



Gastvortrag

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Food and refugees in Rome. Humanitarian practices or agency response?

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In the present paper we will tie food practices to refugees and asylum seekers who live in temporary or emergency settings, focusing on two specific ethnographic cases located in the city of Rome. The first case refers to a bottom up hospitality experience named Baobab; the second case refers to a more structured experience, a soup-kitchen devoted to asylum seekers run by the Jesuit International Service for Refugees. In spite of their specificity, the two cases are comparable: they involve a plethora of subjects: donors, activists/operators and refugees; they have a twenty year long history in refugees' hospitality; they refer to specific value systems made visible or explicit by their actions. A few questions will lead our discussion: what's the sense of food for those who donate and who receive the donation (Harrell-Bond 1999)? How are the value systems actuated by operators and activists? In what ways do the food models of the two hospitality centers diverge? How are the two ethnographic cases, which are locally situated, nevertheless linked to other European hospitality models, both confessional and lay (Rozakou, 2016; Fontanari 2016)? The analysis of our material will lead us to interpretations drawing from different theoretical approaches (mutual humanity, agency) and a possibility of rephrasing them. Methodologically, operators/activists, and refugees will be captured during the intersubjective moments in which food is given and received, a situation defined as embodied social practice (Grønseth, Anne Sigfrid, 2016). Finally, our essay will look at food practices as a tool capable of creating spaces of communication, interaction and reflexivity between refugees and sectors of the host society.