

The Belgian Food2Gather pilots

A Reception Center for Asylum Seekers and a School at the core:

Navigating Foodscapes

Melanie Vivier & Elodie Razy** Phd. Student ** Associate Professor
Faculty of Social Science (FaSS), Research Institute of Social Science (IRSS), Laboratory of Social and Cultural Anthropology (LASC)
University of Liege (Belgium), member of Food2Gather project*



The research

The aim of the research is to identify and document the place of food in the daily life of children and their family applying for asylum : how can food be both a source of integration and exclusion in private, institutional and public spaces in the Province of Liege (Belgium)? Do food encounters develop new foodscapes?

Ethnographic method

- 2 years participant observation with children (4–12 years) and their families in the public school (kindergarten and primary school) and in the reception center where they live
- Interviews with parents, teachers and social workers
- Informal talks with all the actors (children included)

Results

Our analysis showed tensions related to food issues : children in asylum seeking situations' food practices and taste are often considered as opposed to local regulations and social norms or even unhealthy. These discrepancies are mainly linked to the lack of knowledge of both local actors and "migrants" about the cultural and social diversity of food habits. However, food is also at the heart of many organized or informal actions, that may reproduce stigmatisation or lead to encounters and exchanges between different categories of actors sharing "accidentally" the same social spaces (new foodscapes).



Food2Gather photo exhibition

Scan me

1 Workshops on food issues in a reception center

With the aim of improving relations between social workers and residents applying for asylum, we organized workshops on food issues and the center's canteen. Everybody could express one's food frustrations, feelings, role and place within the institution. All together, we looked for solutions in order to improve their **food and hospitality experiences**.

As a result of our discussions, the residents wrote a letter and recommendations addressed to the management team testifying their feelings and ideas to enhance their daily life in the centre.

Video
"Working in a reception center - Martin's testimony"



Scan me

21 recommendations to improve food and hospitality experiences in the reception center



2 Workshops on food issues in a school

In the school context, the focus is often the nutritional dimension of food, while the social and cultural dimension is rarely mentioned. We thus decided to organize weekly workshops based on the anthropology of food to :

1. empower teachers' lessons with research in social science research on food
2. introduce children to anthropology
3. allow them to discover other food norms and practices
4. enhance children's point of view and participation
5. empower children in asylum seeking situation food practices and knowledge

Based on the workshops, we created a food encyclopedia made by children and other participants for children.

The Childtific foodpedia

