

## Final SUMMARY for the FOOD2GATHER project

**FOOD2GATHER explores the relations between food and public spaces in contexts of migration. It focuses on the role food plays in shaping opportunities for intercultural communication and relations between places and the peoples that inhabit them.**



The CRP addresses the experience of food in public spaces from a relational perspective that focuses on the way people connect with others and the environment physically and symbolically through myriad food-related practices. Most particularly, FOOD2GATHER is interested in problematizing the possibilities and limitations of food as a driver of opportunities for intercultural communication and interaction and, thus, for integration and living together in European societies.

The concept that we employed to broaden our understanding of peoples' relational experiences through food in public space is that of 'foodscapes'. Research on foodscapes constitutes an innovative approach to address the nature, scope and limits of contemporary ideas of public space(s). We see foodscapes as interlinked, socially constructed places wherein food practices, values, meanings and representations intersect with the material and environmental realities that sustain the experience of food. Foodscapes emerge thus as crucial agents in the construction of dynamic and reciprocal relationships among all the communities (migrant, refugee, and local alike) in Europe today.

FOOD2GATHER aims at mapping human and nonhuman societies within foodscapes in order to understand and appraise the uses, access and behaviors that mark public spaces. Through different but complementary ethnographic studies in six European countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway), the project promotes cooperation between researchers, stakeholders and the civil society through fieldwork, joint learning and interactive collaboration.

**The first axis** of the CRP created solid roots. It aimed at developing a durable pillar for homogeneous collaboration to assure a good project. We worked together on a collective agreement on the main lines and guidelines regarding organization and management, conceptual approaches, methodologies, selection and combinations of case studies, contextual frames and teamwork.

This axis allowed partners and researchers to not only get to know each other, but concretized a "project" into a **tight and effective collaboration** solidified through a management tool called the "**FOOD2GATHER handbook**". The second outcome was an open access document that describes the working process and the reflections behind the conceptual framework, titled "**FOOD2GATHER – Negotiating foodscapes – An introduction**" ([ODA Open Digital Archive: FOOD2GATHER – Negotiating Foodscapes: An Introduction \(oslomet.no\)](#)). The document reflects one of the ongoing objectives of FOOD2GATHER: Meetups and gatherings always contain a moment for reflection, where we aim to conceptualize the foodscapes as we see them unfold.



The second axis was focused especially on doing fieldwork, most often participant observation in the field, and organizing hybrid forums. This phase of micro level approach was strongly disturbed by the very unique COVID-19 pandemic situation – as the majority of researchers have been forced to stop the production of ethnographic data, while adapting to new met as an exciting perspective.

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Fieldwork was organised in different ways at different levels in the 6 countries all around public space scenarios which included emergency locations and refugees’ encampments in urban areas; a soup-kitchen serving refugees; associative resource centers in rural areas; a social entrepreneur devoted to migrant children and youths; municipality programs for refugees; entrepreneurial restoration activities run by refugees; a street food start up; and an asylum seekers’ reception center with a focus on children. The pandemic actually was somehow enriching as it provoked new ways of thinking fieldwork and opened towards involving fresh collaboration with new partners.



Figure 1 – Public space scenarios

Initially there were 10 research venues linked to ten different Associate partners. Following the Covid pandemic, some of the venues and partners had to be changed and other venues were added, totalling 19 venues. The FOOD2GATHER teams were able to keep regularly in touch with field sites by maintaining a dialogue with the Associate partners, which turned out to be crucial during the Covid lockdown. Online periodical meetings enabled the team researchers to be updated on the various local situations and difficulties. It should be highlighted that some of the initial associate partners had to leave the project, partnerships with others had to be reframed, and other partners were added in the course of the research, both officially and unofficially.

In short, the research contexts were the following:

- The French team conducted ethnographic research in five venues, both in rural and urban areas, which encompass a broad range of realities supporting locals, migrants and refugees, working with five different partners: Coeur de Bastide, an associative resource centre situated in the rural town Ste-Foy-la-Grande; Les Râteleurs, an association supporting local quality food access; the local branch in Bègles of the National association Secours Populaire which supports people in a situation of precariousness; l’Estey, a municipal resource centre in Bègles attended by migrant families; Squats in the Bordeaux metropolitan area.
- The German team conducted research in Berlin with REFUEAT, a food business which sells Syrian food all over the city making use of bicycles for delivery, and with Über den Tellerand, an association which supports cooking groups, and community events to facilitate encounter between migrants and locals.
- The Belgian team conducted ethnographic research in an asylum-seeker centre, hosting both families with children and single persons, and among migrant children attending the public school Ecole de Louveigné in the province of Liège.
- The Norwegian team conducted research in Oslo with Healthy Start, a municipality run health and food education project directed to migrants and with Kompass, a social entrepreneur which aimed at integrating children and youth of migrant background.

- The Dutch team conducted research with Wij Zijn Hier (We Are Here), an association of asylum seekers whose application was rejected by the State, working with art projects aimed at integration. A considerable part of the research was devoted to video production.
- The Italian team conducted ethnographic research in six different venues located in Rome, Ventimiglia, Padova and Venice, associated with six different partners: the Astalli soup-kitchen, a Jesuit run centre which serves refugees; Baobab Experience, a grassroots hospitality association, which leads a solidarity network in support of refugees living in informal encampments in Rome; the 20K, a collective solidarity group which assists migrants in-transit at the Italian-French border; Orient Experience, a restaurant run by Afghan refugees located in Venice offering a culinary journey from the whole middle east; Peace 'n' Spice, a Padova based restaurant run by Afghan refugees; Popoli Insieme, a Padova based association which hosted a digital cooking workshop run by refugee women.

**The third axis dealt with the contextual framework** and aimed at mapping the social context as a media to identify how the relation between food and public spaces has been shaped at both political, empirical and discursive levels. This macro level approach was published in an open access document titled **“What is migrants’ food all about in Europe? A media discourse analysis through the lens of controversies”** [HERE](#) The report aimed at generating a contextual overview of the integration/exclusion of migrants through foodscapes and through a focus on the contextual framework presents and discusses relevant food controversies that occurred in the six countries participating in the study (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, and the Netherlands).

Each of the six FOOD2GATHER teams provided two relevant controversies (controversy used as tool and scanner) that have reached media attention in the last ten years. One of the two had to be related to halal food. A comparative analysis of relevant variables related to migrations, such as the geopolitical position of the countries, organization of reception and food provision, has been conducted as well. Although differences are reflected in the proposed controversies -as the six countries included in the study have different traditions related to migration and have been exposed to the “migrants’ crisis” in different ways-, some common traits tended to emerge. We show that power relationships particularly deal with the right to food, citizens’ commitment, identity, the place of religion, animal welfare and political issues. Food controversies that reach the media attention are seldom something migrants have brought up themselves. The migrants’ representation in the media based on food controversies indicated that migrants are given little opportunity to negotiate values and practices, as norms about “the right” quantity and quality of food tend to reproduce the food model of the country they migrate to, also when there is a “positive” focus on ‘ethnic’ business. To better understand these dynamics, we propose the concept of “food encounters” and illustrate how the type of food encounters can play a role in how foodscapes could evolve or even emerge.

**The fourth axis built on experimental and analytical approaches.** We organized first dialogic platforms with tailored hybrid forums, related to each case study aiming at opening a dialogue with several central actors – in hope of creating a better world together. The hybrid forum also lay the foundation for pilots: We had pilot projects in each participating country with associate partners meant to implement concrete integration of research activities in civil society. Adapting findings to needs, experimental pilot projects were chosen through dialogues with associated partners and hybrid forums. Eventually we proposed an evaluation of the pilot related to social integration - societal, cultural and environmental impact of results. ( hybrid forum [here](#) ) The pilots emphasized the central role of the gift in public spaces, related to foodscapes as encounters and to participants as people who give at least as much as they receive. Moreover we noticed that, the “making” of the pilot project itself was fundamental. The concrete participation and enthusiasm of partners, their colleagues, local communities, local stakeholder and general public during the all the phases of the pilots strongly contributed to its impact. So at the end, the process may have more impact than the concrete result.

[In short, the main results from Food2gther research-based axis:](#)

- Food as language communication tool allowing to share both material and immaterial “something” (from bread to feelings) without accurate wording or sayings
- Food relationship to emotions making it a main subject of memories and narratives both individual stories and collective narratives
- Food as cultural witness - especially important in multicultural and migration situations
- Food as both part of private sphere and public spaces
- Food as encounters in public spaces
- Public spaces as places to meet and discuss but also to give and receive
- Public spaces as areas of dialogue, food exchange and gift
- Public space as cosmopolitan – even in rural area.
- Public spaces and food are crossed by migrations - underlining that our territories are made up of people who have become "from here" but sometimes come from elsewhere.
- Central role of recognition and reciprocity in public spaces, especially within contexts where receiving is important but giving and acknowledging/ being recognised is as much important

The **fifth** axis of the FOOD2GATHER project focuses on **dissemination and exploitation of results**. It built on **four complementary pillars from popular dissemination** to scientific articles, through academic teaching, podcasts and much more.

The first step was to open a Facebook page and to publish our own FOOD2GATHER **website** [FOOD2GATHER - \(oslomet.no\)](http://FOOD2GATHER-oslomet.no), working as a key tool of communication, dissemination and co-creation of knowledge. The website served as a “knowledge platform” for both the academic and non-academic communities, opening a dialogue with the general public and being a vitrine for research based reflections, essays, thoughts or other artifacts. We used these resources to inform about workshops and conferences, when a document is launched or to share upcoming events.

The FOOD2GATHER **photo exhibition** permits to share moments of fieldwork with both partners and the general public ([Photo exhibition - FOOD2GATHER \(oslomet.no\)](http://Photo%20exhibition%20-%20FOOD2GATHER%20(oslomet.no))).

The FOOD2GATHER **podcast series** is a great part of the communication and is to be found on the website ([Podcasts - FOOD2GATHER \(oslomet.no\)](http://Podcasts%20-%20FOOD2GATHER%20(oslomet.no))). The series of podcasts presents narratives based on the fieldwork addressing the general public and methodologies, theoretical frameworks and findings from the project, aimed at an academic audience.

**A policy brief** (called Deliverable 6) is also launched on the website.

The second pillar for the communication axis is based on **academic teaching**. A collaboration between especially France, Norway, Belgium and Italy permitted to develop a MOOC – a massive open online course - titled: **how to create initiatives connecting people through food ?** The MOOC is targeted at students, scholars, professionals, and activists from all over the world seeking to improve their knowledge about food related initiatives to build a stronger, more positive relationship among people living in multicultural societies. The course is about theoretical, methodological, and practical approaches for building initiatives to develop “inclusive foodscapes” to build capacity in communities.

In terms of scientific dissemination, which is the third pillar, researchers worked/are working on publications in peer-reviewed journals and anthologies (see the list in annex) . This dimension also includes several master theses and PhDs (see list in annex). The Food2gather project team was also present at many seminars and conferences during the 3 years of the project (see list in annex) including our final conference “A Sense of Home - European Symposium on Food, Migration and Belonging ”, organised by our Netherlands team at the University of Utrecht between 19-21 April 2022 and involving about 50 participants .



This symposium marks the closing of the FOOD2GATHER project. FOOD2GATHER investigates the roles food play in creating public spaces, shaping opportunities for communication and relations between places and the peoples that inhabit it (so-called host-societies, refugees, displaced populations, newcomers, etc.), thus creating conditions for living together. Over the past three years, with partners in Norway, Belgium, Germany, France, Italy and the Netherlands, researchers and their societal partners, have jointly negotiated the foodscapes that matter to our more-than-human world. Foodscapes - understood as public spaces knitted together through food related practices, including the physical, social, and institutional landscapes of foods and their modes of valuation. Foodscapes are seen as crucial agents in the construction of dynamic and reciprocal relationships among all of the communities that find themselves in Europe today.

Concluding this project means finally bringing together the different but complementary case studies in six European countries -addressed with multi-situated, ethnographic, historical, and visual perspectives- strengthening and empowering the potentialities of foodscapes as a dynamic tool for facilitating living together. This will be done by sharing literatures and experiences, case studies, concepts key to this project, and the table. We hope to welcome a variety of presentations, from traditional paper presentations to roundtables, from community projects to meditations. We hope to welcome societal partners, researchers and all others involved.

<p><b>Proposed Program</b>  <b>Tuesday, 19 April:</b>  13.00-15.00 Start of the program with a shared lunch  15.00-17.00 Opening and keynote (Drift 21 room 105)  17.00-19.00 Workshops 1 &amp; 2 (Drift 21 room 005 and 006)  19.00 dinner/reception and event</p>	<p><b>Wednesday, 20 April:</b>  9.00-11.00 Workshops 3 &amp; 4 (Drift 21 room 003 and 006)  11.00-13.00 Workshops 5 &amp; 6 (Drift 21 room 003 and 006)  13.00- Event at IUI Theater including food and speakers from different communities</p>
	<p><b>Thursday, 21 April:</b>  9.00-11.00 F2G Final Meeting: What's next? (Drift 21 room 006)</p>

*Invitation to The Food2gather final symposium:  
A sense of home – 19-21 april 2021 in Utrecht*

Eventually, the **fourth pillar is concretized by the FOOD2GATHER book**, an open access glossary book titled **Food, Migration and Belonging** published at Palgrave Macmillan. “Focusing on what food shows and tells us about togetherness, integration issues, and inclusiveness, this glossary offers an original, timely and urgent contribution to the study of material culture in the 21st century, highlighting its social, political and ethical challenges.” This glossary proposes about 30 entries based on extensive, new, empirical research on a contemporary theme (migration in Europe) and also includes the original contributions from people from outside of academia (activists, policy makers, migrants, artists and chefs) which will broaden not just its perspective but also open it up to different groups of (non-academic) readers.

**Key contribution of FOOD2GATHER CRP to the HERA JRP Programme:**

The CRP addressed the experience of food in public spaces from a relational perspective that focuses on the way people connect with others and the environment physically and symbolically through a myriad of food-related practices. Most particularly, FOOD2GATHER was interested in problematizing the possibilities and limitations of food as a driver of opportunities for intercultural communication and interaction and, thus, for integration and living together in European societies.

One input is at theoretical and conceptual levels as we reflected about public spaces and migration and emphasized the difficulty of determining the concept of space, in public spaces, by geographic physical or time boundaries, that public space is Food *for thoughts*, meaning a space where we share – both food and stories as well as a place for giving to, and acknowledging, each other.

Another input is at experimental level as ALL the 6-hybrid forum and pilot projects turned out to have a direct impact on local communities. (Hear to some podcasts [HERE](#) for more details, as for example the creation of a community garden in Sainte Foix la Grande ....but you could choose anyone.)