Hostipitality in Post-War Society

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Abstract

Following the theoretical path of hospitality – a principle strongly marked by its *aporia* from antiquity until present, this paper examines the contemporary problem of hospitality towards migrant strangers, from the perspective of Croatian political practice. Croatia, as a society that has for centuries produced economic and political migrants, is the only EU state with recent experience of serious warfare. The *Homeland War* (1991–1995) has made hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people and refugees. Nonetheless, social experience of displacement did not make contemporary Croatian policy more inclined towards asylum seekers and refugees from the Middle East and North Africa. In late summer 2015, Croatia was confronted with daily flow of thousands of migrants on their way to Germany and Scandinavia. Even though the left-liberal government at the time, in cooperation with the group of civil society organisations, answered humanely and provided corridors, food and medical help, dominant public opinion called for more caution and closure of the borders. These acts of both hospitality and hostility provoke *hostipitality*, a theoretical and practical concept that disables true acceptance of Others – strangers migrants in need.

Keywords

hospitality – hostipitality – stranger migrant – post-war – Croatia – asylum seeker – refugee

1 Introduction

The principle of hospitality and the problem of cosmopolitanism are two inseparable concepts of European thought and political practice that can be traced from antiquity. Although philosophy and political literature contain numerous academic texts on this topic, strong *aporia* present in the term of hospitality does not allow simplified conclusions, as well as unified

application of this principle in the interaction between individuals and states.

European political practices of offering hospitality, i.e. accepting different groups of strangers (economic migrants, refugees, asylum seekers) in non-domicile territories, is no less complex than the theoretical dispute regarding the principle of hospitality. Higher advocacy of internal and external sovereignty, as well as ethnical, religious and cultural homogeneity of European states, is contrary to the idea of universal human rights which supersede national borders and affiliation to the specific corpus of citizens. This is especially noted in the current *migrant crisis* provoked by war and destruction in North Africa and the Middle East, compelling millions of people to seek safety in European states.

To corroborate the issues noted in the introduction, this paper has three fundamental goals: firstly, it will give a brief overview of theoretical understanding of the complicated principle of hospitality and its connection to the term of *hostipitality*. Secondly, the focus will shift to the practice explaining the unique Croatian position in the story of *hostipitality*, which is, at the same time, directly related to the actual *migrant crisis*. Finally, it will give a conclusion rising from the fusion of theory and practice, particularly relevant for European societies that have established their statehood lately and do not have enough experience in accepting strangers/migrants.

2 Theoretical Understanding of Hospitality

Hospitality is a word of Latin origin marking a special form of interaction among individuals of different cultural, national, religious or political communities. In ancient Greece, hospitality was considered to be more than the act of friendship between Greeks – providing the food and shelter for the stranger traveller was one of the main demands by the supreme god Zeus. Not obeying this principle resulted in the wrath of gods, but it was manifested solely on other Greeks, meaning those who spoke Greek language, and not on *radical Others* – barbarians.

With the emergence of Cynics, starting with Diogenes from Sinope, the notion of cosmopolitanism began to spread. Namely, Diogenes was the first person to be attributed with the use of the word *kosmopolitēs* with which he marked himself as a citizen of the world.¹ This type of cosmopolitanism, as a

¹ Anthony Long, The Concept of the Cosmopolitanism in Greek and Roman Thought. *Daedalus*. 137:3 (2008), 55.

concept of universal hospitality, would be developed with time into an understanding of the human community as a worldwide city, under one universal law, and it will become a significant philosophical term within the Stoic school of thought. In the centre of Stoic understanding was the desire to replace the central role of the *polis* with the idea of *kosmos*, where humanity would live in harmony. Thus, the human simultaneously inhabits two worlds – the local, where one was born, and the one vastly broader that is common to us all, allowing equal values for every person. ‘Allegiance is owed, first and foremost, to the moral realm of all humanity, not to the contingent groupings of nation, ethnicity and class.’²

Despite such moral allegiance to humanity, people live in bordered political communities, since modernity onwards called states – the logic of which is reduced to internal and external sovereignty. Therefore, what is put upon the idea of cosmopolitan community and understandings of hospitality as the principle problem, is how to regulate relations between people when states stand in between.

By establishing the state as a new *ideal* frame for human life, the international system of states is constructed. The regulation of such system will be one of the fundamental tasks of Immanuel Kant.

Kant would underline the term of hospitality in his brief but defining essay in modernity – *Toward Perpetual Peace*. Kant’s cosmopolitanism is impossible without the principle of hospitality because it is the right of every man on the Earth’s surface for protection and sanctuary in any part of the world. It determines ‘the right of a stranger not to be treated in a hostile manner’.³ Without such universal comprehension of hospitality the realisation of the law of world citizenship becomes impossible. By Kant’s interpretation, hospitality ceases to be an act of philanthropy (as well as Greek friendship, a prerequisite for Roman imperial conquering of the world or Christian charity). From Kant onward, hospitality becomes legal requirement – it becomes a right. This right for acceptance under life-threatening conditions should not be denied to anyone, since denying hospitality and returning the endangered individual to one’s native state could end one’s life. Disregarding such an advancement in understanding of hospitality, Kant will define the difference between the right for temporary (*Besuchsrecht*) and permanent residence on foreign territory

2 David Held, ‘Principles of Cosmopolitan Order.’ In *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Gillian Broc and Harry Brighouse (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 10.

3 Immanuel Kant, *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace and History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 82.

(*Gastrecht*). As long as the guest acts peacefully, one is not to be treated with hostility, locked up or tortured. Should the guest want to obtain permanent residence in the new environment the right for hospitality will then become restricted and dependent on the specific agreement between the host and the guest.

European territory was dominated for centuries by the idea of an empire, the logic of which thrives towards constant expansion and relativizing of the borders, minimising the strangeness amongst the conquered nations. By establishing national states with defined territory and population, the understanding of the notion of strangeness changes because the right to reside inside the state is given only to those within the corpus of the citizens, while the others become intruders. Therefore after Kant, the theoretical directionality (as well as political practice) would be put on the idea of nation and on legal positivism, instead of cosmopolitanism and hospitality. Only after the terrifying experiences of WWII, and especially after the Cold war, the notion of cosmopolitanism returns to the focus of European political theory.

Even though the fall of the Berlin Wall will awaken the new spirit of European community, Eastern Europe, liberated from Soviet dominance, will rediscover the concept of nation. European territory, therefore, becomes divided in ideals, although the idea of cosmopolitanism seemingly prevails. However, this *new cosmopolitanism*, as suggested by Rebeca Lettevall and Kristian Petrov,⁴ has its base in the selective display of Kant's thought, but is, at the same time, contrary to the real situation. Instead of applying the idea by which borders become less relevant and societies more unified, in terms of human rights and freedom, the political practice in the Central and Eastern Europe turns to ethnocentric nationalism.

Historically, Europe has perhaps more than any other area in the world internally, as well as externally, being conceptualized as universalistic civilisation – the birthplace of the Reason, Science, Democracy, Human Rights and Economic Globalisation.

Paradoxically, however, it has all along being dependent upon archaic patterns of essentialist dichotomisation.⁵

4 Rebeca Lettevall and Kristian Petrov, 'Toward a Critique of Cosmopolitan Reason.' In *Critique of Cosmopolitan Reason – Timing and Spacing the Concept of World Citizenship*, ed. Rebeca Lettevall and Kristian Petrov (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 5.

5 Ibid.

The division of Europe and the problem with the notion of Europe itself, as well as the practice of cosmopolitanism and hospitality within it, will be prominently noted by French moral philosophers. They clearly demonstrate how 'western metaphysical heritage, grounded in Greco Roman thought, has generally discriminated against the Other in favour of the Same'⁶ and, therefore, focus on the question of the Other – the acceptance of the strangers. Amongst many, the contributions of Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Derrida stand out.

Derrida constructed the notion of absolute as opposed to conditional hospitality, which he attributes to Kant. The main objection to Kant's notion is that the legal definition of hospitality is inevitably perverted every time the person seeking hospitality is posed with conditions. Derridean absolute or unconditional hospitality, according to Kearney⁷ marks the break with everyday conventions of hospitality governed by rights, contracts, duties and pacts:

[...] absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with the family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.)... but to the absolute other, unknown, anonymous other and that I give place to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive [...] ⁸

Derrida distinguishes the *politics* of hospitality from the *ethics* of hospitality. Politics is marked by obstructions, borders and caution, while ethics of hospitality demands radical opening towards stranger and his acceptance, disregarding all risks which may arise. Such radical understanding has attracted criticism by contemporary authors who have deemed it an inapplicable ethical ideal.

But Derrida in his philosophy is not being naive. What he wants to emphasise by such sharpened definition of hospitality is the permanence of the European acceptance of the Other. Derrida sees Kant's hospitality as a 'constant point of reference for us and throughout the whole tradition that has carried it on.'⁹ Hyperbolic demand for absolute hospitality only emphasises the problem

6 Richard Kearney, 'Strangers and Others: From Deconstruction to Hermeneutics.' *Critical Horizons*. 3.1 (2002), 8.

7 Richard Kearney, 'Others and Aliens – Between Good and Evil.' In *Evil After Postmodernism – Histories, Narratives, and Ethics*, ed. Jennifer L. Geddes (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 105.

8 Jacques Derrida, '*Of Hospitality – Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*' (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000a), 25.

9 Derrida, '*Of Hospitality*', 41.

of European philosophic, linguistic and religious heritage that even today stands in the way of the true acceptance of the Other, especially when European states are not faced with stranger individuals, but thousands of Others in need. Given that, he forges the term *hostipitality* to show how hospitality has a 'troubled and troubling origin,'¹⁰ i.e. word *hostis* having the multiple meaning of guest/stranger/enemy which opens the inseparability between the understanding of the term hospitality and the term hostility

So do we know what hospitality really is? According to Derrida, it is a self-contradiction, an *aporia* because it 'carries its own contradiction incorporated into it.'¹¹

3 Case Study – Croatia

Croatia is the only state of the European Union that, in its recent past, had the experience of long lasting war that caused mass migration and the creation of hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons. The *Homeland War* that occurred in the midst of the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and the process of Croatian independence, lasted between 1991 and 1995. Armed conflicts stopped in 1995 but did not mark the end of military occupation of Croatian territory. The restoration of the entire territory under Croatian sovereignty and the beginning of the partial return of refugees to the remaining occupied territories occurred in 1998 with the process of *Peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium*.

As stated by Esterajher,¹² during the mentioned eight years the system of care for the refugees distinguished four groups of migrants: displaced persons, returnees, refugees and refugees in transit. At the peak of the migration crisis by the end of 1991, 700 000 people lost their homes; 150 000 people became refugees while 550 000 people were displaced within Croatia. Due to the outbreak of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than 160 000 people sought refuge in Croatia in the period from April until December 1992. The additional influx of refugees from the occupied areas in Croatia and other former Yugoslav republics lasted until 1995.

The *Homeland War* was not the only huge wave of immigration from Croatia to safe European states. Croatia traditionally creates migrants. The first

10 Jacques Derrida, 'Hostipitality.' *Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*. 5.3 (2000b), 3.

11 Ibid.

12 Josip Esterajher, 'Iskustva zbrinjavanja prognanika i izbjeglica i suvremena izbjegličko-migrantska kriza u Hrvatskoj.' *Političke analize*. 23 (2015), 16.

significant migration of Croatian populations started in the period of Ottoman conquests and culminated by the end of the 19th and during 20th century. Mass emigration of the poor part of Croatian population started during 1960s and 1970s when Tito's Yugoslavia was opening towards the West, primarily for the economic reasons, but also to discard the political enemies. Most of the migrants in those times sought sanctuary in the Western Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the USA and Canada, while the earlier generations of migrants found their sanctuary in the states of Latin America, Australia and New Zealand. Such course of emigration in the last 150 years created numerous diaspora. Today's estimate is that circa 4 000 000 Croats live abroad, almost as much as in the homeland. Besides mentioned, the Central Bureau of Statistics (DZS) estimates that between 60 000 and 100 000 people have left Croatia only in the past decade, predominantly due to economic reasons.¹³

Did the war experience of being a refugee, as well as the more recent economic migration, make the citizens of Croatia more sensitive to those who do not belong to the same national and cultural circle but share the same fate? What is the attitude of Croatian citizens' towards strangers, particularly refugees and economic migrants? How did Croatian citizens react to the recent *migrant crisis*?

Research conducted in 2013, at the time of Croatian accession to the EU, showed that the stable majority (over 50% population) had no xenophobic attitudes towards strangers.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the other half expresses negative attitudes towards ethnic groups with whom they coexist. That primarily refers to the Roma people (up to 44%) and Serbs (up to 38%). Additionally, a higher percentage of xenophobia is being shown towards groups with which they have not yet had contact, in research marked as: Chinese (up to 32%), Arabs (up to 27%) and asylum seekers (up to 37%).

Generally speaking, the citizens of the Republic of Croatia are in greater measure in accordance with the restrictive, rather than liberal politics of giving citizenship to immigrants. On average, they express equally mild positive attitude towards immigration of foreigners who come to Croatia for education, while they hold negative attitude towards the immigration of economic migrants and asylum seekers.¹⁵

13 Ivana Tomić, 'Gotovo sto tisuća ljudi iselilo se iz Hrvatske u proteklih deset godina' Viewed on June, 02, 2016. <http://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/gotovo-100-tisuca-ljudi-iselilo-se-iz-hrvatske-u-proteklih-10-godina---334253.html>.

14 CMS, 'Istraživački izvještaj – Zastupljenost i indikatori diskriminacijskih i ksenofobičnih stavova u Republici Hrvatskoj' (Zagreb: Centar za mirovne studije, 2013), 29.

15 Ibid.

FIGURE 5.1 *Departure to a better future?* Croatian Police supervise arrival of the refugees in Croatia at the railway station Tovarnik at Croatian–Serbian border in order to control their further transit to Slovenia, late summer 2015.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ZAGREB CENTER FOR PEACE STUDIES

Such attitudes are to a certain degree hypocritical regarding the continuous emigration of Croats to other Western states but also because Croatia was never the desired refuge for migrant strangers. In eleven years (2004–2015) less than 5000 people requested asylum in Croatia (just 133 persons qualified for some kind of legal protection). During the recent *migrant crisis* strangers migrants did not ask for a permanent place in Croatia. What they asked for was predominantly just passage and opening the borders; not to enter and stay, but to enter and carry on.

As a result of closing the migration route through Hungary at the end of summer 2015, Croatia was caught completely unprepared. The left liberal government reacted in opposition to the governments of neighbour states, stating that the migrants will be given help in their search for safe and organized transit to their desired sanctuaries. As a land of ‘small possibilities but big heart’,¹⁶ Croatia decided to treat migrants humanely. The Prime Minister Milanović, at the same time, rejected the possibility of Croatia being forced to give more permanent shelter to the refugees: ‘On the third day following the first arrival of the refugees in Croatia, he repeated that Croatia did not want to be a hot spot for Europe.’¹⁷

President Kolinda Grabar Kitarović, as well as a number of political parties adhering to the leading conservative party – the Croatian Democratic Union

16 Jasna Čapo, ‘The Security Scape and the (In)Visibility of Refugees: Managing Refugee Flow Through Croatia.’ *Migracijske i etničke teme*. 3 (2015), 393.

17 Ibid.

(HDZ), opposed the government's decisions, but not because they considered them to be inadequately empathetic towards migrants. Rather, they accused the government for endangering the national interests and subsequently advocated a complete ban of passage through Croatia by sending the military to safeguard the national borders.

4 Conclusion

Contemporary theoretical debate on hospitality indicates that in meeting the stranger a plethora of feelings, from xenophilia to xenophobia, appears. That spectrum of emotions causes the risk of that what is offered to the stranger: hospitality or hostility.

The case of Croatia clearly demonstrates that, despite its recent war experience, Croatia is not yet ready for the ethics and practice of hospitality towards the groups of migrant strangers outside its national and cultural circle. Moreover, it demonstrates how in preventing hospitality to become hostility, much more is needed than the mere opening of the door for trans-passage. Today's notion of hospitality demands more effort of European policy-makers in the development of mutual migrant policies that proceed beyond partial and depleted models of integration. These policies must not be marked solely by temporary assistance towards individual strangers migrants. They have to be adequately designed for acceptance of larger endangered groups with which Europeans must be prepared to share the same limited territory, even when there is no direct short term socio-economic benefit for EU states. Hospitality is then only the first act of a complex process of integration of strangers into new surroundings where it is not known for how long they will stay and whether their stay will be permanent. Such process of *implacement*¹⁸ should include both the hosts and the guests, as it should happen by degree, leaving enough time for adjustment to both parties in the process. This is not an easy task because:

Most Western discourses of identity are predicated upon some unconscious projection of an Other who is not 'us'. At the collective level of politics, this assumes the guise of an elect 'nation' or 'people' defining itself over and against an alien adversary.¹⁹

18 Edward S. Casey, 'Strangers at the Edge of Hospitality.' In *Phenomenologies of the Stranger*, ed. Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 30–48.

19 Kearney, 'Strangers and Others', 14.

FIGURE 5.2 *Abandoned shoes*. Refugees waiting to enter in the Schengen Area at the Croatian–Slovenian border Harmica, September 2015.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ZAGREB CENTER FOR PEACE STUDIES

During the realisation of this process it is important to insist on three elements: the element of the right – traced from Kant; the ethical element – Derrida's heritage, and the political element based on the idea of cosmopolitanism. The latter element represents a complex task for all European societies and especially post-socialist member states of the EU. Their political history and political culture was not rooted in liberal democracy and in the understanding of citizenship defined apart from affiliation to the same nation. Only then the policy of complete exclusion, marked by *ad hoc* responses to a concrete problem, will be transformed towards pluralistic models of integration²⁰ for the ones who need European hospitality instead of *hostipitality*.

20 Snježana Gregurović et al., *Integration of Migrants in the European Union With Reference to Croatia – Position Paper of the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies* (Zagreb: Institut za migracije i narodnost, 2016), 5.

FIGURE 5.3 *Solidarity has no borders.* Volunteers of the Welcome Initiative supporting refugees at the temporary refugee centre in small Croatian town Opatovac on Croatian – Serbian border, autumn 2015.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ZAGREB CENTER FOR PEACE STUDIES

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