
HOSPITALITY AS A VIRTUE OF THE PLACE

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Introduction

In the context of political theory, the term of hospitality is usually defined as a special form of interaction among individuals of different cultural, national, religious or political communities. This interaction provides welcoming of the guest by the host on the border, doorstep, threshold or edge. There is no hospitality without an edge because, as Edward Casey suggests, the edge is “where strangers are received: it is where hospitality happens.”¹

Even though this definition seems understandable, etymological insight in the Latin word *hostis* (signifying at the same time a guest / a stranger / an enemy) opens the inseparability between the understanding of the term hospitality and the term hostility. According to Richard Kearney² the wager between hospitality and hostility is one of the inaugural dramas of human ethics. This moral and political wager is strongly rooted in the Western philosophical, linguistic and religious tradition that made the term hospitality, as well as the practices of it, an abstract virtue and at the same time a “living existential struggle – a struggle with crucial contemporary implications.”³

The struggle for the understanding and providing hospitality for the stranger is a never-ending task because:

¹ Edward S. Casey, “Strangers at the End of Hospitality,” in *Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality*, ed. Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 39.

² Richard Kearney, “Welcoming the Stranger,” in *All Changed? Culture and Identity in Contemporary Ireland*, ed. Padraig O Duibhir, Rory McDauid and Andrew O’Shea (Dublin: Duras, 2011), 168.

³ Ibid.

(...) there are always more guests to be hosted, ever new strangers to be welcomed as they arrive at the door bearing gifts or challenges, asking for bread or refuge, questioning, calling, demanding, thanking. And there are many differed of strangers, not only those aliens and others who come from afar, but also those strangers who come from within ourselves. We are never done with hospitality because we are never done with hosting strangers.⁴

Limitation of the single paper does not allow resolution of the abovementioned dichotomy, incorporated in the notion of hospitality. Its intentions are much more realistic since it will just briefly sketch both challenges of hospitality – the theoretical and the political one. Theoretical overview of the contemporary philosophical understanding of the term hospitality will dominantly be presented through Brian Treanor's essay "Putting Hospitality in Its Place".⁵ Political implication of the practice of hospitality will be demonstrated through Croatian experience with the recent *refugee crisis* that took place between September 2015 and May 2016.

Hospitality (in Theory)

As Paul Ricoeur notices,⁶ the term refugee is a new concept, created by disruption and violence in the 20th century when the establishment of the right for self-determination of a nation coincided with the forced mass migration provoked by two world wars. As a cure for millions of migrants who lost their homes and citizenship (or did not acquire one at all), the right of asylum, defined at the Geneva Convention, was granted to every human being. The Western principle of hospitality marked the essence of the global asylum system. Even though such principle can be traced from pre-Homeric tradition, European modern understanding of hospitality was strongly marked by the evolution of

⁴ Richard Kearney and James Taylor, "Introduction," in *Hosting the Stranger Between Religions*, ed. Richard Kearney and James Taylor (New York: Continuum, 2011), 1.

⁵ Brian Treanor, "Putting Hospitality in Its Place," in *Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality*, ed. Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 49–66.

⁶ Paul Ricoeur, "Being a Stranger," *Theory, Culture and Society* 75 (2010): 44, doi: 10.1177/0263276416651976.

the principle itself which began at the end of the Middle Ages. From that time, hospitality previously considered an act of Christian charity, is transformed to the universal human right. The period from the second scholasticism and writing of Francisco de Vitoria at the beginning of 16th century to Immanuel Kant's essay *Toward Perpetual Peace* in the late 18th century was crucial for this evolution.⁷

At the same time, the rise of national states introduced bordered ethnical communities which, by the beginning of the 21st century, respected asylum rights to the level of appropriateness for the national interests. Every time when the migrants who were strangers to the receiving nations seeking refuge became supernumerary, they were characterised as the threat for the citizens. Suspension of the granting of the asylum right resulted from closing of the borders for the mass migration.⁸ Position of the borders, therefore, stood for both the inclusion and the exclusion of strangers. Hospitality is impossible without borders, but at the same time, they are considered to be an instrument of the violation of the right for asylum. The improvement of asylum system was expected to happen by the rise of supranational political entities like the European Union. But instead of being improved, traditional strangeness that usually existed as *alterity* within European nations, is transformed to absolute strangeness for the ones outside European (or Western) cultural, political, economic or religious circle. Hence, the problem of the stranger migrant (particularly when it comes to the larger groups of strangers migrants), reoccurred in European theory and political practice.⁹

This problem was especially noticed by French philosophers who were creditable with the main theoretical debate concerning contemporary understanding of the term hospitality. That debate is dominantly led by Derridean deconstruction and Ricoeurian hermeneutics. These

⁷ Gideon Baker, "The Right of entry or right of refusal? Hospitality in the law of nature and nations," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 03 (2011): 1424, doi:10.1017/S0260210510001269.

⁸ Duško Petrović and Romana Pozniak, "Tražitelji azila kao prijatelj" ("Asylum Seekers as a Threat"), *Studia Ethnologica Croatica* 26 (2014): 48, doi: 10.17234/SEC.26.3.

⁹ Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 163.

two positions open the possibility for understanding the dichotomy or even the *aporia* of the notion and the principle of hospitality. Does it need to be unconditional – an absolute openness to the stranger or should it be conditional? Does such hospitality always remain a hyperbolic ethical ideal or can it be used as the base for policy recommendation and development that lead to asylum right?

For Derrida, whose work on the notion of hospitality had the broader theoretical influence, there is no doubt that the responsibility to the stranger in need is unconditional. As Kearney¹⁰ explains, Derrida is well aware that world belongs to everyone but within the borders of national-states it belongs to some more than others and that is why some form of immigration / emigration laws are inevitable.

That's the law and Derrida accepts this; but he goes on to argue that there's something beyond the law: namely justice. And justice demands more: unconditional hospitality to alien. Hospitality is only truly just, this argument goes, when it resists the temptation to discriminate between good or evil others, that is, between the hostile enemy (*hostis*) and the benign host (*hostis*).¹¹

On the other hand, hermeneutic approach calls for more caution and opens the possibility for saying *no* to some strangers migrants. Not all strangers are in need of protection and sanctuary. Hermeneutics, thus, addresses the need for “critical informed ethic-political judgement”¹² which will discern between good and evil and embrace conditional rather than unconditional hospitality.

Putting Hospitality in Its Place

Brian Treanor is well aware of tangled questions mentioned in the introduction, but he suggests that before answering them we have to consider an important notion – the notion of the place. As Treanor asserts, hospitality is a virtue of the place and we must understand the place if we do not want to fail in understanding hospitality. Hospital-

¹⁰ Richard Kearney, “Evil and Other,” *The Hedgehog Review* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 69, doi: 10.1177/0275074014545381.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 71.

ity is indeed “so deeply connected to place that it is defined by this association.”¹³

Hospitality always happens in a place because it consists in giving place to another and occurs as a part of a relationship between an *implaced* person and *displaced* one. This relationship is composed of two subjects: the host and the guest, but their status is significantly different. The host has the power to accept the guest, but since the guest is a stranger, the main doubt of the host is to open or close the door. In other words – to give his / her own place to the stranger or not to give; to share or not to share the place?

Place is, Treanor argues, *sine qua non* of being. It is primordial to the person because it is the space in and from which one lives. When we are accepting the stranger, we not only ask who he or she is and *how* we can live together but also *where* the stranger comes from and *where* the stranger can be *implaced*. In this context, place is not just any space. It is well known space which is familiar and comfortable, predictable and secure. “Places require more than mere spatial orientation. Places are experienced spaces of a certain sort and as such, they have cultural dimension, they are social, communal and historical.”¹⁴

Citing Edward Casey’s essay *Getting Back into Place*, Treanor suggests that place should be thought of as two-sided phenomenon – bounded by our bodies and by the landscape. This duplicity is called *placescapes*, which allows us to achieve orientation that is more than a pure recognition of the environment. When displacement happens (same as *implacement*), it happens by degrees. The higher the degree of displacement is (or the threat of it) the higher the person’s fear and pain is. “The fear of being lost (i.e., without ground) appears to be fundamental to the human psyche and to our understanding of being a stranger. Even the most intrepid solitary explorer, itinerant ‘sathu’, or nomadic Bedouin needs some minimal connection to place.”¹⁵

This fear and pain are also motivated by the problem of language, closely connected to the understanding of the place. “Language is one,

¹³ Treanor, “Putting,” 50.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

yet languages are many.”¹⁶ Since every national state is logocentric, when the process of displacement happens, we are not only faced with the new, unknown environment, but also with the problem of the language barrier that conducts migrations. Would we be able to tell our (his)story? Would we be able to explain our intentions and reasons for leaving our own place and seeking hospitality? If we somehow managed to understand the Other, would there be enough place for our narrative in someone else’s narrative?

The problem of displacement is not connected only to the contemporary migration flows, whatever group of the migrants the person belongs to: economic migrants, refugees or asylum seekers. The displacement in post-modern era happens on two levels: the displacement of the stranger (explained above) and the displacement of the post-modern condition (which will be explained in detail further in the text on the example of Croatian town Slavonski Brod), but we are often failing to understand both of these levels. Moreover, with failing to recognize and understand displacement of post-modern condition, we are failing to understand hospitality.

Hospitality in and out of Works

In spite of being a Mediterranean country, given its special geographical (dis)location, Croatia has not had any significant experience with migration flows that, from 2010 onward, were moving by Mediterranean routes from African countries and the Middle East towards the countries of the European Union. At the same time, it stood outside the overland paths of the *Balkan migration route* on its way from Turkey to the Western Europe. Alongside geographic dislocation from main migration routes, permanently unfavourable economic situation within the country has not made Croatia an appealing country for various non-European migrant groups in terms of representing reliable and safe haven from economic and political deprivation or war in their domicile environments. Between July 2004 (when the *Asylum law*

¹⁶ Richard Kearney, “Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Translation,” *Research in Phenomenology* 37 (2007): 148, doi: 10.1163/156916407X185610.

was first enforced) and June 2014 less than 4,500 requests for asylum and subsidiary protection in Croatia were submitted (out of which 117 were granted).¹⁷

The continuation of military conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan has caused an increase in the number of refugees in Europe. Germany opening up for the acceptance of refugees has made the *Balkan migration route* more frequent than ever before. In the late summer of 2015, Hungary, which was part of this route, had denied further acceptance of new refugees on its soil. Because of that, *the route* was changed and Croatia has encountered the daily overflow of thousands of non-European migrants on its eastern borders. Conditionally speaking, this was the first experience with mass migration of non-domicile population for Croatian government and citizens. The term conditionally needs to be emphasized for two specific reasons. Firstly, Croatia has achieved its full state sovereignty in 1998, only after the five-year long *homeland war* that lasted from 1991 to 1995. The war was the result of the process of dissolution of Yugoslav federation, which Croatia had been part of. During the nineties of the past century, Croatia had the experience with migrant flows and mass migration as almost an everyday occurrence, whether within Croatian borders or from one former Yugoslav republic to another. It is estimated that merely in Croatia, over 700,000 people were internally displaced or became refugees during the war years.¹⁸ A number of citizens of other former Yugoslav republics should be added to this number, especially those from Bosnia and Herzegovina who were exiled to Croatia or stayed there for a short period of time before continuing their journey to other countries, as well as a number of Croatian citizens of Serbian nationality who were exiled from Croatia at the beginning and / or at the end of the war. With all that said, it is important to note that Croatia has traditionally been seen as

¹⁷ Tea Vidović, “Tko su izbjeglice i koja su njihova prava” (“Who are Refugees and Their Rights”), in *Interkulturalne prakse: s izbjeglicama i za izbjeglice (Inter-Cultural Practices: with Refugees and for Refugees)*, ed. Tea Vidović (Zagreb: Centar za mirovne studije (Centre for Peace Studies), 2014), 17.

¹⁸ Josip Esterajher, “Iskustva zbrinjavanja prognanika i izbjeglica i suvremena izbjegličko-migranaska kriza u Hrvatskoj” (Experiences in Taking Care of Displaced Persons and Refugees and Contemporary Refugee Migration Crisis”), (*Političke analize (Political Analysis)* 23 (2015): 17.

one of the countries where migrations originate, especially migrations for economic reasons. *Central Bureau of Statistics (DZS)* estimates that between 60.000 and 100.000 people left Croatia only in the past decade predominantly due to economic reasons.¹⁹ Secondly, for decades now, during summer months (with the exception of *the homeland war period*), Croatian coast has been the tourist centre of the Middle and Eastern Europe, so the daily flow of thousands of foreign citizens on few border passes has become a common sight²⁰.

Given everything aforementioned, Croatia should have the capacity, experience and knowledge to accept migrants to its territory, regardless of their origin and regardless whether they stay for longer periods or just pass through. Because of the recent war experience, a high level of empathy for persons in the same situation is to be expected from Croatian political leaders as well as from the citizens themselves, which is why the principle of hospitality instead of hostility should prevail in their behaviour towards strangers migrants in need.

However, is this really the case in practice? This paper offers the analysis of the Croatian role in the *refugee crisis* that was in progress on Croatian territory in the period between September 16th 2015 and March 8th 2016, or up to April 15th 2016, when the border for the organized passage of migrants through Croatia was closed.

In that period, 658.068 migrants²¹ passed Croatia, most of whom with refugee status, through four key locations: Opatovac, Bapska, Tovarnik and Slavonski Brod. Apart from the official institutions of the

¹⁹ Ivana Tomić, “Šokantni podaci: U deset godina ostali smo bez grada veličine Osijeka” (“Shocking Data: The Number of Emigrants in Last Ten Years Equals the Population of Osijek”), *Dnevnik.hr*, May 5, 2014, accessed June 21, 2016, <http://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/gotovo-100-tisuca-ljudi-iselilo-se-iz-hrvatske-u-proteklih-10-godina---334253.html>.

²⁰ Tourism is considered a form of migration, usually a short term migration, even though it is significantly different from the abovementioned process of displacement because tourism is a voluntary activity connected with personal leisure. As Paul Ricoeur notices, a stranger as a visitor – a tourist – travels freely around the territories of a welcoming country and enjoys freedom of movement and trade; see Ricoeur, “Being a Stranger,” 41.

²¹ Dario Čepo and Mateja Medlobi, “Stavovi građana i građanki Republike Hrvatske o izbjeglicama” (“The Croatian Citizens’ Attitudes towards the Refugees”), the paper presented at the conference *Kamp, kolodvor, granica – mikrostudije izbjeglištva u suvremenom hrvatskom kontekstu (Camp, Train Station, Border – Micro-studies of Refugees in Contemporary Croatia)*, Zagreb, June 14–15, 2016.

Republic of Croatia, such as the basic and border police, the refugees were taken care of by the Croatian Red Cross, the UN, and additionally by the members of the Welcome initiative that arose from numerous non-governmental organisations and was composed of 400 volunteers. Based on the volunteers' reports, Tea Vidović summarised 5 stages of strangers migrants' acceptance into the territory of Croatia in the abovementioned period.²²

The first stage, the one that took place in Tovarnik on the Croatian–Serbian border, was marked as the Chaos Stage. Croatia was caught completely unprepared by the first appearance of the migrants on its borders, so the former government reached for the ad hoc solutions. Already after the first few days, the migrants were accepted to move from Tovarnik to Opatovac, where the second stage, marked as the Stage of Improvement and Bureaucracy, took place. The third stage – the Stage of Unexpectedness was predominantly happened on the location of Bapska. With the opening of the transit centre in Slavonski Brod on November 2nd 2015, the fourth stage began – the Stage of Supervisory System Creation, which was followed, until April 15th 2016 by the last, fifth stage – the Stage of Closed Sectors.

Vidović claims that the fast flow between the stages and the change in their character from humanitarian at first towards more repressive (which culminated in the fourth stage) shows that despite the official desire to help, the principle of the strict border control prevails.

The Croatian government, led by the Prime Minister Zoran Milanović, Internal Affairs Minister Rajko Ostojić and Defence Minister Ante Kotromanović, wanted to create the impression of humane treatment of the migrants by invoking the feeling of solidarity from local population.

There is no need for panic. We do know what we are doing. We are organized. We are the country that knows what it wants and we will finish this hard and responsible job calmly and with cool heads, but we have to be humane.

²² Tea Vidović, "Tranzit izbjeglica kroz Hrvatsku iz volonterske perspektive" ("Refugee Transit through Croatia"), the paper presented at the conference *Kamp, kolodvor, granica – mikrostudije izbjeglištva u suvremenom hrvatskom kontekstu* (*Camp, Train Station, Border – Microstudies of Refugeeism in Contemporary Croatia*), Zagreb, June 14–15, 2016.

Croatia must show its true face, and it must show how responsible and honourable we are.²³

Nevertheless, the timing was not favourable for the rhetoric of solidarity. Parliamentary election in Croatia were held on November 8th 2015, therefore, the refugee crisis coincided with the election campaign. The crisis itself was not the main topic of the campaign, but it nonetheless served as a means of sharpening the nationalistic discourse in which the leading party (then in opposition) *HDZ (Croatian Democratic Community)* dominated. Such rhetoric was highly supported even by the president of the Republic of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović, by openly agitating for *HDZ* (the party she used to be a member of). After the *Visegrad Group* meeting at the beginning of October 2015, she strongly criticized the Government, pointing out how Croatia failed the challenge on protecting the borders and that Croatia should have chosen, like Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Czech Republic, the strategy of strict military-police defence and the protection of, the so-called, green border from the entry of migrants, with the goal to preserve the Schengen principles:

Even during the period of homeland war and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was always a control over who entered the country. Even when we were the first country of acceptance, the level of control was higher than it is now when we are facing the migrant wave that definitely has its humanitarian component which I am not denying, but which carries with itself menace to safety and other dangers as well as the fact that amongst them are numerous economic migrants as well. What will happen when Germany begins returning those people? We already now have to be aware of this issue.²⁴

²³ Raunić, Filip, "Premijer Milanović sutra će posjetiti izbjeglice u Opatovcu, objavila Vlada" ("The Prime Minister Milanović Visits Refugees in Opatovac Tomorrow"), *Telegram*, September 28, 2015, accessed June 21, 2016, <http://www.telegram.hr/politika-kriminal/od-pocetka-izbjeglicke-krize-u-hrvatsku-je-dosad-uslo-oko-77-tisuca-izbjeglica/>.

²⁴ Ivana Tomić, "Predsjednica oštro kritizirala vladinu politiku prema izbjeglicama: 'Pali smo na ispitu čuvanja granica'" (President Severely Criticizes Government's Politics towards Refugees: 'We Failed the Test of Protecting Borders'), *Rtl*, October 09, 2015, accessed June 20, 2016, <http://www.vijesti.rtl.hr/novosti/hrvatska/1786686/predsjednica-ostro-kritizirala-vladinu-politiku-o-izbjeglicama-pali-smo-na-ispitu-cuvanja-granice/>.

As Duško Petrović notes, deflection of migration routes on Croatian territory induced two parallel feelings.²⁵ The sense of solidarity appears, but, simultaneously, so does the vague sense of being threatened which is caused by distrust. Such distrust is dominantly linked to the unknown status of the migrants. Are they truly refugees seeking shelter from war terrors, or are they economic migrants or potential terrorists, criminals and rapists? By marking the entire process as a kind of *weird spectacle*, Petrović furthermore emphasizes how the arrival of a large number of anonymous people in combination with fear causes passive observation that will ultimately result in the reactivation of national borders, or in other words, closing of the same. Petrović claims that with the collapse of the established asylum system each of the EU countries affected by the refugee route turns to search for the solution of the whole problem within their national frames and cruelty – as a common denominator for this distancing from human suffering – begins to dominate the migrant discourse, as well as the practice on the field.

In that context, the divided rhetoric of Croatian political representatives clearly defines the ideological gap between Croatian voters. However, it also underlines two dominant approaches to the refugee crisis: humanitarian versus security approach. While within the first one the sense of solidarity is invoked and the refugees are seen as passive victims, within the second one the clear boundary between *us* and *them* is set. In such dichotomy, the foreign migrants, (in this case refugees), represent the *otherness*, i.e. the threat from which one must protect oneself. A simplified image of the Other, as a passive victim on the one hand, or the terrorist on the other, causes two mutually exclusive principles of action – compassion in opposition to control and repression. While the first principle was dominant in the first stage of Croatian encounter with the migrants, the duration of the migrant wave transformed the initial compassion into doubt and fear. Petrović sees this process of transformation as the paradox of the closed circle of sensibility and

²⁵ Duško Petrović, “Humanitarne granice ili granice humanitarizma: ekspanzija vidljivih i ‘nevidljivih’ granica,” (Humanitarian Borders or Borders of Humanitarianism: Expansion of Visible and ‘Invisible’ Borders), the paper presented at the conference *Kamp, kolodvor, granica – mikrostudije izbjeglištva u suvremenom hrvatskom kontekstu* (Camp, Train Station, Border – Micro-studies of Refugees in Contemporary Croatia), Zagreb, June 14–15, 2016.

repression where the heightened sensitivity to suffering (in general, as well as of the Other) alternates with the sense of fear and threat. The result of this is the politics that causes the reduction of space, and with it, the reduction of the existing rights. With other words, the final result of the *us* versus *them* dichotomy is causing the reduction of people since *we* are depriving *them* from their humanity.

Reduction of Place as (In)Ability of Providing Hospitality

By discussing Croatian experience of participating in the refugee crisis at the end of 2015, Renata Jambrešić Kirin and Tea Škokić²⁶ address the particular location – the city of Slavonski Brod where, in its wider surroundings, in the autumn of 2015, the Croatian government allocated the acceptance centre for the strangers migrants on the refugee route through Croatia. This town has endured a vast destruction during the *homeland war* and is still today an impoverished area of the failed state-controlled economy, with high unemployment rate. Furthermore, Slavonski Brod was once an important railroad junction that has lost its importance due to the systematic destruction of Croatian railroads. The existing travel infrastructure, which was used during the war by NATO for the purposes of war activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, was utilized for the quick departure of migrants from Croatia to further countries of the EU. The acceptance centre itself was built outside the urban centre, in the manner similar to allocating the flow of the migrants outside the capital of Zagreb two months earlier, which was, during the first days of the refugee wave through Croatia, one of the migrant stops on the way to Slovenia. While the citizens of Zagreb in those first days, encouraged by the sense of solidarity, offered refugees free transport to the Slovenian border and brought them food, clothes and hygienic supplies, the long-term unemployed citizens of Slavonski Brod were engaged in public works of building the acceptance cen-

²⁶ Renata Jambrešić Kirin and Tea Škokić, “Shopping centar nenormalne normalnosti” (“A Shopping Centre of Abnormal Normality”), the paper presented at the conference *Kamp, kolodvor, granica – mikrostudije izbjeglištva u suvremenom hrvatskom kontekstu*, (*Camp, Train Station, Border – Micro-studies of Refugeeism in Contemporary Croatia*), Zagreb, June 14–15, 2016.

tre and putting it to function. The local population, hence, had direct socio-economic benefits from the centre, not just because of the arrival of the refugees but also indirectly, due to the residence of numerous workers and volunteers in the area of, until then, a marginalized city.

The acceptance centre Slavonski Brod comprised three units – a registration area, a distribution area and a transit area, where the overall sojourn of migrants lasted around four hours. While the registration area was characterized by standing in line, the distribution area was, according to Jambrešić Kirin and Škokić, the space of *place practice*. Namely, free movement was enabled in order to distribute help to those in need or to find a member of their family so that the families could be re-joined. In this area refugees were offered the possibility to seek asylum, however, just a few of them took that chance.²⁷ The distribution area was therefore the only place where informal talk between volunteers, police and refugees was possible and where a sort of bottom-up screening happened. The refugees were evaluated through verbal and non-verbal ranking considering their knowledge of English language, degree of secularity and even fashion choices. With reference to Meaghan Morris' essay "Things to do with Shopping Centers,"²⁸ Jambrešić Kirin and Škokić compared this area to a contemporary shopping mall. The search for the appropriate clothing and footwear, where refugees were assisted by the volunteers, enabled a pseudo-store, the notion close and familiar to us all. This was a time of negotiations, but also familiarisation and bonding. Conversations, as well as body contact, occurred in such relations – characteristic for the bazaar culture – specifically, the creation of relationships between local population and strangers migrants. Jambrešić Kirin and Škokić notice that in this process, the clothes are of extreme importance because this does not represent just the welcoming *etos*, but also the reflection of the desire for happier *implacement*. From the refugees' perspective, the clothes offered to them

²⁷ Damir Petranović, "Samo deset migranata zatražilo azil u Hrvatskoj, niti jedan Sirijac" ("Only Ten Migrants Requested Asylum in Croatia, not One Syrian"), *Tportal*, October 29, 2015, accessed June 20, 2016, <http://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/402326/Nitko-ne-zelijo-ostati-Samo-10-migranata-zatrazilo-azil-u-Hrvatskoj.html>.

²⁸ Meaghan Morris, "Things to do with Shopping Centers," in *Too Soon Too Late*, Meaghan Morris (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 64–92.

by the host holds a power of allowing themselves to imagine themselves in the new surroundings of the West in the future.

However, the clothes and, in general, material help at the same time posed a problem to the hosts – the local population of Slavonski Brod – a problem for strengthening solidarity towards refugees. Namely, since we are talking about impoverished Croatian citizens, who are themselves in need of appropriate work attire for winter temperatures, empathy and hospitality were mixed with frustration caused by their own economic deprivation. As *losers* from the transition game, the citizens of Slavonski Brod, as well as the town itself, have lost a significant part of their previous identity so the problem of post-modern displacement occurred. Even though the local citizens did not move from their birthplace, the town and its role in Croatian economy and society changed dramatically.

Therefore, the distribution tent, according to Jambrešić Kirin and Škokić, was at the same time the place of both welcoming and scepticism. The happiness of helping those in need, especially the children; of bringing families together and of the interaction between – until then – anonymous people; however, there was also frustration. For the locals, this frustration resulted from their own uncertain situation and sometimes even from the distrust in the intentions of the refugees. For the volunteers, this frustration resulted from the lack of warm clothes and footwear for all, the lack of necessary information and the lack of knowledge of the spoken language – the source of understanding each other's problems.

Conclusion

Hospitality is not some abstract virtue or a custom. It is a virtue of the place marked by the risk and the trust. It is a two-sided process which requires the persons as the guest and the host, but also their good will – the good will for accepting the other and the will for asking for acceptance.

In the recent Croatian example, one part of the puzzle is missing. The strangers migrants did not ask for the permanent place – they did not ask for *implacement*. What they did ask for was just the passage, to

open the borders for them not to enter and stay, but to enter in order to carry on. Croatia did pass that exam, even though it is questionable with what mark. What is not questionable is the fact that Croatia, its institutions and citizens are not yet prepared for hospitality as the process of offering and sharing the place, given the lack of trust in the intentions of strangers migrants. In that context, there is still a lot to be done to accept the ethics of conditional hospitality. The absolute one, as it is clearly shown by the Croatian example, remains a distant and inapplicable ethical ideal. However, it is not the one which can be ignored since it indicates the point from which we have to start in relation to strangers migrants in need. Ricoeurian hermeneutics reminds us that some conditions of offering hospitality are not always morally wrong. As Treanor concludes, we are not hospitable if we simply throw open our doors:

(...) even if we ask no questions and allow unconditioned and unchallenged entry. An unmanned gate or port of entry is no more hospitable than uninhabited house. Hospitality requires someone implaced, someone who will greet, and question the stranger. Not all gates are checkpoints, and not all questions at the gate can be reduced to biased or bigoted attempts to exclude others, or to ethnocentric oppression of the strangers.²⁹

What can help in this two-sided process is not just the understanding of the ethics of hospitality that arises from our moral duty to every human being in need, but also the understanding of ourselves. With understanding of ourselves, our position in the contemporary non-stop changing world and our own past experience of war and migration traumas (in the case of Croatia), we can help the stranger. Only from there, Treanor concludes, we can adopt the concrete practice of helping the Other in, as Paul Ricoeur says,³⁰ *emplotting* the one into *implacement*. In this demanding process, language plays an important role because the *implacement* is fundamentally narrative. *Emplotting* the narrative is not an easy task for neither the host nor the guest, but it allows us to see things from a different perspective and it is the essential element which

²⁹ Treanor, "Putting," 63.

³⁰ Ibid.

can help the guest write himself/herself into the new place or write the place into his/her own story.

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