# Human Rights in Iran. The Ethnography of 'Others' and Global Political Theory[*]

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## Introduction

Knowledge about the 'other' is one of the founding pillars for the development of Global Political Theory.[1] Only the realisation that there are people outside one's own society sparks off questions around the governance of the relations with those 'others' and responsibilities towards them. (O'Neill, 2000) The Enlightenment was a crucial era for the shift towards viewing the 'other' as a fellow human being, governed by universal laws. (Kapuscinski, 2008) The Human rights doctrine that was built on these ideas, established firmly that the treatment of others by their own government is a matter of international concern and gradually fought for rules of international engagement in the protection of specific rights. (Freeman, 2005 and Baehr, 2005) However, human rights violations still continue in many places. In Global Political Theory human rights are an important part of the moral and legal discourse on global governance. Yet, there is still a gap between these theories and detailed accounts of human rights violations and the context for resistance. Here, the treatment of the 'other' in a specific country (Iran) and the oppression as Muslims of Iranians living abroad will be discussed for their relevance to Global Political Theory. The argument in this article is that Anthropology (especially ethnography), journalism and diaspora literature about Iran provide useful input for the field of Global Political Theory on human rights, democratisation and global justice. There are several reasons for this. First, personal accounts and ethnographies bring home the realities of what can't be taken in as big numbers or abstract descriptions of human rights violations. This is well-known from education on the Shoah (the Hebrew word for the Holocaust). For example, only when reading a personal story of a Dutch Jew whose family had Lithuanian origins recently, did it hit me what the effects were on the local community of the many people killed and displaced. (Bregstein, 1995) This was a way of beginning to understand something that was more universal than the personal story and that I had been trying to learn since reading Anne Frank's diaries at primary school. (Frank, 1978)

The use of examples of specific human rights violations to give context to a particular theory or philosophy is not new. Hannah Arendt used the oppression of Jews as an example to develop a wider political theory (Kohn and Feldman, 2008) and Martha Nussbaum traveled to India where she developed her thinking on women and development as well as her position on universalism versus particularism (Nussbaum, 2001). Another example is the work of Cynthia Enloe, who also travels and interviews relevant people for her feminist theories of International Relations. (Enloe, 2004). However, mainstream discussions on Global Political Theory are mostly abstract arguments, which lack the psychological bite to create motivation for change.

Yet, the use of additional sources is of value beyond the possibility of developing empathy. My second reason for arguing that Global Political Theory should pay attention to accounts of the lives of 'others' is that they contribute to the detailed understanding of the effects of injustice and human rights violations, which may in turn contribute to better ways of creating social change and avoid unfitting universalism. These sources also allow more detailed thinking about the risks to human rights and the mechanisms of both human rights violations and democratisation. They form a basis for a creative multidisciplinary methodology where theory building based on first principles is complemented by ethnography. Third, there are a host of themes in this literature of relevance to political thought in a global context. For

example, the effect of violence by one's own government and the types of resistance especially by young people are of direct interest to Global Political Theory looking at forms of global governance, which would support oppressed citizens of other states. Increased knowledge of the 'other' would also enable better thinking about a major implication of human rights violations: the creation of a diaspora. The relationship between Iran and its diaspora and the welcome of the refugee Iranians and their children elsewhere are important themes for this literature as well as for the development of Global Political Theory. In this article I will illustrate my argument for the relevance of anthropological research, especially ethnography, and personal accounts of life under a dictatorial regime in Iran to Global Political Theory.

Already there are some objections to what is seen as the use of 'sad stories' to inform theory, policy making or to affect social change. For example Pupavac (2008) argues that campaigning for refugee rights has indulged in creating images of helpless victims. Yet, she herself acknowledges that refugee stories were traditionally used not to medicalise refugees as sufferers of trauma whose capacity for autonomy was questioned, but as inspiration for political action. A potential criticism from post-colonialism holds that experiences of injustice can only be overcome by indigenous efforts. However, in the case of ethnography there will often be a critical element of giving voice to a silenced group and in the case of personal stories these will often include an account of social activism and empowerment which provide lessons for a wider audience. Both are frequently written by insiders anyway. Post-colonialism advocates itself that perspectives of 'others' be taken seriously as knowledges by people in the west. (Young, 2003)  One note of caution should be that a degree of specialisation is needed to understand some of the context and to avoid an ignorant moral panic. This is why the example of Iran is chosen here and not a mixture of ethnographies from diverse backgrounds.

I will start by an overview of the images of Iran used in contemporary discourses of global politics. I then discuss the usefulness of the ethnographic methodology, including the issue of research ethics. In the next section I show particular common themes between these sources and Global Political Theory such as gender, cosmopolitanism and human rights. I conclude by showing that the use of sources from anthropological ethnography and personal stories (real and fictional) forms an important part of multidisciplinary work to develop insight in the 'other', which in turn can contribute to Global Political Theory that engages with universality and difference without generalising western experience or stereotyping 'others'.


**Ethnography and Global Political Theory: creating a detailed and balanced picture**
The currently dominant images of Iran in the public view create mainly attitudes of fear and puzzlement. The portraying of the country as a dictatorship does not leave space for the nuanced views of Iranians in Iran as published in blogs (Alavi, 2005) or for insights into the minds of the young people in Iran (70% of the population of 70 million is below 30) who may resist the policies of the oppressive regime. Moreover, harassment and stereotyping of Iranian refugees and undocumented migrants and their families in their new countries of residence leads to injustice, unhappiness and ultimately results in preventable deaths (Khosravi, 2007 and forthcoming 2009a). In academic literature on International Relations and in the media Iran is mostly simply seen as a strategic oil producer, a potential threat to Israel or the wider world by producing nuclear capability, and supporter of terrorism abroad, or as a Muslim country playing a part in the clash of civilizations (Micklethwait, 2007; Fisk, 2008). A lot of these sources base their perspective on ethnocentric principles of security, defending borders against 'threats' in the form of migration or terrorism, or increasingly some link between both; the 'threat' of the Islamic culture and the 'threat' of developing strategic alliances or nuclear weapons. These beliefs overlook the fact that terrorist

organisations in the region have all been helped in the past by foreign powers in their competition over resources. (Alavi, 2005) Moreover, Iranians are stereotyped both as Muslim and as Middle Eastern and the distinction between the Persian and Arabic cultures is often not made. The media play an important role in these kinds of misconceptions. (Luyendijk, 1998 and 2006) It is important for Global Political Theory to develop a more realistic picture of the people from and within this plagued country. Sources from Anthropology, especially ethnographies, and personal accounts by the Iranian diaspora in book form or through blogs can assist in understanding the effects of living under a dictatorship, especially an Islamic version, and the implications of living in exile. Reading these stories helps to create an internal dialogue of reflection where global interconnectedness between in this case Iran and the global powers as well as blindness to the role played by ignorance can be exposed. This kind of theory building from a multidisciplinary angle can be generalised to other examples of specific cultures, human rights violations and forms of resistance. For example, Al-Ali's *Iraqi women* is another good source of information to avoid the risk of overlooking the specifics of lives lived under some of the most oppressive political situations, created by national and international factors. (Al-Ali, 2007) Novels and resulting films about Afghanistan have also brought insight in the position of women under authoritarian Islamic regimes. (Hosseini, 2004 and 2007 and Seierstadt, 2004) Here I use a bunch of recent publications on Iran and Iranians abroad to illustrate their relevance to Global Political Theory and especially the themes of cosmopolitanism, human rights and gender. I separate them into three groups of works: the ethnographic work of Khosravi, the literature of Abdolah and the popular non-fiction by Nafisi, Alavi, Moaveni, Elliott, Holland, and de Bellaigue among others. Additional sources of information are the campaigns and reports of human rights organisations (Javaheri and Ghaderi), books on Islam (Abdolah, Ben Jelloun and Aslan) and novels like Amirrezvani.

*Young and Defiant in Tehran* is an ethnography of a group of young people in the most modern neighbourhood in Tehran, Shahrak-e Gharb. The area stands out for its dissidence, its relatively liberal attitude towards sex and youth culture and its constant conflict with the regime in Iran. In this book Khosravi examines how young people in this area construct their identity as a space of defiance against the dominant social order. This involves dissociating from 'poor, traditional, local', youths in South-Tehran. The book has several direct links with Global Political Theory, specifically the impact of young people's struggle for their right to freely create their own identity, the importance of transnationalism, and the context of healing from recent war. Khosravi's publication of his own story of ending up as a refugee in Sweden also illustrates the central argument here. (Khosravi, 2007) It shows the chaos around borders and the migration industry in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The experiences described question the global construction of insiders and outsiders for example through the inherent right of societies to exclude others at their borders which is a central theme in cosmopolitan debates with liberal nationalism. Khosravi's recent article on undocumented migrants' access to elementary social rights such as education, health care, housing and work raises similar questions with regard to the exclusion of people who are already within the borders of the host society. (Khosravi, forthcoming, 2009a) Discussions of global citizenship would usefully be informed by these accounts of exclusive citizenship in nation-states. They usually assume that global citizenship is overlayed upon national citizenship and that it would include solidarity overseas, whereas there are clearly people who miss out on effective national citizenship and who need solidarity within borders. (van den Anker, 2002; Cabrera, 2008)

Kader Abdolah fled Iran and ended up in the Netherlands. In his novels (Abdolah, 2000, 2005, 2006), short stories (Abdolah, 1993, 1995, 1997) and newspaper columns (Abdolah,

1998, 2001, 2003) he shows the realities of resisting the increasingly oppressive regime in Iran since 1979 as well as life in exile. He views himself as writing within the Persian tradition yet making a contribution to Dutch literature. In this spirit he wrote the life story of Mohammed (Abdolah, 2008a) and translated the Koran (Abdolah 2008b) with introductions to each soera. Abdolah's work fits in with the postcolonial effort to write the 'other' into existing discourses; this needs to be taken up by Global Political Theory, too. In addition the information on both life under an oppressive regime and life as an exile can inform more realistic political theory building.

Finally, there are some insightful sources in the Iranian diaspora literature which go well beyond a personal account of dealing with exile and oppression. For example, Nafisi who describes her reading group where a diverse student body engages with the canon of forbidden western literature gives the most harrowing account of what it is like to be forced to wear a veil. She writes about the girls in the group for example: 'Their dilemmas, regardless of their backgrounds and beliefs, were shared, and stemmed from the confiscation of their most intimate moments and private aspirations by the regime.' (Nafisi, 2004: 273) Moaveni (2005) shows great insight in her own situation as the child of Iranian exiles in the US and as a US journalist in Iran. She exposes right in the beginning of her book that the view of Iran as static and unchanging after its failed revolution is the typical perspective of an exile; whereas what needed to be tackled was the actually existing Iran with its present movements for reform rather than some distant ideal that would never come back. (Moaveni 2005: 37-43) She also underlines the importance of the youth for the political shifts in Iran and reiterates Khosravi's argument that the cultural expressions of young people are a powerful force recognized by the ruling clergy as beyond their control. (Moaveni, 2005: 62) Because of her awareness having developed in the US, Moaveni sharply shows the places were she is confronted with difference when living in Iran. For example in her attitude towards violence. After an incident with some friends being beaten up by the moral police, she writes: 'It was to me an encounter of shockingly casual violence. I thought that Nikki would need months of therapy to recover (…). Not at all, it turned out. To them, it was just another Friday night in the Islamic Republic.' (Moaveni, 2005: 54) Another illustration of the realities of living under the Islamic regime is the encounter with the secret services. Monthly interviews containing threats and bribes are becoming routine for her, whereas the general pressure to give in to the regime leads to a period of depression and lethargy. Mental health deterioration as well as increased physical health problems are also mentioned in Khosravi (forthcoming 2009a) as a result of living in hiding as undocumented migrants.

I will continue by making some points about the usefulness of reading Anthropology, fiction and memoirs for the multidisciplinary exchange on methodologies in Global Political Theory and then move on to the discussion of three themes arising out of this reading, namely, the politics of human rights, gender and cosmopolitanism.

**Multidisciplinary methods**

Khosravi's work is rooted in Anthropology yet it has relevance for many other debates. From the point of view of Global Political Theory this account moves beyond a description of young people in Iran by analyzing cultural politics, discourses of modernity, engaging with social and political thought on power and handling methodology very explicitly. (Global) political theorists working on social movements and human rights can learn a lot from what is presented. For example, what political change can be expected to result from the defiance of the young people in Iran? The strict division between our disciplines is unhelpful; despite our different methods we ask similar questions and we would all benefit from more open choices of method. For example, in the Introduction to Anthropology by Oxford University Press (2000) the authors emphasize the search for the universal in other societies. They recognise

that Anthropology also includes looking at the power structures beyond the immediately studied people. Theories of Global Politics work on similar questions yet usually at the abstract end of the spectrum. Just as work on global justice can start from a specific problem, I would argue that there needs to be at least some work on the lessons learned from everyday experiences of human rights violations in the body of work on Global Political Theory. Parallel to what Abodolah argues for Dutch literature, namely that it is in need of quoting examples from Muslim culture, Global Political Theory needs to show that 'others' have become visible to it. Mine is not the first or the only call for this. Nafisi quotes Adorno: 'The highest form of morality is not to feel at home in one's own home.' She develops it into a comment on the role of literature: to make you question the familiar, what we take for granted. (Nafisi, 2004: 94) So paradoxically where cosmopolitanism is about being at home everywhere, about curiosity about the other, it is also about reflection and finding the right balance between cultural confidence and open-mindedness.

Khosravi's fieldwork in Tehran (Khosravi, 2008) raises two methodological issues. First, it shows some of the anthropologist's necessary skills in observing and engaging with young people as well as the author's understanding of the politics and culture in Iran. Although Khosravi doesn't feel he is doing 'anthropology at home' because he lived in Sweden since 1987, there is a vantage point in his 'nomadism'. Coming in from the 'outside' gives a wider context for the analysis, yet the familiarity with the 'inside' allows understanding of subtleties and changes and for the researcher to be accepted easily into the group. The reactions to the author raise interesting questions on knowledge production. Of course the Shahraki young people find him *javad* (a term used for people from South Tehran to indicate they do not know the latest trends in clothes or music), but that is unavoidable due to the age difference. Yet the *javad* find the researcher attractive for obtaining information about the *kharej* (western countries abroad). The researcher also warned them about foreign journalists endangering the young people. The book raises questions for theorists writing without such explicit perspectives on their own roles. For example, can only 'insiders' reflect accurately? Or do 'insiders' miss some of the biases of the researched community? Can 'outsiders' provide additional insights or do they necessarily lack the contextual understanding? Basmenji (2003) views his own position as insider as highly relevant. Yet his journalism lacks the theorising of Khosravi's ethnography. May this be due to being an insider as opposed to a returnee with foreign and academic experience who has had to reflect on his own role as affected by the different cultures and positions he had in them?

Second, Khosravi makes explicit the methodology of ethnography and shows its value in moving between an analysis of what people said to themes known from academic literature or other cultural sources. That is valuable as an example for multidisciplinary research, especially on migration and human rights. It should be possible to add elements of this method to Global Political Theory without risking being 'eclectic'.

The discussion of methodology in Khosravi's work also raises questions about the ethics of doing this type of research in a police state or in circumstances where the respondents may be undocumented migrants. (Khosravi forthcoming 2009a and forthcoming 2009b) Yet research ethics equally raises questions for Global Political Theory, for example on taking general positions on rights and justice as Archimedean observers. When Khosravi describes watching public floggings he identifies an ethical dilemma. However, he concludes that it was useful to attend a few and follow the others through the media. It makes a difference that Khosravi endured watching while he knew he couldn't stop it (especially as he also tells the story of his own physical 'punishment' as a teenager by the Iranian police, which might have made him even less eager to watch). The description of the flogging makes it possible for the reader to feel something and therefore become involved themselves in the politics of human

rights. This seems a consideration for Khosravi since he quotes Walter Benjamin at the opening of the 2008 book: 'I have nothing to say, only to show'.

Another occasion where he didn't interfere was in Golestan in a case of a young man being beaten up by moral police (*basijis*) for wearing the US flag on his t-shirt. However, in one case Khosravi does interfere in a dispute between two *basijis* and a group of laughing teenagers in the Darband area. This raises questions of how to judge when it is safe to do so and how effective can you be as a bystander? And how do the young people judge such situations? Obviously from this account the defiance of young people of the regime in Iran is increasing and increasingly collective. The book opens with the story of a girl in a phone booth who defies a *basiji* policeman when she is challenged to put on her headscarf to cover her hair 'properly'. She tells him he can't make her do anything; he shoots her and she dies. Was the girl in the phone booth just terribly unlucky or could she have known there was a much higher risk than she anticipated? Writing about the details of oppression in this way assists outsiders in taking in the reality of these gross human rights violations. Since these are the hardest to imagine for most readers, hopefully these accounts will lead to better reflection and more action. This is not a call for moral outcries about 'others' and their human rights violating cultures; the complicity of the outsider through global inequality needs to be acknowledged. That is where there is an ethical role for research on Global Political Theory.

**Relevant themes to Global Political Theory**
*The (global) politics of human rights*
The literature on Iran illustrates how the national politics on human rights (both state-led and oppositional) now need to be understood in a global context. The aim of Khosravi's book, for example, is to analyse the construction of identities and the transnational impacts on these. Despite their political implications not being his central concern, in the context of Iran as a religious dictatorship there is an immediacy about the personal struggles of young people that is lacking in liberal democracies. There are a few important lessons to be drawn from his research. Firstly, talking about the *right* to identity, indicates a link to power, which makes the subject political, as rights need to be struggled for, claimed and granted, interpreted and implemented. This is always in relation to the state as well as non-state actors and fellow human beings within and outside of national borders. Setting up this research as about an individual right to identity which inspires collective acts of defiance in rejecting the regime's ideal images of young people situates it in the context of the politics of human rights. Diaspora and international NGO support as well as the need for global pressure on the regime make this an issue beyond Iran. Moreover, global politics have exacerbated circumstances in Iran.

The book's implicit conception of power emphasizes the structural yet contested nature of power (following Foucault) which inspires interest in contested transnational influences and the power struggle between the state and the young people. However, in the central question 'How do young people in Iran struggle to make sense of their lives?' there is a lack of political context that reveals the tension throughout the book between an interpretation of the political as a movement of young people undertaking political action in some traditional sense (i.e. protest, voting, campaigning, civil disobedience) on the one hand and politics in the sense of lifestyle choices, cultural expression and imagination and defiance of the state-imposed model of youth on the other hand. This gets resolved when Khosravi refers to the example of Eastern Europe when explaining how the political gets played out in everyday life in oppressive regimes. Although the book returns to this issue of the political nature of young people's behaviour several times, the author always does so in passing. Only right at the end, the question of the political impact of the youth's defiance is raised once more, yet without providing an answer. In future this book and similar work by others such as Basmenji (2003)

can assist in building our understanding of these wider political implications and in quickening a transition to greater freedom. Already, the work by Abdolah (2000, 2005) sheds light on opposition by political groups, who had important transnational networks, Moaveni (2005) shows the workings of the struggle for press freedom and its cross-border intricacies, Alavi (2005) details the role of blogs by Iranians in Iran and their communication with the diaspora, Nemat (2007) explains the initial protests in schools, the early anti-regime demonstrations and the need to have family abroad in order to prevent ending up in Evin prison whereas Nafisi (2004) shows the diversity within the student body and the difficulties of the participants in the hidden reading group on western literature.

Another (global) political aspect that is highlighted in this literature on Iran is the notion of internalized oppression and neo-imperialism. Khosravi refers to Frantz Fanon only to show disagreement with the Iranian intellectuals who hold that western consumerism destroys authentic Iranian culture. Yet, at several points in the book Fanon would have been highly relevant, especially on internalized oppression, for example in the context of the stereotyping of the *Javad*, the lack of self-respect of Iranians and the *fokoli (*a comedy character teased for looking too western). The whole phenomenon that the government calls 'weststruckness', including Italian fashion, Irangelesi music as well as much less innocent aspects like nose operations to look more western (pioneered by the wife of the Shah in the 1970s), could be seen at least in part as lack of pride in one's authentic culture. This is dangerous ground, as it may lead in the end to essentialising and illiberal positions. Khosravi shows the complexities of the use of western consumer models to express identity for young people in Tehran where young people love being seen in shopping-malls yet also love pre-Arabic Persian ideals. The initial revolutionaries in Iran included people who were truly hoping for an authentic Iran in contrast to the westernization under Reza Shah Pavlavi and his son (Abdolah, 2000; Nafisi, 2004; and Alavi, 2005). This implies that although imposing a religious model of culture and lifestyle is unacceptable, the opening up towards western influences is not simply an outcome of young people making free choices. A simplistic notion of neo-imperialism ignores the wishes of young people to be part of a global culture, but acknowledging this does not mean to say that the globalized version of culture exported from the US is liberating in itself. Yet in Iran being in favour of western culture is a perfect way to contest the regime.

*Women's Rights, Masculinity and Young People's Oppression*
Women's rights are a theme in every discussion on Islam. Critics often refer to the lack of rights for women in Muslim countries. (Dalacoura in Smith and van den Anker, 2005) In Mohammed's time Islam was a progressive force as women had been at the bottom of the hierarchy even below slaves in the Arabic society (Abdolah, 2008a). However, modern Iran has been consistently patriarchal (Khosravi, forthcoming 2009b). Nafisi sums up the detrimental changes to women's rights after the Islamic revolution. The first law to be repealed was the one that protected women's rights at work and in the home. The legal age to marry for a girl became eight and a half lunar years (this is illegal under international law) adultery and prostitution were to be punished by stoning to death (Nafisi, 2004: 261). However, women also protested from the start. For example, from the Revolution of 1979 onwards there were many attempts to make the veil compulsory which were thwarted by persistent opposition from Iranian women. (Nafisi, 2004: 112) Still, the Revolution also brought wider accessibility of education which has assisted women in accessing public life. (Alavi, 2005) There are now dedicated campaigns on women's rights in Iran where transnational support aids local initiatives (Javaheri, 2008). Global Political Theory can learn from the feminist example to create a space where the adherence to first principles is combined with detailed investigation of specific struggles.

Khosravi (2008) observes differences between boys and girls in how their identities are constructed (both by the regime and by the defiant youngsters). Current forms of sexism are exposed implicitly when he reports men talking about 'hairy Iranian girls' as opposed to 'clean and attractive' western girls; and several times they are reported to support the pressure on girls to remain virgins until marriage. In his description of Golestan as a male playground, is the author denying the agency of women to look for revealing (as opposed to the author's judgmental term 'exhibitionist') clothes? A clear example of sexism in youth culture in Iran is the case of the phenomenon of 'empty house'. This refers to parties being organised when parents are away. These may include the use of alcohol, pornography and strippers or prostitutes. This list presumably applies to boys not girls. Or are Iranian girls watching porn and using prostitutes? Other sources show explicitly that violation of human rights is gendered through the use of rape, the forced marriage of Nemat (2007) as a prisoner and the detailed descriptions of both Nafisi (2004) and Moaveni (2005) of the physical and psychological stress of wearing a full hijab.

In his work on masculinity Khosravi (forthcoming, 2009b) mainly focuses on the experiences of Iranian men in Sweden. Yet sometimes their positioning as 'others' is in relation to the Iranian model of masculinity as well as the Swedish one. One respondent specifically describes the conflict between the role he has to play as a man in Sweden and the expectations on him when he visits Iran. Global Political Theory could do with becoming aware of these tensions for migrant men and their children. This might lead to more accurate communication with and about 'others' as well as to increased self-reflection on norms of masculinity governing academic discourse. Moreover, the transnational lifestyles of many migrants problematise the old distinction between Political Theory per se and Global Political Theory.

Another important theme in this literature is the oppression of young people. By definition youth culture is defiant and this is only not political in places where children's rights and young people's positions are safeguarded effectively. Since this is far from the case anywhere yet, all youth culture is political in its opposition to the parental generation. In Khosravi's account there is a lot of respect for young people, and the description of the fieldwork shows clearly that young people trusted the researcher to listen well and not to expose them to parents or the regime. Yet, there are still instances where young people are put down or underestimated, for example by talking about 'childish love' when describing girls in a film, or being overly impressed with a girl who writes about foreign films. Even using the description 'young girl' for her, can be interpreted as infantilizing her. It is important to raise the issue of young people's oppression more generally than only by the Iranian regime. This violation of human rights affects the pace and direction of any future political change in Iran and globally. Children's rights are a legitimate subject in Global Political Theory. Yet, they are at risk of being used in paternalistic or neo-imperial discourses (as in the case of child labour – see van den Anker (ed), 2004). Children's rights do have an impact on theories of global justice in at least two ways: children are the decision-makers of the future and creating fair chances for them involves creating fair remuneration and inclusion (citizenship rights as well as recognition for difference) for their parents.

All three themes, women's rights, masculinities and young people are strongly present in the literature on Iran and all are highly relevant to Global Political Theory. At the very least awareness of the details of the cultural specifics can lead to further reflection on the relevance of current theory; at best the presence of 'others' in the development of these theories can

lead to better principles as well as implementation and acknowledgment of struggles from below.

*Cosmopolitanism and transnationalism*
There are several ways in which the literature on human rights in Iran shows synergies with debates on cosmopolitanism. The positioning of Khosravi's 2008 book in a wider study on transnationalism raises a question about whether transnationalism inspires cosmopolitanism, either in the decreasing relevance of borders or in the decrease of people's xenophobic attitudes. From the evidence presented in this book, it seems that it doesn't do either and the implications of transnationalism for global citizenship are therefore exaggerated by hopeful globalists. The transnationalism of receiving foreign goods and cultural expressions, like films and music, has more to do with a positioning within Iran as free and fashionable, than with engaging with cultural dialogue or protesting about borders.
Khosravi's understanding of cosmopolitanism as 'curiosity about the other' is interesting in light of the many different conceptions of cosmopolitanism in different disciplinary discourses. The general idea in Global Political Theory is that cosmopolitanism refers to notions of duties across borders and global citizenship. However, Ulrich Beck's (2006) cosmopolitan outlook and his sociological descriptive prescriptivism ("we're cosmopolitans and therefore we should be") widens this horizon, too. In contrast to the emphasis in Global Political Theory on the Stoics, Kantianism and on 19th century debates, reading Beck's German account fills in the gaps with references to the tensions between on the one hand Franfurter School theorists Adorno and Horkheimer's vision on liberal cosmopolitanism as dangerous and on the other hand the real and supposed cosmopolitanism of refugee Jews. The context of war and refugees is very much present in Khosravi (2008) and many of the other sources, too. Throughout, he illustrates the deep emotions that are still easily accessible to Iranians about the Iran-Iraq war. Yet, these emotions are also clearly manipulated by the regime especially by creating images of the enemy in the US and the wider western world. The history of this war with its extremely high number of deaths and wounded, affects relationships in Iran intensely. In the diaspora there are those who fled conscription, (often not only to avoid death but also to avoid returning alive (Khosravi, 2007)) whereas in Iran itself there are many disabled and bereaved. Khosravi dedicates his book (2008) to Mansoor, a *basiji* whose young body is devastated by chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war who is suffering from irremediable and unbearable pain as well as to Behrooz, who is a dissident young man who disappeared without a trace when he tried to cross the border between Pakistan and India illegally in 1987. Getting a chance to heal from those hurts is important yet the collective pressure in Iran on showing grief publicly at staged events doesn't assist in such a healing process. This is another link to Global Political Theory where the work in Global Ethics on war and peace can be helped by concrete examples, ensuring that the reality of experience exposes the myth of order and the 'free world'.

Another aspect of cosmopolitanism is the form of it that is most closely associated with xenophilia or love of all that is foreign. This is often recognized when westerners are infatuated with non-western cultures for example described by Said in his notion of orientalism, but not the other way around, when Iranian youth is 'weststruck'. The cultures of 'others' are more often described as 'occidentalist': anti-western. (Buruma and Margalit, 2004) Khosravi's description reinforces the personal as political yet also shows that the Tehran youth is not cosmopolitan in Beck's sense of reflexivity. (See also: Martell, 2008) For example, the young people who love their foreign style markers, are actually very intolerant of difference in other respects, such as homosexuality. The struggles around identity and exile also show difficulty in adopting the 'both/and identity theory' Beck advocates, which

illustrates the importance of claiming multiple and mixed identities fully. While we all get to decide ourselves what is important to us, we move forward toward acceptance and flourishing lives if we claim all our identities one hundred percent and emotionally work through what they mean to us, while eventually aiming to let them all go. Beck interestingly talks about emotional globalization; the role of emotions is clearly something important in Khosravi's work, too, by showing suffering and coping strategies in a non-sentimental way. As Nafisi illustrates by asking if someone in another country hearing about life in Iran: would they condemn the tortures, the executions and the extreme acts of aggression? She thinks they would. 'But what about the acts of transgression on our ordinary lives, like the desire to wear pink socks?' (Nafisi, 2004: 76)

The cosmopolitan theme of social justice through redistribution is also an interesting one in the literature on Iran. In the Koran (Abdolah, 2008b) the message is clearly that just people will be rewarded and to be just one has to give away a fifth of one's income and provide loans without interest. Originally, the hope of the 1979 revolution was to create a more equal society. One of the promises of the Revolution was a more equal distribution of wealth whereas there are now 12 million people (15%) below the poverty line in Iran (Alavi, 2005: 146) Nafisi also illustrates explicitly that she returned to Iran from the US to work for the revolution. Her account illustrates the long-term connections between Iranians and for example the US, France and the UK. (Nafisi, 2004)

These concerns over transnationalism and distributive justice are of interest for Global Political Theory in developing insight on motivation, implementation and political strategy. The counterintuitive effects of the revolution add to the lessons learned on building coalitions on the most minimally moral arguments rather than aiming for forced utopias. Yet, most importantly this literature brings to the fore the issue of developing a cosmopolitanism that is not  imposing on but inclusive of 'others'. This work is now on the agenda and has not yet been done. For example, whereas Benhabib speaks of the rights of 'others' in the context of citizenship in a sovereign state (2004) and she addresses the dilemmas of membership in the global sphere of justification (2006), she does not widen the issue to 'others' as full participants in a sphere of global justice. Appiah (2005), similarly, addresses the issue of identity and cosmopolitanism; yet, despite arguing for a 'rooted' cosmopolitanism, his account remains abstract of actual 'others' and their experiences. The only examples mentioned are tolerance of illiberal practices, yet there is no reference to people who are globally unequal and whose rights are violated to safeguard privilege elsewhere.

**Conclusion**
Khosravi's book contributes insights into the construction of identities of young people in an oppressive regime. Especially in a time where both Iran and Islam are portrayed stereotypically and as potentially dangerous, it is a relief to read a portrait of young people in their rich variety. The author has no time for simple interpretations and shows instead the complex detail of young people's lives and the context in which they struggle for their freedom. This account does not provide easy answers for Global Political Theorists on how youth movements can succeed in bringing down a regime yet it opens up ways of understanding the everyday human rights violations and resistance against them. We will need to collaborate multi-disciplinarily to engage with questions of the political implications of the lifestyle choices of young people in Iran and elsewhere. Khosravi's work is accessible for non-anthropologists and draws out the political questions around the right to construct an identity that are central to the goals of human rights and secure citizenship for all. The other diaspora literature on Iran, just like the personalized literature on the Shoah, shows that we need personal accounts to understand the specifics of human rights; their gradual erosion, the politics of their violation and the everyday detail of resistance. Where abstraction and

generalization may be necessary to present focused Global Political Theories, the multidisciplinary work of bringing together big pictures with specific portraits is required for real understanding instead of stereotyping and perpetuating discourses of power that situate the 'other' as dangerous and primitive. Whereas Anthropology is not always free from such connotations and sometimes overcompensates by romanticizing the 'other', there are plenty of sensitive accounts that are good sources of learning for Global Political Theorists. The goals of postcolonialism as bringing in the 'other' are important to take into account in Global Political Theory. This does not mean using 'sad stories' to exclude on the basis of non-functionality, but to create space to be heard and add critical perspectives even or especially if these blow some of the existing myths on which Global Political Theory is founded out of the water.

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[1] I hesitate to use the term international political theory, as it presumes the existence of nation-states as actors in global politics which I find highly problematic from a cosmopolitan perspective especially in areas like migration and global inequality. In addition, it does not include transnational interactions between individual, groups or organizations. May be we are even at a point where all political theory is both global and local. There are hardly any themes in politics that are only of relevance for one or the other sphere.