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## “TASTE OF HOME”: INTEGRATION OF ASYLEES INTERTWINED WITH TRANSNATIONAL PROCESSES AND THE PROMOTION OF CULINARY TRADITIONS

(Translation)

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*The integration of immigrants in the EU member states is one of the key social issues today. The aim of this paper is to, on the example of the Taste of Home collective case study, provide an overview of the attempts at the socio-economic, cultural and interactive integration of refugees and seekers of international protection into Croatian society and the extent to which they succeed at this. The research is based on ethnological and cultural-anthropological qualitative methodology: on interviews with asylees and asylum seekers, on the observation of participants in cooking workshops and food presentations and on media discourse analysis. In addition to the integration process, which is of exceptional importance for asylees and asylum seekers, the authors describe the extent to which participation, i.e. the preparation of food as part of the Taste of Home project, enables refugees to exist in a transnational field. Finally, they indicate the two diametrically opposed ways in which Croatian citizens accept asylees involved in this initiative (from friendliness to distance), other asylees, protection seekers and refugees in Croatia in general.*

**Keywords:** *asylees, refugees, integration, Taste of Home, attitudes towards asylees*

### INTRODUCTION

The recent inflow of refugees and asylum seekers<sup>1</sup> to the European Union member states represents one of the key social issues today, especially

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<sup>1</sup> The terms “asylum seeker” and “international protection seeker” are used as synonyms in the text, whereby the first term is usually used in everyday speech while the second is related to the applicable law and covers two types of international protection:

when it comes to their integration. Between the beginning of 2006 and the end of the first quarter of 2016, the Republic of Croatia granted international protection to 176 persons<sup>2</sup> and thus committed itself to giving them certain economic, social and cultural rights (e.g. welfare, health care, education, courses on the Croatian language, history and culture, accommodation, employment...) <sup>3</sup>. However, the reality of contemporary Croatia, primarily as an emigrant and transit country with a highly homogenous society, weak economy, high unemployment rate and limited means of welfare state, coupled with a lack of planned integration policies for (recognised) refugees, puts persons under protection in a position of social isolation and poverty that makes it impossible for them to secure their means of subsistence in the long term (Baričević 2013:112).

In the European context, the integration of immigrants into host countries became the subject of research in the late 70s and early 80s. Since then, countries have devised various integration policies (cf. Geddes 2003, Brochmann and Hammar 1999) in order to regulate the inclusion of immigrants into the receiving society while, at the same time, striving to avoid the hitherto existing assimilation and segregation processes. The underpinning idea was that immigrants from other cultures and different religious and linguistic backgrounds should be incorporated into society as a whole by means of mutual adaptation and acceptance. The principle of cultural pluralism was used as a starting point (Brubaker 1992; Heršak 1998:84). In line with immigration policies and the (non)indicators of their implementation, a growing number of scientific considerations as to what integration should include (e.g. Favell, Geddes, Penninx, Heckmann and Schnapper, Hollifield etc) began to emerge. In addition to the three key dimensions of the integration process: legal-political, socio-economic and

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asylum and subsidiary protection. Asylees are refugees who are granted asylum in the sense of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (see: *Law on international and temporary protection*, Official Gazette 70/15).

<sup>2</sup> See more: statistics of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Croatia (<http://www.mup.hr/main.aspx?id=188055>). According to the same statistics 2016 4,667 persons applied for international protection in Croatia from the beginning of 2008 to the end of the first quarter.

<sup>3</sup> Compare e.g. Law on International and Temporary Protection (OG 70/15), Asylum Act (OG 88/2010).

cultural-religious (Penninx 2004), we wish to highlight the interactive (social relations and networks) and identifying (belonging) dimensions, which emphasise the subjectivisation of the integration process, i.e. perception of the integration from the migrant's point of view (cf. Esser 2001:16 according to Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas 2016:13).

Of course, one has to bear in mind that immigrants are not a homogeneous entity and that contemporary societies significantly differ from the cultural and political ideals of a *national container* and do not imply cultural homogeneity. Furthermore, past research showed that the inclusion of immigrants into the receiving society presupposes a two-way process in which different cultural values are accepted and exchanged, and differences are respected through the interaction between immigrants and the host country population (Goodman 2000), as well as the interaction between institutional structures and migrants (Brubaker 1992).

The aim of this paper is to, on the example of the Taste of Home collective case study<sup>4</sup>, provide an overview of the attempts at integrating asylees and asylum seekers into Croatian society and the extent to which they succeed at this. This paper will outline the underlying idea and project of the Taste of Home collective, launched by the activists of the non-governmental organisation Centre for Peace Studies (CPS) (Centar za mirovne studije)<sup>5</sup> from Zagreb together with refugees and asylum seekers. It focuses on the asylees' lived experiences: what the participation in this collective means to them, whether it opens the way to socialisation, whether it secures their subsistence, i.e. whether and to what extent can we consider their active participation in the Taste of Home as a socio-economic, cultural, interactive and identification dimension of integration. On the other hand, it will also explore the extent to which this collective enables immigrant to live in a transnational space, together with the extent to which the preparation and promotion of food from their home country contributes to the feeling of parallel existence in two places. Finally, we shall examine the citizens' opinions on asylees through media discourse analysis of their comments on online articles on the Taste of Home initiative.

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<sup>4</sup> See more on ethnographic case studies: Ó Riain 2009, Swanborn 2010.

<sup>5</sup> More about CPS/CMS on: [www.cms.hr](http://www.cms.hr).

## METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted from October 2015 to May 2016<sup>6</sup>. It is based on qualitative methodology of ethnology and cultural anthropology: interviews, participant observation and media discourse analysis.

After informal interviews with participants in multiple events at which food from the Taste of Home project was presented (e.g. Refugee Day, Migrants Day, New Year celebrations...), more in-depth research was carried out at two cooking workshops with the aim of writing ethnographic field notes<sup>7</sup> and arranging individual interviews both with refugee-cooks and participants, in addition to participant observation. The goal was to observe asylees and course participants at presentations and look into the attitudes of the attendees towards the hosts/cooks/asylees and the food, thus indirectly examining the local population's attitudes towards Others/foreigners.

By using semi-structured and structured interviews, we recorded four lived refugee integration and culinary experiences. The goal was to find out the length of the refugees' stay in Croatia, everyday practices in food preparation, why they joined the Taste of Home project, the choice of food they prepare, the origin of the recipes they use, etc. The migrants were aged 25 to 37, of both sexes and with different levels of education (the majority completed secondary school, while the higher education of some was interrupted due to forced departure from their country of origin). The interviews were conducted in English, French and Croatian, i.e. in the language chosen by interviewees. Workshop participants were additionally questioned about the reasons for their participation and the experience they gained<sup>8</sup>. We also interviewed Emina Bužinkić from CPS, one of the authors of the initiative and Zinka Mujkić, staff member and coordinator of the

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<sup>6</sup> The co-author of this paper first encountered asylee-cooks in 2004 as a CPS student, when they prepared food from their home country for get-togethers with CPS participants.

<sup>7</sup> Ethnographic field notes presuppose the noting parts of interviews and descriptive tropes. The notes were analysed by means of two strategic processing models - coding and developing notes (Emerson, Fretz, Shaw 1995).

<sup>8</sup> The names of all interviewed refugees and workshop participants are given as pseudonyms.

Taste of Home cooperative. The research was conducted using ethnography of the particular (Abu-Lughod 1991) and the grounded theory strategies (Charmaz 2011) with the aim of developing the research questions instead of their "linear" confirmation (Emerson, Fretz, Shaw 1995).

During research, we followed media production which was used for the application of double ethnographic practice (Wittel 2004:19). Firstly, this involves an ethnographer taking part, i.e. being present at a social situation he/she is describing, and secondly, revealing the context and complexity whereby the potential of the ethnographic method lies in what Geertz calls "thick description" (Gerc 1998). The goal of the paper is to show the complexity of the reception of the initiative for the integration of refugees into Croatian society, a complexity that stems from two approaches to our study of this initiative: on one hand, participant observation at food presentations and cooking workshops, coupled with interviews of participants and cooks, and on the other, a description of the discourse of news articles posted on the internet and an analysis of comments they provoked.

Furthermore, the goal was to explore whether the Taste of Home collective enables refugees to maintain their cultural or dietary habits and promote their own culture, thereby reducing the distinction between country of origin and country of immigration. For this purpose, we used the transnational paradigm within the framework of which immigrant practices and social relationships that go beyond state borders are observed, or those by which immigrants link their countries/places of birth/life and their present country (cf. Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Faist et al. 2013). Transnational social spaces and fields mean that, in spite of great spatial distances and national borders, certain social interactions show a trend of global intensification (Glick Schiller et al. 1992). In this paper, we explore the role of the Taste of Home collective in the creation of transnational or transcontinental social spaces<sup>9</sup>. Numerous studies on transnational practices

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<sup>9</sup> Due to the specificities of refugee migrations, the transnational paradigm can only be applied partially. Namely, due to nature of forced migration, refugees mostly exist a space "between" two states, two citizenships ... (cf. Petrović, Duško. 2014. 'Phenomenon of Refugees in the Modern Political System.' *Glasnik Etnografskog Instituta SANU* LXII (2): 49-66; De Genova, Nicholas. 2002. 'Migrant "illegality" and deportability

showed that food prepared using familiar recipes, as well as ingredients and packaged food items brought from the country of origin to the new home, are indispensable elements (Povrzanović Frykman 2010; Povrzanović Frykman and Humbracht 2013; Petridou 2001; Gadže i Rajković Iveta 2015). Since food stimulates all senses and thus recreates the experience of home almost in its entirety, in this paper we shall view food through its function of providing continuity and a feeling of connection to home. Due to its capacity to reconstruct the sensory totality of home and the familiar, we explore whether food can help in a symbolic reconstruction of a world that has been fragmented by changing one's country of residence (Petridou 2001). Previous studies showed that food represents much more than just nutrition, as people choose, cook and serve certain meals because those evoke memories, mark important dates and express their identity (Gadže and Rajković Iveta 2015). Moreover, people from the same social i.e. cultural circle share the same associations to certain types of food, views on food, knowledge and dietary habits, all of which make up dietary culture (Contreras and Gracia Arnaiz 2005:37). Since food has an important biological, symbolic and affective role, migrant groups do not forget their dietary habits since. In this paper, we wish to determine whether food helps to preserve memories, whether recipes and meals prepared in a familiar way awaken senses that foster culture transfer and whether certain foods play an emotional role in the lives of immigrants (Ibid.).

## FOUNDATION OF THE TASTE OF HOME COLLECTIVE

The Taste of Home collective came into being as part of the project *Quality Integration Solutions for Refugees*<sup>10</sup>. The Taste of Home

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in everyday life.' *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31:419–47; Fassin, Didier. 2005. 'Compassion and Repression: The Moral Economy of Immigration policies in France.' *Cultural Anthropology* 20(3): 362-387; Huysmans, Jef. 2000. 'The European Union and the Securitisation of Migration.' *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38(5): 751-777). This aspect of the refugees' involvement in the Taste of Home collective and asylees in general remain as a topic for a future paper.

<sup>10</sup> See more at: <http://www.okus-doma.hr/hr/info/o-nama>. Over the last ten years, the (sub)project Taste of Home has been organised as part of a broader campaign i.e. programme CPS implemented in several stages under different names (see more at: <http://www.cms.hr/hr/vise-o-programima>). Mention should be made of the radio jingle

collective is the subject of our research in the sense presented on their Facebook page<sup>11</sup>, which is also the tool they use the most to communicate with a wider audience. The Taste of Home collective is presented as a social cooperative run by refugees, migrants and volunteers and, at the same time, as a group of individuals brought together by a shared interest in food and cooking. The publication titled "Taste of home" (Bužinkić 2014 s. n.) states that Taste of Home is a "research–gastronomic–culinary project acquainting us with the culture, customs and societies of origin of refugees in Croatia by recording their memories of home and the smells and flavours of their cuisine. This experiment is an exchange of life stories and culinary skills between refugees and people from Croatia."<sup>12</sup>

In an interview with Emina Bužinkić, we found out that the Taste of Home collective was modelled after similar ideas implemented in other parts of the world, for example in Great Britain and Australia, through so-called asylee or refugee cookbooks, which on one hand deal with kitchens as places for gathering and cooking as such (*public kitchen events*) and, on the other hand, represent printed collections of refugees' recipes, aimed at stimulating people to taste dishes from other cultures, get acquainted with them and break down prejudices against refugees. The volunteers and activists gathered around CPS started working with refugees in 2003, talking to them about their everyday lives, problems, their dreams, etc. Successful communication is based on trust, and the between CPS members and refugees was established successfully. First they had coffee together, socialised and then, at one point, started collecting refugee stories and recipes. Between 2006 and 2014, they managed to collect thirty recipes and stories, twenty of which were published in the volume titled "A Taste of Home" (2014). In the words of E. Bužinkić:

"Taste of Home does not mean just recording the stories, Taste of Home is really a space where people are ready to engage in a dialogue with each other ... learn from each other and where we, as

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"Integration starts with understanding", TV video "Origins of Food", cookbook "Taste of Home", the eponymous documentary by Martina Globočnik, etc.

<sup>11</sup> Facebook page of Taste of Home: <https://www.facebook.com/okusdoma>.

<sup>12</sup> Although different terms are used for Taste of Home, in this paper we use the term "collective" since we believe it describes Taste of Home best as the subject of our study.



an expression of what we are, chose cooking, language teaching and some kind of intercultural exchange”.

Many workshops and promotional activities were organised within the Taste of Home framework, in which immigrants<sup>13</sup> prepared and presented food from their countries of origin. These events were organised by civil society organisations, schools and international organisations (e.g. UNICEF, UNHCR, Red Cross...). The Taste of Home collective has also been offering food delivery service since its registration in March 2016. Zinka Mujkić, cooperative coordinator, told us that the clients are mostly NGOs, cultural institutions and associations active in work with young people. It is important to point out that money for registering the cooperative and furnishing its kitchen (19,000 USD in total) was raised from citizens through a *crowdfunding* campaign, who in return enjoyed various *perks*, such as participation in a workshop/ culinary course run by the Taste of Home collective. Our research is based on participant observation at two such workshops.

### **TASTE OF HOME COOKING WORKSHOPS**

The first cooking workshop we attended was held on Saturday, 13 February 2016 at Opatovina, Zagreb in the Kuhaona rented facility, the other on 19 March 2016 in the Centre for Dietary Culture in Zagreb. There were six cooking teams in the first workshop, with each team consisting of one or two cooks and two or three participants. All of the cooks were immigrants, some of whom were asylees, and there was also one person in the process of application for protection. The nationalities of the cooks determined the type of food that would be prepared, which means that Ethiopian, Libyan, Nigerian, Pakistani, Syrian and Senegalese dishes were made at the workshop.

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<sup>13</sup> Although the primary goal of the Taste of Home initiative and the most promoted one is assisting refugees and bringing them together (most of who were granted asylum or are in the process of application), in numerous events we saw that they are open for all other immigrants too (e.g. immigrants from African and Middle Eastern countries who live in Zagreb due to marriage migrations).



The workshops can be described as a fine blend of aromas and flavours. Laughter and chatter (in Croatian, English and French) were heard through music coming from the radio. People were drumming on the tables and high fiving each other. The participants were introduced to each other and exchanged experiences on cooking and travels. As the cooking began to make the kitchen warmer, the fine smells of familiar and less familiar foods and spices (coriander, caraway, cumin, cayenne pepper...) started spreading through the room. People called out to each other, asking for ingredients or cooking utensils, talking and/or questioning each other, tasting the food that was being prepared. The utensils banged, spice packages rustled, one cook's shoes clunked on the kitchen floor. One cook's dish was boiling over, another cook over salted by mistake, but in the end the dish was saved. This short *thick description* (Geertz 1998) brings only a tiny part of the very relaxed atmosphere at the workshops; the friendly atmosphere made it possible for everyone to establish rapport with others and engage in conversation, which meant that the three hours of cooking flew by very rapidly. At the end of the workshop, all of the participants tasted and enjoyed the prepared food, satisfied at having participated in the workshop. When everything was eaten, people danced for a while to the sounds of Ethiopian and Libyan music from *Youtube*. Then most of us left and hung out a bit longer in a nearby coffee bar.

The participants' motives for coming were varied: Ana (35, agronomist, born in Munich, lives in Zagreb) is acquainted with an asylee from before and is aware of the difficulties he is facing in Croatia, especially when it comes to looking for employment. Therefore, she came "to support financially this praiseworthy initiative". Marija (32) works on an NGO project in Čakovec aimed at improving the lives of third-country nationals in Croatia, and one part of this project also supported Taste of Home: they took part in furnishing their kitchen and raised other necessary funds. She brought three colleagues to the workshop as volunteers. Ivan (32, IT specialist, lives in Zagreb) came with his wife, and the workshop was a Christmas gift from their friends who knew they like to cook and travel. Lana (22, student, Zagreb) described her motive for joining the workshop thus: "My roommate asked me if I would volunteer in a workshop ..., when she explained what it was about, the idea of meeting new people and getting to know other cultures immediately appealed to me. When I arrived and

heard that Samba was from Senegal, I realised it was a great opportunity for me to speak French.”

The impressions of all interviewed workshop participants were very positive, which was confirmed in additional interviews:

“I’d describe the atmosphere as relaxed, fun, friendly... like when you cook with friends at home. Very nice. And I think “my” cook was the best. I cannot really tell why, but cooking and hanging out with him was such fun. Very interesting person... would definitely do it again... because it was such a lovely and fun experience, unexpectedly relaxed, partly because I like supporting people in what they do. Working, being employed and thus financially secure is, after all, one of the fundamental things in life. We cannot live... on air and sun. These people are all young and eager to work, but I am fairly certain their chances on our job market are slim. They need our support in their efforts to work.” (Ana)

“... the whole thing was awesome because the atmosphere was so friendly. Part of our task was to chat with them and just hang out; I had a feeling that everybody was in an exceptionally good mood, no communication problems whatsoever... We were accepted with open arms and the fact that food was a central topic created a friendly and family-like atmosphere from the start. Food seems the fastest means of connecting people. I had the loveliest time and that they need our support... They hope to open a cooperative – create a chance to be self-employed – and what is most important – they do not wish to be a burden to others in Croatia, but to build their own life here by themselves – it is an attitude I, myself, would wholeheartedly support.” (Marija)

“It was super interesting, I learnt how to make new dishes, I met new people and had a chance to know them – I simply like this kind of thing... I like the idea of this workshop, it helps people find jobs, while we have a chance to learn something new...” (Ivan)

“It was interactive and since the people we cooked with were friendly and talkative, it turned out to be a lovely experience. I didn’t expect much, I even thought I would be bored... I was sceptical, but all that changed... This is a very good way... for asylees to try to integrate ... and making food a central part of it was the smartest way to do it – there is nothing as familiar to people as food... when two people

from two different cultures have nothing in common, food might be their common ground." (Lana)

Although the reasons for taking part in the workshops were different (desire to help, voluntarism, gifting, meeting immigrants...) as was the participants' previous knowledge about immigrants, asylees and asylum seekers, it is evident from the above statements that all participants were extremely happy about the experience because they spent a pleasant and interesting day, gained new experiences in a friendly and relaxing environment, learnt about other cultures, tasted new food, all while contributing to the integration of asylees into Croatian society by accepting their food/culture and giving them the opportunity to cook/ work. However, we also must not overlook the fact that some of the comments, although positive, have in the background the discourse that "those" people (i.e.: *them, others, different*) need our support, they do not wish to be a "burden to" Croatia, it is a worthwhile effort to find "them" work (someone else doing it for asylees, not asylees themselves), this being a good example of asylees "trying to get integrated". The very phrase "trying to get integrated" a priori implies uncertain outcomes. Ghassan Hage (2000) writes about phantasies on *White supremacy* in multicultural society and deconstructs power relations found in the behaviour and talk of those who consider themselves managers of national space, whether they are nationalists or multiculturalists or cosmopolitans. *Managers* of national space are also found in the background discourse of the Taste of Home workshops: local people consider themselves called to give (informal) approval to asylees to work, to prove they are not burden for the state (nation) and to try to get integrated into "our" society. According to Hage (Ibid. 45), there are at least two modes of belonging to the national home: the first is *passive belonging*, the other *governmental belonging*. The mode of *passive belonging* involves the belief he or she "belongs to a nation", in the sense of being its part and therefore entitled to using national resources, "fitting into it" or "feeling at home" within it. "I belong to nation" is an approximate attitude of such *managers* of national space. On the other hand, *governmental belonging* (which is not equivalent to formal state power or government) involves the belief he or she has a right over nation, including the right to contribute (even if only with his or her *legitimate* opinion on the internal and external policies of the nation) to its management such that it remains "his/her

home". "This is my nation" is, according to Hage, the formulation of those feeling *governmental belonging* to a nation. Although "tolerant"<sup>14</sup> and friendly toward asylees and asylum seekers, the statements of the workshop participants show they speak from the position of *passive belonging* to the national space that surrounded us while we were cooking with asylees and asylum seekers in the Taste of Home workshops.



Picture 1: The cooks and participants of the "Taste of Home" workshop.

Photo by Igor Bezinović, 13 February, 2016.

## THE MIGRANTS' EXPERIENCES AND THE DISHES OF THE TASTE OF HOME COOKS

The purpose of participant observation was not solely to observe the workshop from close proximity but also to interact with our subjects, ask questions and gain an insight into the lives unfolding in front of us (Hine 2004:33). Individual interviews with the cooks were also set up in the workshops: with Akin from Nigeria, Kamran from Pakistan, Haya from Syria and Samba from Senegal. What follows are their lived refugee, integration and culinary experiences.

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<sup>14</sup> "Tolerance" is another key term Hage is challenging.

## **Akin**

Akin is a 30-year-old Nigerian who fled his home country for political reasons and threats to his life. He says that, in Croatia, he can sleep "with his eyes closed", unlike back home. He arrived to Croatia on 24 December 2011 and successfully applied for asylum. He cooked already as a child and his food is something he misses the most from home. Akin joined the Taste of Home collective already at the end of 2012. After sharing his refugee story and his recipe with the members of Centre for Peace Studies, he began cooking for them at their presentations.

"The Taste of Home looks like when you go to one big hotel and they tell you: "Oh, we have international dishes" – that means it's diversity. Always people need to try something new, to get more experience about, to know or to get closer to ... other cultures... For me, it is really like this is integration... When there is a food, cooking of food, making some music event, when the people try to present what they eat and what they do – that makes in community like Croatia less of racism, less of all that bad attitude. I think we have reached lots of people's minds so they're thinking migrants are something good... So these activities mean a lot to me, they are very helpful in our cause of trying to bring balance and not thinking of us as we are strangers..."

At the Taste of Home workshops, Akin usually prepares *jallow* rice, a dish made of meat, red peppercorn and Yoruba tomatoes. It is a traditional celebratory dish from Southwestern Nigeria. "If you do not cook *jallow* rice if you have some event, then your event is not complete. People will talk about it as: "Maybe they are poor, maybe they do not know what they are doing"... It's a simple meal but you never eat it alone. If you eat it alone, you'll be tired, you'll feel lonely and depressed." As the necessary spices called *ogiri* and *shombo* are hard to find in Zagreb, he uses different kinds of peppercorns which change the taste of the dish. This bothers him sometimes, so his friends from CPS bring him African spices from the "tropical shop" in Vienna, where other African ingredients can be found, as well. Explaining why he does not have somebody to send him spices from Nigeria, he says it is because he doesn't want to have any contact with home, as he is an asylee. Then he adds: "I eat what I see". Nevertheless, he tries not to eat alone, as eating by himself feels lonely and strange to him.

“Most of my life in Nigeria, I ate with my family, I ate with my friends. But here, at the beginning, I felt lonely, I felt very, very lonely, I ate alone, and I didn’t feel what I eat. I didn’t feel the taste. It just makes no meaning. I just eat for eating and not to be sick. Later, when I was in Zagreb for a year, I tried to get an association, so lots of guys came to my house. I can still remember until today that no one came to my house that I didn’t cook... I always cook. Because it is what it is... Now I got this culture from here, to eat alone. It’s not good to eat burek, to eat pizza on the road – it is not healthy, it’s not normal. It’s never, never, never good to eat in that way... You know, food means a lot, it’s not just about eating. Eating food [with others, author’s comment] means a lot – there is a spirit in this. But why eating alone? In Africa, they say you are like an animal when you do this. In Africa we promote harmony with one another, then respect.”

It is obvious that this asylee does not want to be in contact with his home country or have anything sent to him from Nigeria, and that he wishes to be a part of his new society; he invites friends over and cooks for them. His new friends make him feel less lonely and he gladly shares his food with them, the same way he used to do back in Nigeria with family and friends. But the tastes, aromas and gifted spices he uses to cook food for his new friends still remind him of home and the family he left behind. At the moment, his cooking with the Taste of Home is just a hobby, but it also helps him integrate into his new country, as well as changing some initial impressions of Croatia. When he started cooking back in 2012, his food was such a success that many came for second helpings and he was pleasantly surprised: “Croatian people eat Nigerian food - this is awesome!” This added an interactive dimension to the integration. He is convinced that food can change opinions and forge friendships. Food also changed his perception of Croatia as a closed-off country not particularly friendly to the “different”. He believes that the Taste of Home is:

...a project that will establish Zagreb and Croatia as a country amenable to integration. It will show... to everybody that Croatia accepted their refugees, that they established a catering business and then their own restaurant. This project is giving us the opportunity to show the richness of our culture and our way of life. This is our chance to show who we are! I am so happy and grateful that, even if



I'm having ten jobs, the Taste of Home needs me, I'll drop everything in a heartbeat and come running! There will come a lot of good stories out of this. We'll have everything and anything on our menu. That is how it is supposed to be, this mixing of cultures. The Taste of Home is the only real integration that exists in Croatia. Integration, incorporation into a society free of racism. It is a truly awesome thing that happened to the refugees (Pavić 2016 s.n.).

### **Kamran**

Kamran is a 27-year-old Pakistani who was granted asylum in Croatia in late 2014. A Nigerian friend told him about Taste of Home and he has occasionally cooked for them since 2015. He is a professional cricket player, but used to cook often in his uncle's restaurant in Pakistan. He doesn't have a cooking degree because you do not need one to cook in a restaurant in Pakistan. The recipes for *korma* and *kheer*, the traditional Pakistani dishes he prepared at the workshop, came from his mother and uncle. He rarely cooks them for himself, as *korma* and *kheer* are expensive dishes and the ingredients are hard to come by in Croatia (such as *korma masala*, a spice blend). To make his workshop *korma*, he used a *garam masala* spice blend that was made available by organisers in the workshop kitchen. He added that aroma of the spices fills the house when a dish is being prepared in Pakistan: "It is a beautiful smell, it's really nice, and here it is not possible".

He eats mainly Croatian food in Zagreb because Pakistani food ingredients are impossible to find and getting them from his parents in Pakistan would be too costly. The only food from home he singled out as easy and affordable to prepare in Croatia is the Pakistani traditional bread. He feels *like at home* when he eats it. Even making the bread makes him feel good, reminding him of family and the life he had back home. His migrant journey took him through Greece and Macedonia, where he lived for a while. As Greece offered the same ingredients and spices as Pakistan, he was able to prepare the same food as back home. He is of the opinion that his diet in Croatia would be better if he had a paying job that would make it possible for him to order Pakistani and Asian food ingredients from his Greek friend. Then he would eat the Asian food he grew up with: "Asian food is with taste, it is not tasteless like here. We use many spices and spices are good for health". During our research, Kamran's opinions on The



Taste of Home project vacillated between sceptical and very positive - the latter happening during periods of more intensive cooking workshops and participation at events in which Taste of Home was involved. Regardless of this, he was always willing to cook with Taste of Home, trying to make it his source of income. Kamran's example shows just how interaction with the host country population is facilitated by Taste of Home workshops. The intensity of the interaction conditioned Kamran's opinions on whether to stay in Croatia or move on: the higher the intensity of contact with the local population, the higher was his satisfaction with his own life in Croatia. The exact opposite happened when there was less contact: less interaction meant a less active life, and therefore he took it as a sign that it was time to move on.

### **Haya**

Haya is a 37-year old-Syrian who came to Croatia in September 2015 to seek asylum and provide a better future for her children. Three years ago she lived for a while in Zagreb, where she owned a restaurant together with her Lebanese husband. At the moment, she lives in Zagreb, where she takes care of her three children (one 15-year-old daughter and 10-year-old twin boys) while her husband is working in Moscow. She is hoping to be granted asylum and permitted to stay in Croatia. While attending a presentation about Syria, she came across information about the Taste of Home and joined in. Her motive was to help the refugees and to be of use, and it just so happened she also liked cooking and loved how making food brings people together. At the workshop, she made *fattouche* salad and *shish barak* on rice, both recipes passed on to her by her mother. These are also dishes she frequently prepares in Zagreb for her family. They are very popular not only in Syria, but throughout the whole Middle Eastern region. She brought to the workshop her own *sumac* from Syria (the main spice in those dishes) and Arab bread bought at the Oriental store in Zagreb (owned by her friends from Syria). In Zagreb, Haya cooks the same way she used to cook back home in Syria and finds all the necessary ingredients in Zagreb. She adds that cooking Middle Eastern food reminds both her and her children of happy life they used to have in Syria. Haya does not bring only hard-to-find-spices back from Syria, but also other ingredients and homemade products

like *kishk* (similar to Croatian "zimnica"). When her stockpile of Syrian *kishk* runs out, she says, she will ask her parents to send her some more.

Haya's wish is to become a professional cook, but one needs a degree for it. She would cook both Syrian and Lebanese cuisine, even though she is aware that such food has limited appeal in Zagreb. However, comparing her previous stay in Zagreb with the present one, she admits that people's tastes have changed, and that they are becoming more open to new flavours. She credits Taste of Home for bringing that broadening of tastes about. Taste of Home is, according to her opinion, also a worthwhile initiative that creates good relationships between asylees and the local population. She feels good in Croatia, safe, while adding that Croatians accept "others" in a good way, and pointing out that living in Zagreb is easy for her. Her children attend Croatian school and are well accepted by their classmates. Her hope is to be allowed the opportunity to continue living here and build a permanent life:

"I am happy that I'm here in Zagreb, it's a lovely city for me. I have Croatian friends also here, really good people and friendly and I hope that I will get my positive decision" (for her asylum application; *authors' comment*).

Haya's story highlights the importance of asylum seekers being socially included - to be valued and useful members of their local community, doing what they know best and cooperating with their social environment in its entirety.

### **Samba**

Samba is 25 years old and was born in Dakar. He came to Croatia in July 2014 and applied for asylum status, which he was granted. He came into contact with Taste of Home the same year, when CPS staff came looking for information on Senegalese food and recipes. He took part in various activities organised by the Taste of Home, and during the Refugee Days events in September 2015, he cooked for them for the first time. In response to the question regarding what The Taste of Home means to him, he said:

"It means lots of things, a new family for me [*italics by the authors*], a new collective, great people who I meet there and a great idea. The idea is great because it's full of messages, a new revolution for me...

a lot of messages: to show to the rest of these people that we are one and that we can... we share food, different food and food we eat at one plate, and it's unity, the unification of everyone, from everywhere. We can share, to show that we can do something... It's one of my reasons (why I am taking part in.), because I see it as a big idea, good things that are for me very important, you know... Unity, peace, love. New family and do what you want".

His statement clearly shows that the Taste of Home collective means relevant social integration to the asylees, and a sense of belonging (or "creating a new family") exemplifies both the interactive and identifying aspects of the integration process. Samba likes cooking, and making food and feeding people is for him something beautiful. He wishes to be a professional cook, but, at the same time, doubts the concept of being a "professional": "things should exist naturally within you... I know who I am, I know my qualities and I know all I am capable of - I know my level, I know what is inside me." He used to cook alongside his aunt and grew up living with her, so he calls his aunt "mum" too, same as his birth mother. His workshop dish was *couscous* (*thiere* in Senegalese *wolof*), a meat stew cooked with grains, paprika and garlic. It is an everyday dish that can be prepared in many different ways and Samba eats it often in his Zagreb home. Despite some ingredient substitutions (sunflower seed oil for peanut oil), his workshop variant was prepared according to his grandmother's recipe, the way they make it for a Senegal national holiday. By choosing to prepare a dish that is always prepared for a Senegal national celebration, but preparing it by following his family's old recipe, Samba created his own transnational area.

In his everyday life, Samba does not eat Senegalese food for lack of ingredients, and does not want to use substitutes because the food then would not taste right. He says he does not want anything sent to him from Senegal because of the cost and adds: "I can survive everywhere". One habit survived from home, though: eating food with hands, from one bowl, like "at home" because hands are the "original spoon, original fork, original knife", and eating out of one common plate for him signifies:

"...this is like we are one... we don't care about if you are sick or not, if you are different... I will never become sick if I share the food with

someone – that is love for me, love cannot be mixed with anything else, anything bad... Just go and wash yourself, sit and eat... We do not separate people, separation started from there: one plate, two plates, three plates... we separate ourselves and we don't know... the one pot is: we are one".

During his migration journey, he lived for some time in Greece, and there he ate "normally", as in Senegal because Greece has shops that stock African ingredients. He is currently employed by the Taste of Home and is about to graduate as a cook. Not only did the collective open up the possibility for this asylee to be successfully integrated, socially, interactively and individually with the realisation of a parallel transnational belonging, but it also added on the possibility of economic integration, as well. Because of everything that happened, he said: "Where people live, life is there, that is my philosophy... you can make your way everywhere" (...) "My life is everywhere, but I live in Croatia". He finished his interview with these words: "I feel good, I feel great, I feel happy in Croatia, I feel myself...".

## **THE TASTE OF HOME AND ITS TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELD**

From Akin's, Kamran's, Haya's and Samba's lived refugee and asylee stories, we can clearly see that they occasionally inhabit transnational social fields and participate in transnational processes (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004:1028). These authors name two distinct "modes of being": existing and being within the field relating to actual social relationships and being within the field of their everyday practices as individuals. Conversely, the modes of belonging to the transnational social field are related to habits signifying or embodying the identities assumed while forming a meaningful bond with a particular social group. The activities included in this mode of being are not symbolic, they are very specific and visible activities, all denoting belonging (Ibid. 1010). All of the narratives - the cooks' and participants' - state that both the food they cooked and their participation in the workshop mirrored their mode of being and signified continuity of their life from "over there" and to "here": their country of origin or countries they lived in while in transit (Greece, Macedonia) and Croatia. The very nature

of forced migration affects the possibility of access to food ingredients from their home: Akin choose not to procure them for political reasons, Kamran and Samba deem them too expensive and Haya will go through the trouble of acquiring foods from home only if it is too difficult to prepare a certain meal in Croatia: *kishk*. None of the cooks emphasised the national character of their dishes - they were all dishes that possessed an individual emotional dimension, associated with their own families, i.e. the people who taught them how to cook and the people whom they shared their food with. Nevertheless, the dishes themselves held "transnational" ingredients. The workshop staff and friends of the asylees procuring hard-to-get ingredients for them are the facilitators of their being in transnational social field, albeit symbolically. The cooking workshops were not mere cooking courses: they represented a reinforcement both of the participants' attitudes (on the importance of the integration of asylees into Croatian society) and the attitudes of the asylees themselves, whose food was warmly accepted, and therefore were they, too. The Taste of Home case study confirms that the incorporation of migrants into their new country and their transnational connections are not binary opposites, that the migrant experience can be viewed as a movement between the new country and the transnational assimilation - a movement that, over time, can vary both in direction and intensity (Ibid. 1011). Samba's musings might illustrate this thesis the best: "Where people live, life is there... My life is everywhere, but I live in Croatia".

## **THE TASTE OF HOME ON THE INTERNET**

After describing the prevalent mood at the Taste of Home workshops and hearing opinions about it from both cooks and participants, we could safely conclude that the local population is amenable to cultural differences and that Taste of Home is a successful example of various aspects of integration moving in the right direction. But, can we really conclude that? Are the workshop's participants a true representation of the Croatian society at large, or are they a minority? We turned to the Internet to look for the answer. According to Boyer (2012:383), the Internet is one of the main points of interest in the field of media anthropology - one that, over the past 40 years, focused its research on the ways in which both creating

and receiving communicated media texts and the advance of technology facilitates or influences processes of cultural creation and reproduction.

We could state that what we are witnessing on the Internet is a collection of texts. In considering it as such, the use of the Internet becomes a process of reading and writing texts, and the ethnographer's task is to develop understandings of meaning lying at the base of textual practices. (Hine 2004:36)

As an in-depth analysis of media discourse about asylees and the Taste of Home would be well beyond the scope of this case study, our aim was to look into some of Croatian citizens' opinions about the asylees participating in the Taste of Home initiative. The research started with a Google search for "Taste of Home". Because of the large volume of results our search generated, we set a time frame and singled out articles published online over the duration of our case study. Our analysis of ten or so articles was based on thematic (discourse) analysis of the content (Bryman 2012:528–536) of the online versions of daily newspapers. The online articles all offered a comment thread section, in which the "wide readership" could post their opinions under a real name or invented online handle.

What follows are the fragments from several texts that outline the way in which events at the Taste of Home were presented.

On 24 February, 2015, "vecernji.hr" published an article under the title: "Emina Bužinkić: We Want to Open a Restaurant Staffed by Asylees", with a subheader "We wish this restaurant to be a place of integration, and any profit generated would be reinvested into the refugee effort." The article continues with short passage describing the lives of several asylees and asylum seekers living in Croatia at the moment and the story chronicling the birth of Taste of Home. The interview with E. Bužinkić includes facts about the number of granted asylum applications in Croatia, a story about the cook working in Taste of Home and reports on the plans for forming a cooperative which would be based on the rules of social entrepreneurship. This cooperative would concentrate solely on catering in the beginning, followed by a real restaurant staffed by refugees. "'Taste of Home' needs to be a place of integration and connection; any profit raised would come back to the refugees living among us and other marginalised society groups." The article also included a photo

gallery with nine pictures of the asylees, of Emina herself and photos of the dishes with recipes attached (Matijević 2015).

The article provoked many comments, here republished with all the grammatical mistakes and misspellings, and the comments themselves generated many likes of the wide readership.

Refugees go home and let Emina, as a good Croatian citizen, open a restaurant staffed by unemployed Croatian citizens living on the dole and invest profit into soup kitchens and shelters for homeless. (*novo vrijeme*; 88% likes)

It is so nice and humane taking care of the persecuted. What is it, a centre for peace studies? We live in a land of milk and honey, we haven't even one unemployed person, and every day more and more of our young leave the country. Maybe that centre should leave its ideas IN PEACE. (*demokrscanin*, 81% likes)

All asylees from Islamic country. They will nicely raise our birth rate. This is the price we pay for being in EU. (*Cupcake*, 79% likes)

Would ya just look at that name, centre for peace studies, if one wouldnt know what it really is, you might think it's some university or something, but, lo and behold, it is just twenty or so leeches sitting in the government bog, with just one goal in mind, find homes and settle in the so-called refugees from one bog over... (*mileudarcina I*, 86% likes)

The likes of these do not integrate they even order us to accept their way of life. (*grevilija*, 80% likes)

NO thank you!!!!!! Look at the French, how happy they are now... or maybe Swedes!!! Horror why we need foreigners when our young ones are running away FOR WORK!!!!!! This all is on big treason, they want to water down our Croatian national being and that is all there is to it!!!!!! (*kriticko\_razmisli*, 75% likes)

Asylees should be allowed into the country if they are indeed in need of an asylum, under the condition of assimilation, first and foremost accepting the largest local religion - so we don't fall into the trap, like the Brits did, of growing Muslim terrorists hating all things Christian. (*silverback*, 75% likes)

I hope this country of mine goes bust soon; we people pay highest taxes so that my government can do "mumbo-jumbo bullshit" with



"centre for peace studies" "social entrepreneurship for asylees and so on" .. Our Republic loses tens of thousands of young people per year, and the state wastes money feeding those (half of them turn out to be ISIS fans anyway)... madhouse... we r "fckd"...  
(*longestmailevercreatedfortrade*, 67% likes)

On 16 October, 2015, "nacional.hr" published an article entitled: "THE TASTE OF HOME Asylees Cooked Their National Dishes in Split". The article reports on the gastronomic show at which the asylees in Croatia prepared their national dishes, along with the charges from Center for Homeless operated by the MoSt Cooperative. The event marked The World Food Day and The Fight Against Poverty Day. The article features quotes by E. Buzinkic on Taste of Home and lists the cities where the event had already taken place - Sisak, Kutina, Čakovec, Rijeka and Pula, adding that, after the Split show, the event will take place in Osijek and Vukovar. The newspaper story is illustrated with photos of the participants, with cooks from Nigeria, Ethiopia and Senegal. One reader commented on it under the name of *Sime Begonja*:

"them there your new friends are coming with one big single goal have you seen their motto from yesterday in sweden CATHOLICS EITHER BECOME MUSLIMS OR DIE that is their goal".

On 20 October 2015, "dobrahрана.jutarnji.hr" published an article on collective's fundraising efforts under the title: "The Taste of Home: A New Campaign Helping Immigrants Open Restaurant in Croatia", with a subheader of: "A noble gesture connecting new cultures and offering a new beginning!" The initiative itself is briefly introduced, with a link to a short, two-minute long video clip filmed at one of the workshops that includes interviews with the cooks and participants. At the end of the video clip, one of the cooks makes an appeal for donations in English, as they were trying to raise the EUR 15,000 needed to furnish the cooperative's kitchen in order to start their catering business. The article has two comments:

"Oh, geez, I too would like to open my own restaurant and return back home. Who is willing to help me with their donations???"  
(*Natalija*)

“Flirty young hippie bunnies hanging around young black men... I really would like to know just what kind of ethnic cuisine sausage they are interested in.” (*Tomislav*)

## ANALYSIS OF INTERNET ARTICLES

We can conclude from the above mentioned articles that they are written factually, with a lot of photographs included and the overall tone towards refugees, asylees and all the others involved with this collective is positive, i.e. there is a positive media discourse towards the Taste of Home. According to Spitulnik (1993:295), the most pervasive and dominant paradigm of mass communication process in the 1980s was a linear model consisting of three levels: message production, message transmission and message reception, whereby the message is seen as the key unit of cultural meaning, a powerful means of the refraction and reproduction of society’s dominant ideologies. In this paper, we look at the third level: the way in which media messages about the existence and activities of Taste of Home were received by the readers. It is evident that the above mentioned comments stand in stark contrast to the exceptionally positive impressions of the workshop participants and of those who tasted food at presentations, as well as to the positive attitudes of journalists. The first article published in the online edition of the *Večernji list* was the most commented on: all posts were negative and generated likes from the others. The *real* factors related to the socio-economic *threat* that immigrants pose in connection with economic interests (cf. Čačić-Kumpes, Gregurević, Kumpes 2012:314, 316), economic crisis, high unemployment in Croatia, low birth rate and emigration are evident in the attitudes of those who posted comments, and because all of this asylees are seen as the ones who are taking the already scarce economic resources of local population. On the other hand, there are also *symbolic* factors (socio-cultural threat) (Ibid.) related to culture, customs, religion and values.

Stuart Hall poses the following questions: how do we represent people and places that are significantly different from us, why is “otherness” such an attractive topic and contested area of representation, what typical forms and representation practices are used in order to represent “difference” in today’s popular culture and where do all these stereotypes come from (1997:

225)? Can we explain why representation of "otherness" engages feelings, attitudes, emotions and mobilises fears and anxieties, like the ones we saw in the comments by some of the articles' readers? People who are in any way different from the majority ("them" vs. "us"), are often exposed to a binary form of representation: "through sharply opposed, polarised, binary extremes – good/bad, civilised/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, repelling-because-different/attractive-because-strange-and-exotic." (Ibid. 229). This thesis is confirmed in the statement of an asylee from Nigeria living in Croatia: "Croatian girls are schizophrenic when it comes to black men. They are either attracted to them for no particular reason except for their being black or reject them for the same reason." (cf. Dujmović 2015).

In the light of the arguments of Mary Douglas (1966), most comments see asylees as something undesirable, something that disturbs the order within Croatian society (culture). Symbolic boundaries between cultures keep them "pure", giving them their unique meaning and identity. Dark-skinned cooks are reduced to the concept of asylees who are, at the moment, the "others". and since they are different in status and skin colour from the "indigenous" people, we do not need them for there is no work here even for "our people". Here we enter the domain of stereotypes, one of the features of which is precisely the practise of "closure" and exclusion that symbolically fixes boundaries and excludes everything which does not belong (Hall 1997:258). Moreover, we have to feed and take care of our own "needy" before we can even think of anything else except sending asylees the message to go somewhere else. The online commentators see multiple dangers/threats: they are going to water down Croatian national being, they take jobs from "our people", especially the young (who are forced to leave Croatia) and they are going to impose their Muslim faith on us. The last comment does not even take into account the fact that asylees' religion is not mentioned anywhere in the articles. In the given examples, we encounter intertextuality that is defined as the accumulation of meanings across different texts, where one image refers to another, or has its meaning altered by being read in the context of other images (Ibid. 232). We can conclude that the commentators of articles about Taste of Home formed their opinions on numerous other articles on asylees (cf. Župarić-Iljić 2013) and immigrants in general (Franc et al. 2010; Šram 2010; Čačić-Kumpes et al. 2012), in which the authors perceive asylees and immigrants

were a socio-economic and socio-cultural threat to Croatian society and competition on the labour market, and that lack of closure towards cultural diversity leads to the exclusiveness of local population towards immigrants (cf. Župarić-Iljić 2013:209).

Although not directly politically motivated per se, some of the negative discourses in the comment threads can be associated with the first type of symbolic conflict identified by Simon Harrison. This conflict, according to Senjković (2002:274), can be read as an example of ethnic and nationalist rivalry that increases cultural differences and represents a reflection of the negative tactics of "valuation contest". Commentators verbally attacked refugees as the "others", classified them as the ones who are going to impose their faith and such, and saw CPS members as adversaries because they support such "others" and therefore as renegades from the society of "our people", or even as women of dubious morality ("Flirty young hippie bunnies hanging around young black men"). In some comments, the second type of Harrison's symbolic conflict, "proprietary competition" can be identified: the intention to employ refugees in some comments is defined as hostile behaviour, and the right to work and earn in Croatia are seen as important collective symbols that primarily belong to the majority community, the Croats.

The mentioned comments on online articles on the Taste of Home are attitude projections of anonymous readers and it can be assumed that there was no interaction between them and seekers of international protection in Croatia. The comments indicate that one part of Croatian society is open neither towards asylees, nor towards people from different cultures, races and faiths. They also show that what Hage (2000) called *governing belonging* to a nation, for they feel they have a right to the nation (and therefore a *legitimate* opinion on asylees) and its governing so that Croatia remains "their home". "This is my nation" is an attitude that can be read in the background of most (if not all) online comments.

## CONCLUSION

Given the global migration flows and aged European and Croatian population, it could be assumed that, in the context of Croatia's EU membership, more and more foreigners will be moving to Croatia in near

future (Čačić-Kumpes, Gregurević 2012), and that the Republic of Croatia will be approving more requests for asylum (Župarić-Iljić 2013). However, the "refugee crisis" that started in 2015 as well as the recent emigration of Croatian citizens in search of work and a better standard of living show different migration directions, in and out of Croatian territory. Over the last ten years and in line with new migration flows, new EU programmes, mechanisms and instruments for the promotion of integration were passed or, existing ones were amended.<sup>15</sup> In 2011, the European Commission proposed a new *European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals*<sup>16</sup> which, among other things, focuses on the increase of social and cultural participation of migrants and activities on local levels. These guidelines are applied through the Taste of Home, the goal of which is frequent interaction between asylees/foreigners and local people by way of public food presentations, frequent presence in media and the like. Although the initiative was launched in Zagreb, promotional events are organised in numerous other places. We believe that, after first having gained experience in the Taste of Home collective, some asylees could find a job in other parts of Croatia, especially on the Adriatic coast, which is faced with a labour shortage in the catering business. Since the goal of the Taste of Home founders was to articulate everything that refugees/asylees/migrants are by means of cooking and thus break down all prejudices and stereotypes, it is precisely through asylees' stay in smaller places and everyday contact with local population that this could be achieved. The organisers believe that cooking proved to be a good means for this, because nobody sees it as a threat or danger. Workshop participants and asylees are of the same opinion. Moreover, they point out, Taste of Home shows society that refugees are able to do something, that they did not come to take away jobs or women

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<sup>15</sup> C.f. A Common Agenda for Integration Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union (2005) <http://eurex.europa.eu/LexUriSerexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0389:FIN:EN:PDF>; European Web Site on Integration, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/home>; European Migration Forum, <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-european-migration-forum-1>;

<sup>16</sup> European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals (2011) [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/homeaffairs/news/intro/docs/110720/1\\_en\\_act\\_part1\\_v10.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/homeaffairs/news/intro/docs/110720/1_en_act_part1_v10.pdf)

from the "indigenous" population, i.e. that they do not want to be a burden to the state.

According to the qualitative data gained in interviews with asylees and workshop participants, it can be concluded that this programme was successful in terms of the implementation of social, cultural, interactive and identifying integration of asylees, and that it could at the moment provide economic integration for some asylees.<sup>17</sup> Involvement with the Taste of Home proved essential for the identity dimension of integration, i.e. feeling of personal satisfaction and belonging, confirmed by asylees' emphasising that they found a "new family", and the fact that the people who met within this initiative socialise outside it, as well. On the basis of ethnography of the particular, it is evident that integration is a dynamic process, since the opinion and the level of satisfaction about his present situation and life in Croatia of one of the asylees kept changing during our research.

Without challenging the thesis that the nature of refugee migrations is being "between" two states, on the basis of data presented in this paper we can conclude that the very dishes asylees (or refugees who were granted protection by a new state) prepare in workshops, regardless of whether they are prepared with the same ingredients as home or with ingredients that attempt to achieve that, represent a cook's embodied transnational practices and the continuity of his/her stay in Croatia and, on a symbolic (identity) level, in the country of origin since this dish reflects not only what they have been eating since childhood, but their personal views on food and eating. For one of the respondents it is "unnatural" to eat alone, for another it is natural to eat from one bowl because dividing food on plates for each

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<sup>17</sup> Although the Republic of Croatia granted international protection to 176 persons, according to our knowledge an extremely low number of them have the opportunity to work in Croatia, which will be the subject of a future systematic study. Since there are no official statistics with regard to where they live and in what conditions, and whether they work, we believe migrant networks should be used to reach as many asylees as possible, and that qualitative interviews should be used to find out whether their degrees have been validated, how many have completed additional qualification courses, what obstacles they face when looking for a job (e.g. no knowledge of Croatian), reluctance from the side of employers to take them, (level of unemployment in Croatia), what their plans for the future are, etc.

individual means division among people, and the third thinks the Asian food he grew up with is more nutritious and better than food eaten in Croatia.

According to the conducted research, there are two sides to integration. On one hand, the local people that are in direct contact with asylees demonstrate great openness towards cultural and other differences while, on the other, comments on online articles and the likes they receive from others point to a completely opposing view - social distance and a high level of resistance to their becoming a part of Croatian society. Asylees are perceived as a socio-cultural and socio-economic threat. Because of the above mentioned, we confirm the thoughts of C. Geertz:

“Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is. It is a strange science whose most telling assertions are its most tremulously based, in which to get somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion, both your own and that of others, that you are not quite getting it right. But that, along with plaguing subtle people with obtuse questions, is what being an ethnographer is like” (Gerc 1998:44).

The entirely different contexts: the friendly atmosphere and enthusiasm on the part of all who participated in public presentations and workshops and the contrasting, hostile attitude toward asylees-cooks as well as organisers, reveal a multi-field approach to the research of Taste of Home, and the complexity of the issue of the integration of asylees into Croatian society. It is going to be interesting to follow the development of the Taste of Home collective, especially when it comes to their capacity to employ refugees in the cooperative they founded, whereby the fact that the cooperative employs not only asylees but local people too is not to be overlooked. Consequently, questioning positions of power within the Taste of Home collective will certainly be a subject of further research. Since our research was carried out at the very beginning of the Taste of Home project, we think that it will be possible to determine in a more realistic way whether this is an example of the successful integration of asylees and asylum seekers into Croatian society only after some time has passed.



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