attractive transit city to Europe and Van near the eastern border, a logical city to register for people who cross the border from neighboring countries. However it must be noted that Istanbul is not a satellite city. Asylum seekers are not issued residence permits for Istanbul, unless there are critical circumstances related to health or safety that requires them to live there (Biehl, 2009: 2).

Name of location	Population of concern to UNHCR at location, end-2010	Share of age group in total						Percentage female per age group					
		0-4	5-11	12-17	<18	18-59	60+>	0-4	5-11	12-17	<18	18-59	60+>
Ankara: Point	721	7%	9%	8%	25%	73%	2%	43%	39%	47%	43%	36%	47%
Corum: Point	719	12%	14%	11%	37%	61%	2%	46%	45%	49%	46%	43%	58%
Eskisehir: Point	937	8%	12%	7%	28%	69%	3%	46%	39%	44%	42%	42%	43%
Gaziantep : Province	1,146	10%	14%	11%	36%	63%	1%	49%	45%	41%	45%	33%	60%
Isparta: Point	533	9%	14%	10%	34%	66%	0%	43%	49%	49%	47%	47%	100%
Istanbul: Point	2,039	8%	9%	10%	27%	71%	3%	43%	42%	46%	44%	32%	46%
Kayseri: Point	1,505	6%	8%	10%	24%	72%	3%	38%	52%	47%	47%	49%	54%
Konya: Point	606	9%	11%	9%	29%	70%	1%	42%	54%	49%	49%	43%	50%
Nevsehir: Point	904	4%	5%	6%	15%	83%	2%	50%	49%	43%	47%	36%	60%
Nigde: Point	512	5%	9%	10%	24%	75%	1%	46%	56%	53%	53%	40%	57%
Van: Point	2,007	8%	16%	14%	38%	61%	1%	51%	45%	46%	47%	41%	36%

Table 5.4 (UNHCR, Global trend: Major locations and demographic composition of populations of concern to UNHCR, end 2010)

The figure above only presents the numbers of the largest satellite cities, there are however more cities, as illustrated by map 5.1. There is a big difference between the cities related to the social assistance and services. As already described in the regional context; life in satellite cities is difficult. This is the ever-returning sentence used by my informants when discussing the reasons why they keep coming back to Istanbul. The answers were all related to employment and accommodation. The local unemployment levels in most satellite cities are already high; therefore (illegal) working opportunities are very limited. Another problem is that many refugees do not speak Turkish very well (Biehl, 2009). The lack of proper accommodation is also very problematic. Because most refugees do not have a social network in the assigned city, it is a difficult task to find accommodation.

Once every three months, the NGOs in the field organize meetings in which they discuss their activities of the past period. I attended two of these meetings, one in February and the other in April. The main issue discussed in great detail during the first meeting was the problem of moving to a satellite city within the context of the whole procedure. The absence of a social support system is a major problem and therefore the most obvious reason why so many

refugees and asylum seekers return to Istanbul after a short period. The solutions for this problem given by the attended representatives of the NGOs were as follows: (1) Speed up the resettlement program and let them stay in Istanbul in the meanwhile, or directly send them to satellite cities and build a social support system for them there. For example schools and medical services and a meeting point. However the most idealistic situation is to let them choose whether they want to stay in Istanbul, or move to a satellite city. (2) Decrease the number of the satellite cities, because then it would be easier to build a support system for them without creating too much chaos and keep the work efficient.

The different participating NGOs at the meeting all had a different point of view and therefore a suitable solution was to let the refugees choose whether they wanted to stay, or move to a satellite city. Although some NGOs may think this is a possible solution, it is highly doubtful the government supports their enthusiasm. If the refugees were in the position to choose whether they wanted to stay in Istanbul or move to another city, then the situation would be more chaotic and less controllable for the government. If many refugees would choose to stay in Istanbul, the result may be a growing illegal sector in which people without documents disappear. The situation would become even more difficult to control, the problems would increase and the challenge to cope with these problems as well. However, even with the strict policy and consequences of not residing in the assigned satellite cities, still many refugees chose to return to Istanbul. The examples of my informants below will illustrate the problems as they experienced them in the satellite cities and why many prefer Istanbul.

Female refugee - Eritrea

They send her to a satellite city far away from Istanbul, at that time she was pregnant. The police did not take care of her and told her she had to arrange her own accommodation, but how? She only had little money left, so she stayed in a hotel the first few nights, but then she was out of money and spent a night at the station.

Male refugee – Iran

He is waiting in Van, a city in Eastern Turkey. He wants to go to Germany, because he has a sister there. He gave all his money to a human smuggler, but they caught him at the border and put him in detention for 5 months. So now he hopes to be resettled to another place. The local authorities gave him permission to travel to Istanbul for ten days, because the circumstances in Van are very difficult. He cannot get a job over there, although he owns a temporarily residence permit. (He is the only informant in this research who obtained the six-month's residence permit). When he visits Istanbul, he passes by the ERC for clothes or food.

Male refugee – Eritrea

They send him to Konya; he explains it is a very difficult city to survive because of the absence of social assistance. The police in Konya are not friendly at all and they are very traditional, which makes the situation even more difficult. He wants to apply for intern resettlement to Isparta, at least there he knows people and there are also organizations that provide social assistance.

Male refugee – Congo

He knows he has to go to Eskisehir, but he does not want to, because there is no work over

there. At least here he can work from time to time and earn a little bit of money. Beside that he needs medical assistance, which is better arranged in Istanbul, but he does not have enough money to travel back all the time.

Male refugee – Sudan

He is staying in Isparta, but there is no medical support. The only support he has over there is from other Sudanese refugees, but they also suffer, so they cannot give him any money. He receives the monthly amount of 100 TL from the UNHCR, but this is not sufficient to survive. The journey to Isparta is long and takes almost 10 hours, so why not stay in Istanbul; at least here he has more financial support for his medical problems.

All the informants above were interviewed at the ERC, a safe heaven for them. They (temporarily) returned to Istanbul in order to receive medical, financial and social assistance. Especially women with children prefer to stay in Istanbul because of the assistance. The next chapter will focus on the refugees in Istanbul and how they try to make a living in the city, some still being in transit, others who got stuck. The fact that the life in the satellite cities is hard does not mean that the circumstances in Istanbul are that much better. However, due to the largeness of the city the opportunities to 'disappear' in the illegal sector are broader and besides that, the presence of the NGOs is an important reason why refugees prefer Istanbul.

Chapter 6 Economic, Institutional and Social Aspects and Livelihood

The regional background discussed the Turkish asylum and refugee policy in detail and in relation to the working field of the UNHCR and NGOs. The next part will focus on the limitations refugees experience as a result of the strict policy and how this influences their livelihood strategies. By making use of the stories of the refugees, a comparison and evaluation of the theory and practice of the refugee policy is made. In order to keep the overview well-organized, livelihood is divided in three aspects: the economic, institutional and social. The economic aspect refers to opportunities and limitations related to the labor market and the institutional aspect equals the participation of refugees in the different organizations. The social aspect will be the main focus, whereas this is related to local and international networks and the second part of this chapter will focus on the social capital deriving from these networks. Social capital here refers to sources on which the refugees rely to improve their livelihood during the lengthy transit phase in Istanbul. The first section below will discuss the opportunities of the refugees to participate at the labor market.

6.1 Work and Income; the Economic Aspect

Refugees do have a legal right to work, however this right imposes an obligation to obtain a residence permit of six months on the refugees (Kolukirik and Aygül, 2009). This is the most important and obvious obstacle for refugees to participate economically during their stay in Istanbul. Even if they possess a legal residence permit, the next step of obtaining a work permit is also a complicated process. According to the Turkey's law on the 'work permits for Foreigners' (law No. 4817), asylum seekers and refugees are allowed to apply for work permits from the Turkish Ministry of Labour and Social Security (Biehl, 2009/10: 8). Refugees are facing several problems when they wish to have a job in the legal sector. In order for permission to be granted, the employer must demonstrate that a Turkish citizen cannot fill the position. Beside this the employer has to pay additional fees and costs for having an official translation of their passport made (Amnesty International, 2009). No one of the migrants and refugees met during the research possessed a work permit. As already discussed, most of the refugees do not qualify for a work permit, because they avoid getting a residence permit due to financial reasons (Kolukirik and Aygül, 2009). One often used argument when discussing the return to Istanbul from the satellite cities is the absence of work. In Istanbul it is easier to find a job in the illegal sector, tolerated unofficially by the authorities. Turkish authorities thus display a certain amount of tolerance towards undocumented migrant labour, depending on the person and the sector of labour. Examples of the types of jobs that refugees have in the illegal sector are given below.

Male refugee – Iran

He does own a temporarily paper for one year, which can be prolonged. There is no work in his satellite city 'Van'. They gave him a paper to travel for 10 days; he is a guide in Istanbul. It is necessary because otherwise he does not have money.

Young Male refugee – Congo

The accommodation for minors in which he stayed for one year was good, because at least it provided food and shelter. At the age of eighteen he had to leave and received no support from the government. After having applied several times with the UNHCR he now receives a

monthly amount of 100 TL. Besides that he works with an NGO as a translator.

Young Male refugee – Eritrea

He came to Turkey when he was fourteen years and lived in a minor house for four years. Now that he is eighteen, he lives in a house with three other male refugees. He works in a shoe factory and the working conditions are very bad and the wages extremely low. But he does not have a choice. He is struggling with his resettlement process and he has to make a living during the time waiting.

Social networks in order to get a job in the informal sector are very important. How these networks are used exactly will be elaborated in the next section of this chapter, which discusses the concept of social capital. The example that will be used here is that of the men from Sierra Leone. During the last few months, many boys and men from Sierra Leone visited the office. Some of them applied for the refugee status, others did not and continued their journey to Greece. Most of them live in the same house; they share one big room with sometimes up to thirteen people, depending on newcomers and those who left. Four of the informants in this research are from Sierra Leone, only one of them applied for the refugee status, and already left to Greece. All were having an unofficially tolerated job in the illegal sector, often mediated by their social contacts.

Young male refugee – Sierra Leone

He works at the streets, where he collects the garbage from the stores. Carrying a big barrow, he struggles his way up the steep hills of the city. I ran into him three times in my neighbourhood, and asked him why he did not come to the office anymore while I pore over his filthy clothes. He was too busy with trying to earn some money, so he could continue his journey to Greece as soon as possible. He was working from Monday till Saturday, sometimes until nine in the evening. The wages are very low and the work is physical very intense. Recently I got news that he left to Greece.

Male refugee – Sierra Leone

He is in Istanbul for a few months, but already has a job. His friend who left gave him his job in a boutique. This is very exceptional and only few refugees find a job almost directly after arrival.

Male refugee – Sierra Leone

He is working in a car wash, mostly in the evening. The wages are very low and he complains about his body.

The migration- country report of Turkey gives three main reasons for the growing illegal sector: first of all, the procedure for obtaining a work permit still remains highly bureaucratic and costly for both the employer and the employee. A second reason is the fact that the Turkish labor laws for foreigners state that certain professions are restricted to Turkish nationals. And third, aside from legal restrictions the granting of work permits is, in practice, highly arbitrary, and leads to many applicants who simply abandon the process (Icduygu and Biehl, 2009: 30). Refugees fill a significant gap in sectors that need temporary workers. The jobs described above (car washing, factory labor and sorting out garbage) are typical examples. The most important difficulty is the risk to be subjected to financial sanctions of

the government for employing illegal workers, although most of these jobs are tolerated unofficially. Another problem between employers and refugee workers is the latter's dissatisfaction concerning the wages (Kolukirik and Aygül, 2009). The young man from Sierra Leone for example is given less money for the garbage he collects and delivers than a regular Turkish citizen. This situation leads to rivalry and instability. Kolukirik and Aygül give the example of a Turkish employee who complains about the inefficiency of the migrants and the fact that they earn more money, because they also receive support from the government (2009). In practice most refugees do not get any financial support from the government at all and in this case the lack of information is the source for instability.

It is imaginable that especially in the satellite cities, where the labor market has far less opportunities than in the major cities like Ankara and Istanbul, the citizens feel threatened by the incoming flow of refugees who agree with low wages. However the reality is that many refugees leave their satellite city because the local unemployment levels are already high in most of these cities and this leaves no opportunities for refugees who do not speak Turkish (Biehl, 2009-01). The presence of asylum seekers and refugees in satellite cities can lead to hostility on the part of local inhabitants, the idea of 'foreigners' receiving cash or other kinds of assistance can lead to resentment (Biehl, 2009/10: 10). The sketched situation creates a 'We versus Them' dichotomy, which may have a negative influence on the social opportunities, because it decreases their opportunities to participate outside their own community. On the other hand, this dichotomy is a logical consequence within the context of Turkey. Although this section provides a bottom up approach, which follows the refugees' point of view, it is important to include the role of the Turkish citizens in this analysis as well. Their attitude towards the refugees might have an important influence on opportunities of the refugees to participate in the society.

It is very important in this section to include the gender issue. Men and women do have different options at the labor market and in the case of the latter these are more limited. Most of the illegal jobs as described above are physical intensive and this work is carried out by men in almost every case. Another important aspect is that there are many single mothers, whose options are limited because they often cannot afford a babysitter. In some cases the child stays with members of the ethnic group, but this is not a structural solution. It allows the mother to work only part-time and sporadic, resulting in a financial gap and a decrease in the means of sustaining life. This is one of the reasons why single mothers, women and minors who travel alone are seen as the most vulnerable group. The examples below illustrate the difficulties faced by single mothers and women at the labor market. Again the importance of the social network will become obvious.

Female refugee – Eritrea

It is impossible for her to find a job. She has a baby and does not want to talk about the father. She has to be with the baby, because she cannot afford a babysitter. And even if she could, there are no job opportunities and she does not speak Turkish.

Female refugee – Ethiopia

She is living in Turkey for seven years already, after her registration she was sent to Antakya, but came back to Istanbul after two weeks. There were no opportunities for her. They stopped her procedure and she applied several times again with the UNHCR but they denied

her apply. She does not have a job, but sometimes they ask her little daughter as a model for advertisements. Like most women she is mainly dependent on the NGOs for financial support and other necessities of life.

Young female refugee – Congo

She came alone to Istanbul and because she was nineteen during that time she was not qualified anymore to live in a minor guesthouse. She is living with a woman she met in the church. In exchange for food and shelter she is doing some housekeeping for the woman.

Female refugee – Eritrea

They re-opened her case because she now finally has moved to her satellite city (Antakya). Due to contacts in Istanbul she was referred to an American missionary who lives there. The American mediated in order to get her a job with a family as an intern housekeeper. The family gives her food and shelter in exchange for her labor.

The stories from the refugees as illustrated above point out the difficulties and challenges men and women experience at the labor market. Their options to participate economically in the society are limited. The first reason that is given is the absence of a residence permit in most cases; therefore obtaining a work permit is also impossible. As a result most male refugees work in the illegal sector, with bad working conditions and outrageously low wages. The situation in the satellite cities is even more hopeless, because these are often located in the poorer regions of the country. There is more competition of Turkish employees and this creates a tense ambiance among the workers, which might negatively influence the further social position of the refugees in the satellite cities. Many refugees therefore rather prefer to stay in Istanbul illegally, then legal in the satellite city with no means of sustaining life.

The importance of a social network is also demonstrated by the examples. Some of the refugees were able to find a job in the illegal sector, due to their social contacts. The policy and laws related to work permits are the main limitation and barrier for refugees to fully participate in the economic context. The strict policy makes it difficult to structurally improve their livelihood.

6.2 Incorporation and Membership; the Institutional Aspect

The resettlement process is already in detail described in the regional context of this research. The first part of this institutional section will focus on the institutional position of refugees in relation to the procedures of the UNHCR. The refugees' opinion about the policy will be discussed in the light of the different phases of the procedure. The first two examples are of two boys of whom one is accepted for resettlement and the other one is still waiting for an answer of the UNHCR. This part analyses the theory of the procedures and will claim that in reality this theory is poorly executed due to the lack of capacity of both the government and the UNHCR. The second part of this section will focus on the relationship that the refugees have with the different NGOs in the field. It will be argued that these are the most important actors in the daily lives of the refugees, because they depend heavily on them for whatever form of assistance. The last section of the regional background discussed the main tasks and objectives of the NGOs and it can be concluded that they function as the safety net for many refugees and asylum seekers. But first, let's turn to the examples of the

two young refugees.

Young male refugee – Eritrea

'I don't get the policy of the UNHCR'

He already has the refugee status for four years. He was fourteen when he was placed in a shelter for minors. The authorities told him that unaccompanied minors are not being resettled and so he just had to wait. During that time he really wanted to go to school, and he tried to enter for two years, after he reached the age of sixteen they told him that he was too old and they were not obligated anymore to send him to school. He is frustrated about many things. Now that he is eighteen he wants them to put him on top of the list to be resettled, because actually he is already waiting for four years. Another frustration is that many people from Iraq are following an accelerated resettlement procedure. The fact that Africans have to wait for so many years and others are being resettled in such a short amount of time is unfair in his eyes.

Young male refugee – Congo

He is so excited because finally he is invited for an interview with the Canadian authorities. The first thing he wants to do after arrival is to attend classes, because he never had the option to do so in Turkey. A few days later, the decision was made that the founder of the Union of Young Refugees will be resettled to Canada within six months; they cannot give him the exact date, because the paperwork will take some time. But at least this young man can start dreaming again about a better future. Frustration in relation to the policy was clearly expressed by him. After he applied several times for a monthly financial support from the UNHCR he now receives an amount of 100TL since three months. They told him that they would visit him in order to check whether the situation was urgent, however they never came. It is a pity that this took so long, when the case is so urgent.

As explained in the regional background, refugees are referred to the UNHCR after they registered with the local authorities. This implies that the refugees have regular contact with the UNHCR and the institution should serve as their backbone, however this contact is not easy. The boy from Eritrea claimed to have called the UNHCR many times to reveal if his case is being discussed, but the number they gave him was out of service. He took the initiative to travel to Ankara and went to the office. They told him to wait and they could not give him an answer about the progress of the case. Many refugees express their dissatisfaction towards the UNHCR, especially because the time in between the RSD and the actual resettlement is very long and uncertain. This is exactly the reason why some of the refugees choose to avoid the RSD and continue their journey to Europe, or stay illegal in Istanbul.

The reason why refugees blame the UNHCR for their uncertain position is somewhat misplaced. As described in the regional section, the working relationship between the Turkish government and the UNHCR is not clearly set out and sometimes confusing for the refugees. Turkey is a party to the European Human Right Court (EHRC), so refugees are in the position to petition this court. The UNHCR explained to the Court that its refugee status determination procedure in Turkey 'is seen by the authorities as a measure of burden sharing by the international community', and that its role is implicitly recognized in the 1994 Asylum Regulation. As far as implementation of this implicit recognition is concerned, UNHCR observes that the Turkish authorities generally agree to grant temporary asylum to persons

UNHCR considers being refugees. Occasionally, the authorities do not grant temporary asylum to persons recognized as refugees by UNHCR. The reasons for this are unknown to the UNHCR, as the Office does not have access to individual files held by the authorities (Zieck, 2010: 600-601). This for example is something many refugees do not know and because the UNHCR claims to be the institution that works for refugees, many blame the UNHCR. The UNHCR pamphlets that are distributed among new coming refugees explain the whole procedure step by step. One important error in the process is the unawareness of refugees concerning their rights, for example where and how to appeal when the decision is negative. While applications to the EHRC have proved to be the only reliable mechanism in preventing forcible returns from detention, NGOs have expressed their concern that even the interim measures of the Court are not always respected (Amnesty International, 2009: 17).

The importance of religion, here analyzed as an institutional entity, is already discussed in the theoretical background. Most of the informants visited the church on a weekly basis. There are different churches in Istanbul and often people with the same ethnic background visit the same church. The example of the young girl from Congo describes how she met a woman at the church who provided her shelter. Many of the NGOs in Istanbul have a religious background, although this does not imply they only assist people with the same religious background. However the foundation and point of view from the organizations is based on religion related charity. For many refugees the NGOs and churches are their save heaven. These are the environments in which they can communicate in their own language and where they get the absolute necessary financial and emotional support.

The experience of working in the ecumenical refugee centre offered me the opportunity to explore the daily lives and urgent needs of the refugees. The conclusion that can be drawn is that refugees and migrants who visited the centre depend strongly on institutions like this. The centre offers help to the most vulnerable, who are as discussed women and children. One day a week men were welcome as well. One of these projects that the centre offers are the different language courses. This is a great opportunity for the visitor, because speaking another language (French, English or Turkish) allows them to participate at a broader level and may be very useful when having the prospect of resettlement. The prominent role of the NGOs in the daily lives of the refugees will be illustrated by the experiences of refugees.

Female refugee – Eritrea

Her satellite city was far away and there were no social services at all. At least here she gets food and milk for her baby and herself.

Male refugee – Sudan

His satellite is far away, and he has many medical problems, in Istanbul they can provide him the medical assistance.

Male refugee- Iran (resettled to Canada)

He is resettled to Canada and came back to visit his family and to visit HCA and the ERC because they supported him during his stay in Istanbul. 'HCA and ERC were great emotional support for me'.

These are only three of the many examples of refugees expressing the importance of the

NGOs in their lives. The NGOs are that crucial because the need is that urgent; these are in many cases the only source on which the refugees can rely for emergency relief. The previous part analyzed the options that refugees have at the labour market, concluding that these are limited. Those who have job receive very low wages, which are not sufficient to cover all the costs. The numbers of clients who visit the different NGOs reflects the lack of proper financial resources of refugees. The institutional position of refugees is closely related to their social position, because the environments serve as meeting points as well. Many contacts are made due to their visit to churches and NGOs.

6.3 International and Local Networks; the Social Aspect

The social position is analyzed by using four different types of networks/ social spaces in which the refugees participate or not. This allows to explore how dense these relationships are and how they reflect the participation of the refugees in the society in the social context. The four different categories of social contacts cover in-group and out-group contacts in Istanbul (local level) and in- group and out- group contacts at the international level. These will now be discussed separately.

In- group Local

Refugees depend strongly on their own ethnic group; language is of course one of the main reasons. Often people of the same ethnic group cluster in the same neighbourhood or accommodation; the men from Sierra Leone illustrated this. The same counts for Eritrean and Ethiopian women who visited the centre; they have a strong relationship and mainly talk to each other.

Male refugee – Sudan

His medical problems cannot be treated in Isparta and therefore he came back to Istanbul. In Isparta there were more people from Sudan and he mainly found social and emotional support with them.

Female refugee – Eritrea

She arrived in Istanbul ten days ago with the purpose to earn some money; she now lives with her Eritrean friend who introduced her to the ERC as well.

Out-group Local

This group is divided into Turkish citizens and local authorities on the one hand and other refugees and employees of NGOs on the other. The refugees have regular contact with other refugees and migrants who visit the same NGO or church or who live in the same neighborhood. It can be claimed that this contact is less intense than the contact with the own ethnic group. Their contact with the employees of the NGO is often the only contact they have with people who are not migrants or refugees.

The out-group contact referring to Turkish citizens and authorities is problematic. Discrimination is unfortunately still common and awareness for this issue is high on the agenda of many NGOs. Most of the refugees claim to have no contact at all with the Turkish citizens and they express their dissatisfaction related to not feeling welcome. Especially in the satellite cities where the economic situation is far more uncertain, the refugees complain

about a very conservative environment. Closing the boundaries and drawing a firm line between insider and outsider expresses the feeling of threat experienced by the inhabitants. But also in Istanbul, refugees live almost separately from Turkish citizens, a situation which perhaps best can be described as living next to each other instead of with each other. Refugees on the one hand do not get the chance to participate at the social level in the Turkish society, because the Turkish citizens do not have an open attitude towards them. On the other hand, the refugees themselves also cluster, which is logical in their situation, however this creates closed boundaries as well.

Male refugee- Iran (resettled to Canada)

'Authority including police was dealing with us like garbage.'

He does not have good memories of Istanbul, because most of the people he met did not like to see foreigners in their land. He explains he had lots of friends in Turkey but most of them left him alone after they noticed that he was a refugee. He did not have any social contacts except with other refugee families. His neighbors were bothering and exploiting him periodically.

Male refugee- Sierra Leone

'They laugh when we pass by in the street and calling us 'zenge''

He expressed to be discriminated many times. Sometimes the children in his neighborhood throw stones at him and spit on them.

Female refugee – Ethiopia

She never really felt welcome in Turkey, the people are not friendly and she does not interact with them at all.

Male refugee – Congo

He lives in Aksaray, which he describes as a good neighborhood because many other migrants and refugees live there, therefore he feels 'safe' there. He has beside the employees of NGOs no contact with Turkish citizens at all.

Female – Eritrea

'They are not friendly.'

She says she only has contact with people from her own community and other refugees. She does not have any Turkish friends or social contacts.

In general the refugees perceive the Turkish citizens in a negative sense. The refugees do not have the feeling they are welcome and there is almost no interaction between the citizens and refugees. However this cannot be totally generalized, whereas one informant expressed her satisfaction. Others did not complain at all about the citizens, because there was no contact, they did not have an opinion about the attitude of the Turkish citizens.

Female Eritrea

She does not have much contact with Turkish citizens, but she thinks they are friendly. Sometimes her neighbors buy her some food and other supplies for her baby and her.

Maybe it is a little radical to state that the attitude of the majority influences the social

'integration' of the refugees in Istanbul, but is not a truly false statement. Following this point of view it can be claimed that one of the factors that influences the social position and participation of the refugees is the social exclusion they face. This of course is also a result of their illegal status. Contacts they have outside their own ethnic group are mainly with other refugees and based on institutional contact (religious, UNHCR, IIMP and other NGOs). Other contacts with the Turkish population are very limited.

One very important issue is the discrimination towards refugees and migrants by the local authorities. Many refugees have negative experiences with the authorities. These differ from receiving no help from the local authorities in the satellite cities to physical violence. Especially the circumstances of refugees in detention centers near the border and at airports are topic of the internal debate related to discrimination and violation of human rights. As the amnesty international report states: It is also apparent that persons detained in transit zones at airports are often refused access to asylum procedure, but also are refused access to UNHCR, NGOs and lawyers. The officials within the Directorate of Foreigners, Borders, and Asylum defended this policy using the argument that airport transit zones are not within Turkish territory (2009: 15). The conflicts that may arise in the satellite cities between refugees and the local authorities are already described in the first empirical chapter. It may be concluded that many refugees feel threatened by the police or experienced any other form of abuse.

The previous section argued that most refugees depend strongly on their own ethnic group. The social capital deriving from these social networks and how this will influence their livelihood will be discussed in the next section. The contacts refugees have in Istanbul are with people of their own ethnicity and other migrants and refugees. The interaction with the Turkish citizens is very limited and some complains about discrimination have been expressed. The next part will examine the in and out group social contacts of refugees at the international level. Transnationalism, which is elaborated in the theoretical section, is an important concept in this section. Transnationalism from below allows creating a more empowering perspective, through which the agency of refugees can be analyzed, while being in transit. The concept of agency will be elaborated in the next empirical chapter in relation to the social capital deriving from social networks.

Out- group International

Many of the informants claim to have contact with people in their country of origin. In this section it is important to emphasize technological developments. Whereas the importance of recent grown communication technologies like 'facebook' is crucial for some refugees to maintain contact with their family and friends in their home country. Due to programs like these it is not only possible for refugees to maintain contact, but also for researchers to follow the journey of their informants by having contact on a regular basis. However ICT programs like these are not accessible for everyone. For them the mobile phone is their most important asset to stay connected with contacts in- and outside Istanbul.

Female refugee – Ethiopia

She does have regular contact with her family in Ethiopia and her purpose is to return one day. She does not have any other contacts worldwide, some of her friends moved to other countries but they do not have contact anymore.

Male refugee – Iran (resettled to Canada)

He explained he was lucky during the time he was in Istanbul, because he did not have a job, but his family is wealthy. Because they have enough money they could support him financially during his stay.

Male refugee – Iran

He does have much contact with his sister who is living in Germany for years already. His purpose is to be resettled to Germany, although he knows this is going to be very difficult.

Male refugee- Sierra Leone

He still has contacts with his family and friends in Sierra Leone, and because he cannot return he speaks to them via e-mail and facebook. Most of the migrants/ refugees he knows make use of an Internet cafe every once in a while. Their phone and their facebook account are the main assets in order to maintain a social network.

Most of the refugees do know people in Europe, everybody has 'a friend or brother' in Europe. However the density of the contact is depending on the strength of the relationship and the possibilities to communicate. Another important factor in relation to these transnational contacts are the future expectations of refugees (concerning resettlement). The section on social capital flowing through social network will elaborate further on the issue of selectivity within maintaining international social contacts. However the next example will already illustrate the role of the future visions and expectations in relation to social contacts.

Male Refugee – Congo

He is having the prospect of being resettled to Canada within at least six months. He explains that many Congolese people he knows live in France, which is a logical option due to French being the second language in Congo. He also knew one Congolese man who is living in Canada, but they lost contact, however now that he is being resettled to Canada, it might be interesting to try to get in touch with him again.

The conclusion which can be drawn and thereby the logical step to the next section is that refugees mainly have contact with their family in their home country, within their own ethnic group in Istanbul and other migrants, refugees and employees of NGOs in Istanbul. This contact is especially realized by making use of a mobile phone. Some of the refugees do not even have an official address, so their phone functions as their mobile address. The contacts refugees have in their own group in Istanbul are very important to them, because these cover, together with the NGOs, their social support system.

6.4 Networks and Social Capital; Livelihood strategies

Especially the local networks (in- and out-group) are useful for the refugees in order to expand their limited range of options. The theoretical framework elaborated on the concepts of social capital and the social network analysis. The first refers to qualities inherent in or deriving from peoples' social relationships. These qualities can have important implications for other dimensions of social and economic life; however there is no simple relation between the structure of one's social capital and the social, economic position of that person in society (Bebbington, 2008).

Some of the examples of refugees in the previous chapter have already illustrated that important social capital in terms of assets may derive from the local social network. For example the men from Sierra Leone who live together, receive newcomers, and help each other to find a job. Another example is the Eritrean newcomer who was given shelter by another Eritrean female who introduced her at the Ecumenical Refugee Centre. The most important assets deriving from the local in- and out-group contacts include: Shelter, social and emotional support, food and in a very few cases access to an illegal job. This was the case for the man from Sierra Leone, who already had a job after two weeks, because his friend (also from Sierra Leone) left and introduced him. This introduction at the illegal labor market is very crucial in the livelihood strategy of refugees. The capability approach allows insight in the effect that these sources may have on the livelihood of the refugees in transit. Increasing financial resources might broaden the range of life options, and related to that their functioning (the things they actually do and achieve).

The two most important and elaborated issues discussed in the already mentioned NGO meetings were resettlement of minors and former minors and the problems faced by refugees in the satellite cities. The satellite cities were seen as problematic, because many of the unaccompanied minors had a 'good' life in Istanbul and did not want to go to another city in order to wait for their actual resettlement. Although life in Istanbul is expensive (housing) and their monthly support of 100 TL by the UNHCR is not sufficient and as illustrated not always provided, they at least have a *social support system* in Istanbul. It can be argued that the in-group (own ethnic group) and out-group (religious institutions, other refugees and migrants and employees of NGOs) contact is very important, especially for unaccompanied minors. These are often the only sources on which they can rely for medical support and educational opportunities.

Besides the fact that they have a social support system in Istanbul, they are often facing violence and discrimination in satellite cities. People in those environments are not used to an inflow of migrants and as stated before, might experience a sense of threat. The young refugees thus often do not want to be transferred to satellite cities, and the Ministry of Interior should come with a solution; a sort of transitional project. One solution given for the discrimination issue was to send them in groups instead of sending individuals. By doing so, they would at least have a small social support system in this new environment. However following my point of view this will not solve the discrimination issue. Even the contrary may happen; people might feel even more threatened if the refugees/ migrants arrive in groups, which may result in processes of social exclusion, othering and segregation. This will not benefit the access to social participation and opportunities of the migrants/ refugees in the satellite cities.

In this chapter the main limitations related to employment, incorporation and social participation have been discussed. The conclusion is that the refugees mainly depend on their own social support networks, consisting of a network with the own ethnic group and contacts with the local NGOs. The social capital deriving from these networks is crucial to make a living during their stay in Istanbul, which in many cases comprises several years. Livelihood strategies are dependent on these different forms of social capital. However refugees do not have many options to improve their situation structurally, whereas the sources from which this social capital derives often also have a limited capability set.

The term capability set is part of the capability approach, as discussed in the theoretical background. It refers to the range of life options people have. Their functioning within this approach leads us to look at the actual things people do and achieve. This is closely related to freedom; the real opportunity we have to accomplish what we value. Based on the previous three chapters, it can be concluded that freedom is not applicable to the situation of the refugees. Their options, and in relation to that the things they achieve are limited. Hopefully after being resettled to a third country, their development in the context of freedom is a more suitable concept

Chapter 7 Progress and Future expectations

This last empirical chapter reflects on the efforts made by the government to align their asylum policy with the standards set by the European Union. Chapter five created a general overview of refugees in Turkey and zoomed in on the situation in Istanbul, where according to statistical data from the UNHCR most registered (and unregistered) refugees live. Chapter six provided more background information on the livelihood strategies of the refugees in Istanbul. The regional background of this research discussed the policy and projects of the government to align their policy with EU standards; the forthcoming chapter reflects on this policy. The first part of the chapter will focus on the efforts made by the government in order to try to improve the asylum and refugee policy. If these efforts have a positive practical influence as such, then maybe the refugees' future expectations, which will be discussed in the second part of the chapter, are affected as well.

7.1. Progress and Improvement?

Until 1994 Turkey did not have its own national regulation on asylum. Critics argued that Turkey was violating the rights of refugees and asylum seekers by denying them access to asylum procedures or failing to provide them adequate assistance (Kirisci, 2003: 8). In recent years, the most important incentive to improve the asylum policy is the potential membership of the EU. The efforts made by the government in order to align the migration and asylum policy with the European Union are topic of the national and international debate. An interview in the Dutch newspaper *'Trouw'* with a spokesperson from Helsinki Citizens' assembly released November the 26th, 2010 expresses the frustration among employees of NGOs in the field.

'Estimated Turkey is hosting over 300.000 migrants, in the recent years only 20.000 refugees applied for asylum, all the others are illegal' (Balci, 2010 in *Trouw*). The article discusses the debate among the agreement in which Turkish citizens have easier access to visas for Europe and are allowed to travel through the Union. In exchange they will provide shelter to the refugees, in order to illuminate the 'asylum seekers burden' of the European Union (Balci, 2010 in *Trouw*). However as an employee of HCA claims; they had hoped that the new asylum legislation would be introduced this year, but the prospects do not look that bright. He goes on by stating that even if this agreement is being executed in practice, the Turkish government lacks capacity to meet his promises. The government is not capable to give shelter and provide social services for the 20.000 refugees who are registered at the moment, let alone what will happen if thousands of illegal refugees obtain the status of asylum seeker (Balci, 2010).

The article published at the end of 2010 is not very positive about potential changes in the nearby future. As discussed in the regional chapter, most projects of the National Action Plan had a deadline in 2012. However the fact that the government did not even start with the construction of for example the new shelters is not promising. Among the refugees the frustration concerning their ignored rights by the local authorities is clearly expressed, especially in the satellite cities. The example given at the end of the regional background, which discussed the situation in the satellite cities, is only one of the many complains expressed by my informants. These complaints are often a result of confusion about who is responsible for what services. This creates a situation in which the UNHCR and local authorities point at each other. However in the meanwhile refugees nor receive help neither

clarification about who is in charge.

In line with the action plan, the government has been working since 2008 on an immigration law and aims to establish an asylum and immigration directorate within the Interior Ministry by the end of the year. Turkish authorities are cooperating with civil society in order to shape the law, delivering an outline of the draft law to NGOs and gathering their opinions on it (Küçükkoşum, 2010). It must be noted that the inclusion of the NGOs in the law making process is a very promising step towards positive change. These are the people who base their opinions on the everyday practice and their daily interaction with refugees. The fact that these NGOs were actually included in the process was proven at the conference of the International Organization for Migration, where the employees of the NGOs gave their opinion about the draft law.

As the National Action Plan states, in order to increase the capacity, institutional set up will be realized to establish a specialization unit in the field of migration and asylum. This existing unit will be expanded and strengthened for guaranteeing that asylum and migration procedures are enforced in harmony with the EU Acquis (NAP 2005: 30). It is not realistic to reflect on this guaranteeing aspect, since no reliable evaluation reports or interim reflections have been published. The most efforts so far have been made in the field of institutional set up.

According to the Amnesty International Country Report of 2010, recognized refugees, registered asylum-seekers and others in need of protection were arbitrarily denied access to the asylum procedure and sometimes detained. Some were returned to countries where they risked persecution. For example: 'In September the European Court of Human Rights found in the case of *Abdolkhani and Karimnia* that the refugees had been unlawfully detained for more than a year. The applicants were eventually released in October, but many others detained in similar circumstances remained in detention and the provision declared unlawful in the judgement remained in force' (Amnesty International, 2010).

The previous section briefly discussed the efforts made by the government to align their asylum policy with EU standards. Although some progress has been made in the context of institutionalization, so far actual direct visible changes in the everyday lives of the refugees remain absent. Although the establishment of a strong institutional landscape in this field is urgent and necessary in order to stabilize the policy, in the short term the effects of these efforts have no influence at all on the refugees' situations. The benefits from this institutionalization may be visible in the long term for the refugees, however this does not take away the fact that still too many refugees struggle every day to survive. In other words; the need is very urgent, but the changes made by the government do not trickle down in the way that the refugees benefit from it directly.

The following section will discuss the future expectations of the refugees, if relevant, in the context of resettlement. The fact that the Turkish government struggles with the adjustment of the policy might have an influence on the prospects of the refugees. Also the lengthy process of the resettlement program may have an influence on the vision of the refugees and the choices they make. And even more important, in the context of choices, the fact that resettlement itself is not a right that can be claimed.

7.2. Future expectations (in the context of resettlement)

What are the future expectations and visions of refugees concerning their procedure and in relation to that the final goal of resettlement? In order to answer this last sub question, it is necessary to create more insight in the difference between theory and practice of the resettlement process. The numbers according to the UNHCR in 2008 are estimated on a 560,000 persons who are in need to be resettled worldwide, however the hard reality is that there is only 'place' for 70,000 actual resettlements (UNHCR, 2008)⁴.

The UNHCR and the MOI only have limited influence on the ascent of these processes, the final decision lies in the hands of the countries of resettlement. They decide who can settle within their borders, the refugee himself cannot even give a preference to which country he or she wants to be resettled. The countries which take part in the resettlement process also have an annual maximum, these numbers are as follows: Australia: 300 persons, Canada: 450 persons, Sweden: 50 persons, and the USA: around 2,000 persons (according to the statistics in 2008). All the countries have their own criteria when discussing who they accept and whom not. For example certain limitations can be related to political status, but also chronic diseases and the life histories of people (Does the person have a criminal background, or ever worked in the prostitution?). So very important is that once you have obtained the refugee status from the UNHCR this does not imply you will be resettled to a third country. According to the figures related to 2008, about 30 percent of the people with a refugee status are not in the process of being resettled. Another issue is that the Turkish authorities do not resettle you from Turkey when they find out you have already applied for a status in another country (UNHCR, 2008)⁵.

Resettlement can be seen as the goal to which most migrants who obtained the refugees status strive. Turkey has become an attractive destination hosting one of the largest resettlement programs in the world, both through the UNHCR and through private sponsorship programs to Canada, Australia and the United States (Biehl, 2009: 2). In practice some migrants who do not fall under the international definition of refugee try to obtain the status. This will be illustrated by two examples of migrants from Ghana and Nigeria.

Female migrant – Ghana

She came alone to Turkey after her husband died in Ghana in a lorry accident when she was three months pregnant of her newborn son. And although she is not a refugee, her story is interesting in the sense that she wants to apply for the refugee status. She came by plane and she explains that you could not see she was pregnant and therefore they gave her the three- month's visa at the airport. She asked me to help her with applying for a refugee status at the UNHCR, and she wants to tell the story of her family. She asked me if it was possible to use the story of her father who is a chief and became involved in a tribal conflict. Therefore, her situation would be life threatening if she returned to Ghana; of course this story is a little exaggerated. I explained her they would not accept it at UNHCR, and recommended her to not apply. Her second option was to tell she was from Ivory Coast however I told her she could never apply again; if they found out she was lying. Her situation is sad in the sense that without a paper she will not be able to work and without work she is

⁴ <http://www.unhcr.org/486bacf12.html>

⁵ Ibidem.

not able to earn money to raise her baby. The only advise I gave her was to return to Ghana, because her overstay fee, due to the absence of a legal residence permit, was increasing every day.

Male migrant- Nigeria

The man who is actually from Nigeria lied to the UNHCR that he is from Rwanda, although people of the organizations who support him financially know his true story. They assigned him to one of the newest satellite cities, and in first instance he did not want to go, because of the lack of social assistance. However eventually he went but regularly returns to Istanbul to get medical assistance. He is still waiting for an answer of the UNHCR if they accept his case and give him the official refugee status.

The two examples illustrate the risks people are willing to take in order to be resettled. However if the UNHCR, but especially the local authorities, discover these people have lied in order to obtain the status the consequences will be very drastic.

When talking with the refugees about their future visions and expectations, most of them refer to God. Religion is a very important aspect in the lives of most of the refugees. This statement is underlined in the regional context by using Akcapars' article, in which religion was described as a form of positive social capital. Religion plays an important role in the formation of personal and social identity, not only during the integration process, but also during the transit period in Turkey before resettlement in a third country (Akcapar, 2006: 818). In many cases, religion is the source from which refugees gain strength and hope in their uncertain transit position. The same counts when discussing their future perspective. Because so many people do simply not know when or whether their case will be accepted and if they will be eventually resettled at all, their hope is in God. The often-used quotes below from my informants illustrate the role of religion in the context of their future expectations.

Female refugee Eritrea

'If God permits, then we will be resettled to America.'

Male refugee Sierra Leone

'Let's pray to God and maybe one day we can meet in Europe'

Male refugee Eritrea

'I am in Istanbul for four years already, and I do not see any progress with my case. They (the UNHCR) cannot answer my questions, so I pray.'

However in the context of resettlement, the young man from Congo who is waiting for resettlement to Canada speaks with more excitement about his future plans. The first thing he wants to do after arrival is going back to school. The man from Iran, who is already resettled to Canada and is visiting Istanbul, speaks with much passion and enthusiasm about his future. However, as explained in the theoretical background, it must be noted that in reality the refugees are confronted with a loss of social and support networks (Hayden and Sellen, 2006). Due to this loss, it may take more time and effort for the refugee to build up a new life and participate fully in society. Although refugees are facing improving conditions

concerning key indicators (e.g. housing, employment), they still have to cope with difficult circumstances. This condition might negatively influence the resettlement process and the effective integration of refugee households.

Male Refugee Iran (resettled to Canada)

Before he went to Canada he did not know much about the country and the first few weeks after his arrival it was a totally different world for him. The first reaction after his approval for resettlement was very relieved, because all he wanted was to be as far away from the Middle East as possible. He tells he loves Canada more than any other place in the world. There is enough work and there are many other options. He met other immigrants who could not endure and left but he claims to be very lucky with his resettlement to Canada.

The future expectations of the refugees are logically often dependent on their status within the different procedures. Those who already received the refugee status in general have a more open attitude towards the future than those who are still waiting whether their case is being accepted. However, this does not imply that people who have the refugee status are very positive about the future. The main reason for this lies in their uncertainty whether they will be actually resettled. The longer this uncertain period persists, the more insecure they get about their future. Those who are still waiting for the RSD procedure are in the most uncertain situation. The example of the young boy from Sierra Leone who applied for the status, but left to Greece before his case was rejected or accepted, illustrates the choices refugees make in the context of their future livelihood. Some of them make the decision to continue their journey, because they do not want to wait for years, especially if resettlement to a third country is not guaranteed. The examples of the refugees who are in the final stage of resettlement and whose case is thus accepted by all concerning actors, illustrate a positive attitude towards their future. They have more hope and dare to dream again. However it is also argued that refugees face several new challenges after resettlement and some cannot cope with the situation.

The concluding following chapter will reflect on the research and thereby answer the main question; how the theory and practice of the policy influences the everyday lives of the refugees. The chapter will start with an overview of the most important findings and will conclude with some recommendations (as far as possible) in the context of improving the everyday lives of the refugees.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

The reason why the focus of this research was on Turkey is because the country is facing several challenges in the context of their asylum policy. Turkey is hosting one of the largest resettlement programs worldwide due to the geographical limitation Turkey retains on the 1951 UN convention. As a result of their wish to join the European Union, the government is trying hard to make efforts and align its policy with EU standards. However, the extendedness of the problem and lack of capacity from the Turkish government and the UNHCR create a situation in which the efforts and results in the everyday practice are limited. In short; refugees do not benefit directly from years of adjustment policy. This research is intended to answer the main question of how the theory and practice of the Turkish asylum policy influences the everyday lives of the refugees in Istanbul. The previous chapters discussed the situation of refugees in Turkey, by making use of a bottom up approach and thereby analyzing the context from their point of view. The section below will first elaborate on the most important findings of this research, in the context of the sub questions. The second part will focus on potential recommendations.

8.1 Most Important Findings

The regional context answered the first sub-question of how the Turkish asylum and resettlement process are presented on paper and how the policy is executed in practice. The gap between these two is significant, and the most important intermediaries are the NGOs. The refugees can rely on them for legal, medical and social assistance and there are, in the context of resettlement, programs to prepare approved refugees. Although Turkey is hosting one of the world's largest resettlement programs, the fact remains that there are still thousands who are waiting, or whose procedure is stopped. As noted in the introduction of this research; at the end of 2010 there were more than 10,000 recognized refugees still in need for resettlement (UNHCR, 2010: 311) Chapter five elaborated on the second sub question, which is focusing on who these refugees are and how they are geographically spread in the country. The focus is shifted to the satellite cities, assigned by the Ministry of Interior, and the problems in these cities. As explained the procedures will be stopped if one refuses to go to the satellite city. However the experiences of the informants illustrate some very good arguments why so many return to Istanbul. The two most important (related) reasons were the lack of employment and the absence of a social support system.

The importance of a social support system is described in chapter six, which illustrates the institutional, economic and social aspects of the refugees' livelihoods. And thereby answers the third sub question of what the main limitations of refugees are in the context of improving their livelihood strategies. The social aspect was set out by a social network analysis divided into four different categories. The contacts refugees have within their own ethnic community are very important, these cover, together with the employees of the NGOs their social support system. It is also demonstrated that besides other migrants, refugees and NGOs, the out- group contact was limited. There was no contact with Turkish citizens and in some cases complaints about discrimination were expressed by the refugees. The experiences with the local authorities were in general not pleasantly; especially those who returned from their satellite city were dissatisfied with the way they were conceived and felt abandoned. Most of the refugees have regular contact with their family and friends in their

home country. Besides this many have contacts in Europe; these are often people of their own ethnic community. The section on social networks also reflected on the selectivity in maintaining international social contacts, especially in the context of resettlement.

The section focusing on the economic aspect illustrated the difficulties and challenges men and women experience at the labor market. Most do not own a residence permit and therefore obtaining a work permit is impossible. Even if they would obtain a residence permit, their chances at the labor market are very restricted due to the Turkish policy. As a result most male refugees work in the illegal sector with bad working conditions and outrageously low wages. The importance of a social network is illustrated by the fact that many refugees did get their job via friends. The institutional aspect described the role of the UNHCR, NGOs and religion in the lives of the refugees. The disappointment in the UNHCR is expressed by many refugees; however the accuses are not always grounded. The functioning of the UNHCR is partly dependent on other actors as well (for example local authorities). The NGOs are that important because the need is that urgent; these are often the only source on which they can rely for emergency relief. Religion offers them hope and support during the uncertain time in Istanbul. This analysis took place at a multidimensional level, which implies that all the institutional, economic and social aspect are interrelated.

The second section of chapter six discussed the sub question of the influence of social capital flowing through social networks on the refugees' livelihood strategies. In short it can be concluded that especially the local in- and out group networks are useful for the refugees in order to expand their limited range of options. According to Bebbington, qualities deriving from social networks can have important implications for other dimensions of social and economic life (2008). The theoretical section also reflected on the fact that social networks do not automatically result in social capital. However in the case of the refugees, these qualities/ assets deriving from the networks are crucial to make a living during their time in Istanbul. It can be argued that contacts made with NGOs are basically a livelihood strategy in itself. In the context of local in- group networks, the concepts of trust and reciprocity are important determinants. Another theory used in this research in order to analyze the refugees' situation is the capability approach; the conclusion in terms of this theory can be stated as follows. The conceptual model described the approach with the concept of access (to improve their livelihood strategies) dependent on agency and assets (capability set). The amount of agency refugees have is minimal and so are their assets; this results in very limited access to participate at different levels in society and thereby improve their situation structurally. The concept of integration, which is used before in scientific research in the context of Turkey, can be labeled here as an illusion.

Chapter seven elaborated on the last sub question of what efforts are made by the government and whether this influences the future expectations of the refugees. It must be noted that some institutional efforts were made by the government. This is crucial, since the regulation and responsibility of such a complex reality needs a stable transparent institutional environment. However, the everyday lives of the refugees are not much improved, perhaps due to the efforts and attention put in the institutionalization. Still many face a situation that is rather hopeless. It is arguable that the positive results of such profound changes will trickle down in the long term; however this does not take away the fact that the need in practice is very urgent.

8.2 Recommendations

The National Action Plan and the subsequently launched projects all had the purpose to align Turkey's asylum policy with European standards. However as is stated, the results are still not visible in the society, since the main focus was on institutionalization. So what exactly can be done to improve the situation of the refugees in short term? Some conclusions can be drawn, based upon the meetings of the NGOs.

In the context of resettlement the main argument made by the NGOs was the necessity to speed up the resettlement process. Because now too many people were waiting, without any knowledge if they would be accepted and how many months or years they would still be in Turkey. The research illustrated in what kind of circumstances the refugees live in Istanbul, and their incapability to improve their situation during the years of the procedures. Speeding up the resettlement process would be the best suitable solution, and leaves less people in uncertainty. However, because so many actors are involved in the processes (UNHCR, Turkish government, the government of the resettlement country and several cooperating NGOs) and the demand exceeds the supply, the problem is not that easy to solve.

Another major problem in the context of eventual resettlement is the policy of dispersion in different satellite cities. The refusal of the refugees to move to these cities and the decision to return to Istanbul results in an increase of refugees living illegally in the city. Many refugees get stuck due to the satellite city policy. Solutions suggested by the NGOs were to let the refugees choose whether they stay or move to a satellite city or send them in groups, instead of individuals by themselves. From my point of view, these are not the best suitable solutions in the context of Turkey. If many refugees would choose to stay in Istanbul, this may result in a growing illegal sector in which refugees without documents disappear. The latter option to send them in groups to satellite cities may be a solution in the context of their social support. However, the arrival of groups of refugees may increase the sense of threat among the Turkish citizens and thereby stimulate the 'we versus them' dichotomy. This would only decrease the options of the refugees in terms of the economic, institutional and social aspects of their livelihoods. Another more realistic idea of the NGOs was to decrease the number of satellite cities, which would make it easier and more efficient to build a social support network in those cities.

The most ideal situation would be an accelerated resettlement procedure and better circumstances for the refugees to make a living while waiting. The first steps towards a more institutionalized asylum and migration policy are taken, but the question remains if the government is capable to regulate this challenge. Following the results of the research, this is highly doubtful. NGOs, like the Ecumenical refugee centre, are the organizations that deserve the most credit when discussing the emergency relief of refugees. They are the ones who respond to the results of the policy and serve as the most important support system of the refugees. Many blessings have been expressed by the informants towards the NGOs, and much aversion against the local authorities and impotence of the UNHCR.

The fact that there is a lack of agency among the refugees, and that they are not able to unite themselves, decreases their ability to pursue goals. Their capability set and related to that their functioning in the society is minimal. To conclude in the Amartya Sen's vocabulary:

These people are struggling for freedom; however reality is that their opportunities to accomplish what they value are minimal. Most do not even dare to think or dream about what they value, because while being in Istanbul, their priority is to make a living. Their main focus is on the everyday struggle to survive.

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