Caring for Others, Managing Migrants: Local and Institutional Hospitality in Lampedusa (Italy)

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Abstract In my chapter I analyze, first, the social elements explaining the hospitable, and not hostile, attitude Lampedusa inhabitants have shown over the years toward migrant people. I argue hospitality cannot be understood as a cultural element or an intrinsic characteristic of the Mediterranean identity. This attitude is mostly linked to historical dynamics and structural factors that characterize this Italian borderland. As the concept of reciprocity suggests, the fact that Lampedusa has historically been a place of emigration to Sicily and other Italian or Northern Africa regions led to a sort of identification with migrant people. At the same time, foreign migrants have always been temporary guests on this island. This situation facilitated, I suggest, the perception of migrants as non-dangerous visitors, unable to change the social landscape. Secondly, I explore the negative effects the transition in the perception of migrants from guests to take care to people the Italian state is entitled to manage has produced on the island. The replacement of a local model of hospitality based on informal

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practices and spontaneous places with an institutional model characterized by bureaucratic procedures and militarized sites led to a forced separation between local and migrant people.

Keywords Anthropology of the Mediterranean • Border economy • Border infrastructures • Hospitality policies • Migration crisis

INTRODUCTION

Lampedusa, the southernmost Italian territory, is one of the symbols of hospitality offered to migrants¹ traveling from the African continent to Europe via the Mediterranean. Although this island of 6000 inhabitants has become famous because of the recent migration crisis (Lendaro 2016), the arrival of migrant people in this territory started a long time ago. More specifically, the history of hospitality offered to migrants in this Italian borderland can be divided into three phases (Cuttitta 2012). The first phase occurred in the 1990s. The number of migrants who arrived in Lampedusa at this stage was rather small, and the local population was one of the main providers of care to the new arrivals. In the second phase (2000–2010), the number of migrants received on the island increased as well as the presence of the state, national and international humanitarian organizations. A migrant reception center was introduced during this period, and a shift was made from an informal hospitality model run by the local population to a formal hospitality model controlled by the state. The third phase began around 2010. The number of foreigners who arrived on the island continued to increase, as did the presence of national and international hospitality authorities and hospitality professionals (Friese 2012; Hart et al. 2010).

The current migration crisis can be described as a fourth stage in this chronology. According to national and international laws and migration policies, most search and rescue operations carried out by the Italian state and international NGOs moved from Lampedusa to Sicily and other southern Italian regions from 2015. At the same time, restrictive border policies led to an increasingly limited number of arrivals in Lampedusa, as well as other areas. According to the International Organization for Migration, between 2017 and 2018, migrant arrivals decreased from 119,369 people to 23,371 people in Italy. Despite these trends showing to what extent migrant people are ‘unwelcome’ in Italy and Europe, the

island of Lampedusa continues to be portrayed in national and international medias and political arenas as a *hospitable land* (Cuttitta 2012).

This essay focuses on the hospitality model that Lampedusa's inhabitants historically applied to migrants who arrived in this Italian borderland. Drawing on the critiques Michael Herzfeld (1984, 1987) addressed in the 1980s to Julian Pitt-Rivers (1977) and other anthropologists (Davis 1977) who proposed to understand the Mediterranean area as a cultural area, I will argue that Lampedusans' behavior does not find an explanation in one's innate attitude to generosity as a typical value of Mediterranean populations. In continuity with the analyses of other anthropologists such as Maria Minicuci (2003) and Dionigi Albera (2006) on this topic, I will show how the choice to take care of the Other cannot be taken as evidence of a putative welcoming culture trait characteristic of the Mediterranean. The moral principles suggested by the Catholic religion moreover only partially influence this caring behavior. I suggest that other historical and sociocultural elements play a more significant role in Lampedusans' historical attitude for the inclusion of foreigners. The overarching aim will be to contribute, then, to the deconstruction of the understanding of openness and hospitality as cultural Mediterranean patterns, instead of considering them as the result of local histories of encounter with people coming from elsewhere. The following paragraphs will show that, despite these observations, a part of Lampedusa's population still claims hospitality as a local virtue or even as an expression of their local culture. At the same time, the chapter aims to analyze how the hospitality models offered to foreigners have changed over time. Building on political anthropology, border studies and migrations studies literature (Frieze 2011; Boudou 2012; Ben-Yehoyada 2015, 2017) I will explore some of the consequences that arise from this process in the island of Lampedusa.

DATA AND METHODS

This chapter is based on ethnographic research on the island of Lampedusa between July 2016 and January 2017. The research work was funded and realized within the ERC EU Border Care project, directed by Professor Vanessa Grotti. The principal method I used was participant observation during the migrants' arrivals at the harbor of Lampedusa and their transfer to the reception center as well as in the spaces of Lampedusa's daily life, such as streets, squares, shops and churches. This approach allowed me to examine in depth the interactions between the local and migrant

populations in the public arena. It also made it possible to ‘map’ hospitable and inhospitable spaces in Lampedusa: for example, I could analyze in which part of the island migrant people live today compared to local populations, where migrant people’s presence was allowed (such as the church, squares or bars) and where they were excluded (such as on beaches). During my stay in Lampedusa, I had long discussions with local inhabitants I spent most of my time with in public and domestic spaces. The choice of being hosted for seven months within a Lampedusan family allowed me to analyze in detail local daily life and the feelings Lampedusan population share toward migrants. The family I lived with introduced me to their neighbors’ and friends’ networks allowing me access, through a ‘snowball mechanism’, to other representatives of local population, namely people of different ages, social backgrounds and political ideals. The relationship of trust I built up helped me to undertake interviews (20 in total) about hospitality practices and discourses. I also carried out interviews with representatives of the Italian coastguard (3 interviews), representatives of the Italian police who are entitled to control migrants’ behaviors on the island (2 interviews) and representatives of NGOs and humanitarian associations present on the island (5 interviews). Interviews with the local population involved people from different generations, aged between 27 and 73 years at the time of the interview. Some of these people were engaged in hospitality practices offered to migrants since the 1990s; others were working at the migrant reception center introduced by the state or collaborating with the humanitarian organizations on the island. Interviews with local people allowed me to reconstruct the evolution of hospitality models over time but also the relationship between these models, which I summarized through the categories of ‘caring’ and ‘managing’ migrant people. Consistent with Didier Fassin’s theorization of the care and management of foreigners as contemporary form of governmentality of immigration and borders (Fassin 2011), ‘caring’ corresponds to a humanized model and ‘managing’ to a militarized model. Interviews with representatives of the Italian coast guard, Italian police and humanitarian associations allowed me to explore further these two mutually reinforcing and complementary models. These interviews will not be quoted extensively in this chapter, which focuses on the hospitality practices and discourses of people from Lampedusa.

The interviews I conducted with local people were carried out in Italian, and translations into English are my own. In order to respect the anonymity of the subjects who took part in the research, the names that appear in the chapter are all fictitious.

CARING FOR OTHERS: ENCOUNTERS WITH MIGRANT PEOPLE AS ‘WELCOMED GUESTS’

Lampedusan people have always been used to encountering strangers. Before the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the island was ‘settled’ and abandoned successively by different peoples, such as the Arabs, the British (including people from Malta), the Spanish and the Sicilians (including people from the islands of Pantelleria and Ustica). Because of its location in the central Mediterranean, the island and its harbor have also historically functioned as a ‘safe haven’, where populations from Southern Europe and North Africa could rest during fishing and trading activities across the Mediterranean (Faranda 2015).

Encounters with people who migrated from the African continent, and who were trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe, started to come into the institutional orbit of the Italian state during the 1990s (Cuttitta 2015). What do Lampedusa’s inhabitants remember about these arrivals? What were the most common reactions? Although the analyses that will follow cannot be generalized to the entire population of the island which is far from presenting homogeneous positions, the prevailing feelings that emerged from the interviews I made with older generations are curiosity and openness toward foreigners. Carmela, a 71-year-old housewife, who has been committed to welcoming migrants since the 1990s, emphasizes that

Many of us were attracted by these people who came from distant places. We didn’t even know where their countries were situated in Africa. For many years Lampedusa has been isolated from the rest of the world. The fact of seeing foreigners coming to our island was a surprise. Some of us wondered how this was possible; then we realized these people were fleeing from Africa to seek a better life in Europe.

Mario, a 67-year-old mathematics teacher at the elementary school of Lampedusa, has the same opinion:

It does not seem to me people rejected or were afraid of these foreigners. Many of us had never seen people with black skin before. It was a discovery! The different color of the skin does not scare us. On the contrary, it made us ‘curious’ toward these people.

Although this attitude toward ‘foreigners’ (literally ‘*stranieri*’) could be defined as orientalist (Said 1978), the reaction to these feelings of curiosity has mostly been to transform the stranger into a guest to take care of. This approach emerges in an emblematic way from the commitment local inhabitants I spoke with expressed toward newcomers. The choice to cook for them or bring them food, the decision of many families to offer them clothes and shoes, the collection of money to allow them to speak with their families via payphones and the request to transform vacant buildings (such as those around the old airport) into ‘useful spaces’ where foreigners could sleep are some examples of local hospitality offered to migrants. In some cases, the form of ‘hosting’ islanders guaranteed to these outsiders consisted of inviting them to eat or shower in their homes. Some families even chose to shelter them in their homes, where they spend time together as if with members of their own family. Alessia, a 68-year-old housewife, describes how sharing her domestic space with foreigners was an experience that allowed her to feel useful to people in need:

Although we did not speak the same language, it was not difficult to understand each other. After all, we are all human beings, and we all have the same needs. With my family [she has three children] we hosted a woman from Liberia the first time, a couple from Ivory Coast a second time, and two boys from Senegal a third time. We have a guest room, which was usually free, so we could offer them a bed and some comfort.

For his part, Claudio, a 66-year-old baker, emphasizes how the openness toward foreigners did not have to do with Catholic values of benevolence and charity, but it was an expression of a wider human commitment:

The amazing thing was that even the poorest families who do not regularly go to church made themselves available to help foreigners. For several years there was a mobilization of the community for migrants’ reception. If one family did not have enough clothes to offer, another offered them in its place; if a neighbor could not cook, another neighbor prepared meals, etc. For people who were very Catholic, maybe this was part of religion, but for those like me who do not have a strong relationship with faith it was above all a matter of humanity.

Curiosity, compassion, solidarity and altruism are some of the feelings that explain, then, the attitude Lampedusa’s inhabitants I met and spent time with displayed to migrant people who have been treated and

understood as ‘welcomed guests’ during the 1990s. These efforts Lampedusans made to receive foreigners can be summarized under the category of *domestic hospitality*, namely an inclusive and informal model of care offered to migrant people. As my interviewees pointed out, at the time this practice was extended to all migrants who arrived on the island, without any distinction based on age, gender or nationality of origin. The term that Lampedusans used to refer to all categories of migrants was ‘Turks’ (‘Turchi’). This category, which carried the sense of ‘those with a darker skin’, neutralizes all differences related to ethnic or geographical origin among the migrants themselves. At the same time, it served to underline a distinction between *us*—the islanders—and *them*—people who are marked by the color of their skin as not being part of local population.

Temporary Hospitality Practices: Historical, Social and Structural Factors

In line with previous arguments made by anthropologists (Albera et al. 2001) who challenge a number of essentialisms still existing in characterizations of Mediterranean populations as ‘noble savages’ or ‘pre-modern people’ (Ellingson 2001), my research underlines how Lampedusa’s tradition of caring for foreigners is far from justifying any assertions that Lampedusa’s inhabitants are inherently ‘good people’, or people who are ‘generous by nature’ and have ‘hospitality in their blood’. Likewise, a religious reading of the domestic hospitality model as described so far would only partially explain the openness showed toward the newcomers (Molz and Gibson 2007). I identified other structural factors, which strongly contribute to the welcoming attitude toward strangers of the Lampedusans I encountered. These factors, I argue, are closely linked to the local history of Lampedusa and its population. At the same time, they also have to do with the short duration of migrants’ stay on the island.

A first factor to be mentioned is the paradoxical lack of a native population in Lampedusa. As I highlighted above, the inhabitants who settled the island in the past centuries came from nearby islands (i.e. Malta and Pantelleria), Sicily, Southern Europe and North Africa. Matteo, a 64-year-old archaeologist, describes the mixed identity of the Lampedusa population as an element that aids openness toward foreigners. In his opinion, the mixing of identities over time has made Lampedusa’s inhabitants accustomed to welcoming people who are not part of their territory:

If you ask people “who here is from Lampedusa?”, they will tell you that there are some families who have been living on the island for several generations and other families came later on the island. In reality none of these families is originally from Lampedusa, [so] in a sense we are all immigrants here.

If the process of mixing identities was, then, a crucial component for the demographic growth of this territory, another element to be considered is the historical familiarity of Lampedusa’s population with the emigration process. Departures from Lampedusa to northern Italian regions started in the 1960s and became more and more frequent during the 1970s and the 1980s. This phenomenon can be described as part of the more general emigration flows from southern to northern Italy during the same period (De Vejeli 2010). These departures from Lampedusa usually had an economic purpose, namely to find a job and improve one’s financial position. Hence, emigration flows mostly concerned men, especially young men. In most cases, the working lives of these young men were lived outside the island, while their social and family life was based in Lampedusa. Through visits to their families, emigrants generally maintained a relationship with their homeland; in many cases, they married women from the island and had children with them. For their part, women emigrated less than men if their husbands worked outside the island. Consistent with a gender system historically based on a separation between productive and reproductive work, women used to stay in Lampedusa, where they would take care of their own family and their in-laws. The emigration phenomenon decreased after 1990, when new employment opportunities arrived in Lampedusa thanks to the spread of the tourism industry. Despite this, today a number of families have relatives who emigrated, and departures to northern Italy continue to involve new generations on the island. These experiences of emigration often lead to a feeling of closeness with the foreigners who arrive on the island. As emerged in interviews with younger generations, migrants’ experiences are considered not so far from their own experiences of displacement to other Italian regions or abroad. Some people, for instance, emphasized their understanding of difficulties related to living away from one’s family. Feelings of identification with foreign migrants were stressed in many cases. Giovanna, a 42-year-old housewife whose brothers emigrated to Rimini (Emilia Romagna), points out that the way in which she interacts with migrants in Lampedusa is how she would like people from Lampedusa to be treated elsewhere:

What these people are living is what we have experienced too. In my family many people left Lampedusa to go and work in the North. It would have been nice for local people to treat them genuinely. I identify my family story with the one of these people. I am sure the first reception counts a lot towards feeling well accepted in a place far from home.

Sonia, a 47-year-old cook in a restaurant in Lampedusa, whose two children left the island to work in a factory in Ancona (Marche), shares this view. Like Giovanna, based on the experiences within her family, she also has a feeling of proximity toward migrant people:

Every time I saw these boys who arrive in Lampedusa I thought of my children. After all, it's the same thing; my sons left home for Ancona, these people left their families to come to Italy. Sometimes I have invited them to my house for lunch. Many families in Ancona have been kind and helpful with my sons; I try to do the same here with the newcomers.

The similarities between local people's experiences of migration and those of foreign migrants are thus felt to be more important than the differences, and this contributes to Lampedusa islanders' attitude of openness toward foreigners.

The historical connection Lampedusa inhabitants had with Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Libya is also called upon to explain their willingness to welcome strangers, as Lampedusan people were welcomed elsewhere. Until the 1960s, fishing and trade in the Mediterranean were the main economic activities in Lampedusa. The latter was often carried out in partnership with people from North Africa (Ben-Yehoyada 2015, 2017). Taking place within the relational matrix that Naor Ben-Yehoyada defines as a sea of cousinage (Ben-Yehoyada 2017), these collaborations took a variety of forms. Lampedusan fishermen sometimes hired sailors from North Africa or Lampedusan people worked as sailors for North African fishermen. Another example of collaboration was the seasonal work Lampedusan people carried out in North African countries, for example, repairing boats in shipyards. Pasquale, a 71-year-old retired fisherman, underlines the frequency of circulation of people from one side to another of the Mediterranean in the past, as in practice there were no international borders:

The matter of knowing the maximum number of miles [from the coast] you can navigate in the Mediterranean didn't exist before. We went to them [in North African countries] and they [people from North African countries] came to us without any problem. I lived in Morocco and Libya for work. The Mediterranean was an extremely interconnected area for fishing, and we felt very close to African people.

Tonino, 69 years old, who belongs to a family of fishermen, highlights how he and his brother migrated three times to Tunisia for work. Consistent with Ben-Yehoyada's characterization of the Mediterranean Sea as a transnational region (Ben-Yehoyada 2017), Tonino describes the Mediterranean as a place of circulation and exchange with other populations. According to these fishermen, contemporary management of migratory flows represents a change for the worse compared to the freedom of displacements in the Mediterranean as they lived it in the past.

In addition to the factors mentioned so far, the awareness that migrant people are transitory presences on the island also contributes to the attitudes shown toward them. Consistent with the national law on migration and border controls (law 40/1998), the island of Lampedusa has been understood, since the 1990s, as a place of transit where a first reception to foreigners is provided and some initial administrative procedures take place immediately upon landing. Typically, migrant people who disembarked in Lampedusa were moved elsewhere for the remaining procedures, after only a few days or weeks. These displacements usually occurred via maritime transfers, organized for this purpose by the Italian state. In most cases, migrants are taken to reception centers in Sicily or elsewhere in Italy. Consistent with the features of the law of hospitality theories (Pitt-Rivers 2012; Derrida 1997), the certainty that migrants do not stay long on the island encourages citizens to be hospitable. Costanza, a 48-year-old teacher, explains how, for many citizens, the purpose is to offer care to foreigners before they leave for other destinations:

Since the beginning, migrants have left after coming to Lampedusa. There are no reasons not to help them during the time they spend in Lampedusa. Paradoxically, knowing that they will not live on the island, where they probably will never return, leads people to take care of them.

The idea Lampedusa is a place of transit, where migrants are not entitled to belong, also contributes to reducing the fear of a potential invasion

of their own territory by foreigners. Maurizio, a 43-year-old owner of a shop in one of the main commercial streets of the island, says:

Many people here tolerate migrants since they know they will leave soon. If this were not the case, I wouldn't be sure citizens would be so kind and hospitable to these foreigners. The fact that they will leave helps us not to feel in danger. Lampedusa's population is relatively small; if these people were to stay on the island, we would become the foreigners and they the locals.

The tolerance shown to foreigners therefore also depends on their status as temporary guests. The matter of long-term cohabitation with the foreigner, as well as issues related to the transformation of guests into citizens, is not part of the hospitality model guaranteed locally. An example of the feelings of intolerance Lampedusan people show toward foreigners who remain for longer on the island can be found in the crisis that occurred in 2011, when thousands of people fleeing Tunisia during the Arab Spring arrived in Lampedusa without being transferred elsewhere. At first, local populations reacted with openness, offering food and clothes to the newcomers. After a few weeks, however, uncertainty about when these foreigners would leave produced intolerance, which was fed by a feeling of being invaded. Faced with a number of guests that exceeded that of the local population (almost 10,000 Tunisians compared to 6000 local inhabitants), a number of citizens confronted the foreigners in defense of their own territory (Cuttitta 2012). Another example of intolerance arose in 2020, during the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic in Italy and worldwide. While the Italian territory was under a tight lockdown which entailed the closure of international borders and the prevention of any movements to other Italian regions, landings of migrants were recorded almost every day in Lampedusa. Uncertainty regarding the transfer of migrants elsewhere has led, also in this case, to a sentiment of invasion and danger, doubled by the fear of contagion. As a result, Lampedusa inhabitants organized themselves to protest against the arrival of migrant people during the Italian lockdown (March–May 2020). Despite this, local authorities claimed hospitality as a virtue Lampedusa islanders have shown in the past, an attitude the Italian state took advantage of, until it decided to take over the management of migrants.

MANAGING MIGRANTS: SHIFTING TOWARD AN INSTITUTIONAL HOSPITALITY MODEL

In this part of the chapter, I will analyze how the reception practices offered to migrants have changed over time in Lampedusa. More specifically, the aim is to show how the *caring* tasks Lampedusa inhabitants performed have been replaced by other ways of *managing* migrants in more recent years. As I will underline, such a redefinition of the reception model goes with a number of innovations related to the organization of local territory, the right of action granted to local inhabitants and the relationship with foreign guests. I will focus on two main transformations that the shift from a domestic to an institutional hospitality model produced. The first concerns the spatial reconfiguration of the island. The definition of Lampedusa as a strategic location for the defense of Italian and European borders led to a growing presence of border infrastructures on the island during the 2000s (Anderson et al. 2003). This led to the introduction of militarized structures for the reception of migrant people that more recently acquired the status of EU migrant ‘hotspot’ (2014). The presence of these structures created new symbolic and spatial boundaries between the island’s citizens and foreigners (Brambilla 2015; Agier 2018). The migrant reception center is located in an almost uninhabited area of the island. This structure is therefore difficult for the local population to reach. The Italian army—first alone and then in collaboration with international agencies for European border control (i.e. Frontex since 2015)—runs this center, while access to this structure is forbidden to the local population. Unlike the spaces where the domestic hospitality model was performed, its location and organization show how one of the key elements of the institutional reception model is a spatial division between citizens and foreign migrants. Through the introduction of a military structure that has been described by various scholars as a biopolitical device similar to a prison (Gatta 2018), the goal was to keep the two populations separate. Although according to national law this way of managing migrants concerns the whole Italian territory, the small size of Lampedusa (20.2 square kilometers) makes the spatial separation between citizens and foreigners particularly stark (Proglia and Odasso 2018). Lucia, a 42-year-old beautician, underlines how, for citizens engaged in domestic hospitality practices, the introduction of a migrant reception system that excluded the local population was difficult to accept:

After the introduction of the reception center, it is as if migrants were received on another island. We know they are in Lampedusa, but we don't know anything about their life in the reception center. The area where they live is a military zone where we can't go. Now there are two territories in Lampedusa: the territory of the State and the territory of the island. The first is an autonomous area, with separate laws, where the citizens of the island have no right to go.

The feeling of having lost a part of the island's territory, which has been 'occupied' by the state, is commonly expressed by citizens who propose the closure of the reception center. Their criticisms of the hospitality model established by the state mainly focus on two themes. Firstly, they point to the lower quality of care offered to migrant people compared to what was provided in the past. Care in the framework of domestic hospitality is described as more humane in this regard. Secondly, they criticize the exclusion of local people from the institutional hospitality policies pursued by the state. As in international development efforts to formalize the economy through a shift from informal to formal money-making models, the transition from informal hospitality practices carried out by members of the local population to a formal hospitality mechanism controlled by the state led to a transformation of the human economy (Hart et al. 2010) connected to the reception of foreign migrants. The Italian state circumvented Lampedusan families in favor of professionals from outside the island as the principal actors in the migration industry and border economy (Friese 2012), leaving Lampedusa inhabitants to negotiate the preservation of a role in the reception of the foreign migrants who arrive in their own territory (Deleixhe 2016). As Sandra, a 38-year-old housewife, underlines, the high turnover of hospitality professionals working on the island (i.e. representatives of military bodies, humanitarian associations and NGOs) clashes with the permanent presence of locals whose ability to care for foreign migrants depends on collaboration with these external actors:

In recent years a number of professionals moved to the island to work with migrants. Even if their stay in Lampedusa is temporary, representatives of associations and NGOs are considered the experts in hospitality while ordinary citizens no longer have the chance to offer care to migrants.

Another development resulting from the rise of institutional hospitality model is the denial of some rights assigned in the past to the local population of Lampedusa. Specifically, some of the practices that were socially shared or even normalized on the island are progressively classified and judged as illegal by the Italian state. For example, citizens are prohibited from hosting foreigners in their homes, since according to institutional logic the only place deemed suitable for migrants' reception is the reception center mentioned above. The official ban on hosting foreigners at home is effective even when the number of migrants in the reception center exceeds the maximum number of people that can be accepted in this structure (around 300 people). Patrizia, a 39-year-old yoga teacher, defined this situation as paradoxical, noting that the reception center can consequently house more than a thousand migrants whose living conditions are inhumane. Another example is the limited freedom of movement of local citizens in their own island due to the transformation of a number of spaces into military zones under state control. Such areas include the harbor where foreign migrants disembark after the search and rescue operations carried out by the state and international NGOs in the Mediterranean. Like the area where the reception center is located, this space is fenced, strongly militarized and inaccessible for the local population. The restrictions to freedom of movement also concern the island's shoreline and coastal waters. The tension between the forms of help Lampedusan fishermen offered to foreign migrants and the rescue operations the Italian State is responsible for emerged in the shipwreck that occurred on October 3, 2013, a few miles from the coasts of Lampedusa. During this shipwreck, which has become one of the symbols of migrant tragedies in the Mediterranean, 368 migrants died and 20 were missing. Faced with hundreds of people dying at sea, local fishermen decided to intervene and saved 155 persons. This choice was strongly condemned by the Italian government, which accused them of promoting illegal immigration. Only a few of these fishermen succeeded in the legal process against the state: the rest of them were forced to pay a fine or even in some cases give up their boat license (Cuttitta 2012, 2015).

Resistance and Adjustment to the Institutional Hospitality Model

The rise of institutional hospitality model led to a growing division among the population of Lampedusa. As in the past, this can be explained by a tendency to take care of migrants according to individual social and

political positions. The internal differences among Lampedusa inhabitants align with their choices to resist against or adapt to the hospitality model promoted by the state (Boudou 2017). Based upon observations I carried out alongside the local population and long discussions I had with the latter, I analyze this choice of resistance, adjustment or commitment to the institutional hospitality model with respect to three areas: (1) rescue operations at the sea, (2) migrants' reception at home and (3) collaboration of local citizens with the reception center and/or humanitarian sector.

With regard to rescue operations in the Mediterranean, the main position held by local citizens (mainly fishermen) is to adapt to national and international rules. As Salvatore, a 69-year-old fisherman, points out, these rules became increasingly restrictive from 2013, and the penalties increasingly rigid. As a result, although such behavior is considered inhumane by many of them, the risks involved in providing aid to foreigners discourage fishermen from saving lives:

If we see a boat carrying migrants, we have to call the coastguard. If the latter does not arrive soon, the only thing we can do is to call again. We cannot help these people. According to the law this is a crime. Watching people dying without doing anything about it is not a crime? Apparently not! The state forces us to do so and we must think of our families; if we go to jail then who cares for them? The state?!

For his part, 73-year-old Nino, a retired fisherman, underlines how nowadays it is impossible to escape police and state surveillance and save migrants' lives secretly:

Coastguard and international radars are everywhere. Even at night we are under their supervision. It is impossible to do something without getting caught. There are the police at sea, there are the police on the island, how do you save migrants without being discovered? Where can you hide them in Lampedusa? Nowhere!

Most of my interlocutors choose to respect the prohibition against hosting migrants in their own homes. According to the migration laws now in force in Italy, the potential accusations that may arise from domestic hospitality include aiding illegal immigration and, in the case of minors, kidnapping. Despite these risks, some citizens I interviewed resist the state interdiction and continue to host migrants at home. An example is Matteo,

a 52-year-old post office clerk, who, at the weekend, is in the habit of inviting two or three migrants to his house for lunch:

In my opinion the most important thing to offer a foreigner is food. This will make him feel at home. Together with my wife, we have always welcomed people [migrants] to our home and we continue to do so. Of course, if the police arrive it could cause us problems. In reality everyone knows we are doing nothing wrong.

This attitude, asserting that offering a meal at home is not a crime, is only shared by a minority of people, however. The majority of my interlocutors instead take a position between respecting the prohibitions established by the state and the willingness to offer food to migrants. Hence, the main tendency is not to cook for migrant people but to pay for food for them in public spaces, such as bars or fast food restaurants on the island. Both solutions highlight the importance of commensality as a key element of hospitality (Sahlins 2008; Schemeil 2004). Sharing food, therefore, remains a way to welcome the stranger (Herzfeld 2005). At the same time, consistent with the rules established by the state, this practice has new forms today. Marcella summarizes as follows the fact that public spaces assume today the function initially held by domestic spaces in the relationship with a foreigner:

What we do today outside our houses is similar to what we did before inside the houses. In the past, many families cooked for migrants, now many families buy food for them at the supermarket or at the bar. It is always a matter of making sure that they are well fed.

Finally, citizens' collaboration with the reception center run by the state and/or the humanitarian sector engaged in migrant reception is an issue that produces many divisions. My familiarity with the local people suggests four categories into which I classify Lampedusan people's attitudes toward the choice to cooperate with the humanitarian sector or to resist against or adapt to the hospitality model promoted by the state.

The first can be defined as a *radical attitude*. People who share this attitude oppose both the hospitality model proposed by the state and the reception practices the humanitarian sector promotes. Echoing critiques of international development policies (Hart et al. 2010), they argue that both the state's presence and that of humanitarian organizations prevent

citizens from having an active role in relationships with foreign migrants. In their opinion, the state model of reception and NGO humanitarian interventions both lead to a professionalization of hospitality and the devaluation of local citizens. This position is shared by a minority of people who express far-left political opinions and who have a high level of education. These people I met and accompanied during their meetings and mobilization actions (i.e. protests against the militarization of the island) proclaim a ‘hospitality duty’ toward foreigners whom they would like to take care of autonomously.

The second position can be labeled as a *solidarity attitude*. As in the first case, people who hold this position oppose the hospitality policies promoted by the state and European military bodies (i.e. Frontex). Unlike the first group, however, they consider the role played by the humanitarian sector to be positive. In their view, this represents a valid alternative to the militarized reception model, and hence they collaborate with some of the associations and NGOs devoted to migrant people in Lampedusa. This form of collaboration led to the creation in 2015 of the Lampedusa Solidarity Forum (Forum Lampedusa Solidale), composed of local citizens and representatives of associations and NGOs, such as the Italian Red Cross and Mediterranean Hope. I regularly attended the meetings the members of the Lampedusa Solidarity Forum organize once a week, and I accompanied their various activities including offering food and hot drinks as migrants disembark at the port of Lampedusa; offering clothes and other necessities (soaps, towels and blankets) to migrants who live at the reception center; offering Wi-Fi access and other means of communication (e.g. SIMs) to allow migrants to get in touch with their families; the reconstruction of the migrants’ kinship network for the burial of people who died in the Mediterranean; and management of the Lampedusa cemetery area dedicated to migrants. Maria, a 54-year-old housewife, described these activities as a renewal of a number of practices of care that characterized the former domestic hospitality model which is still understood today as an example to follow and to be proud of. In most cases, people I encountered who hold this solidarity attitude have a high level of education, hold left-wing political opinions and are sometimes close to the values of Catholic Church.

The third position can be described as a *work-centered attitude*, which translates into collaborating with the institutional hospitality model. Those who express this attitude are hired on fixed-term contracts and they work at the migrants’ reception center. Giacomo, a 47-year-old plumber,

underlined how the tasks assigned to local inhabitants are lower in status than those performed by the military bodies and reception professionals who come from outside the island. Typically, women from Lampedusa work as cooks or cleaners within the reception center, while men are hired as drivers or plumbers. Although these people are often paid low wages after long delays, the possibility of earning money without having to look for work outside the island is considered positive. According to Giacomo:

It is better to work near home than to look for a job in Northern Italy. For me, working with migrants is even better than working with tourists as migrant arrivals occur throughout all months of the year.

At the same time, the tasks performed are consistent with the social profile of people who hold this work-centered attitude. Most belong to medium-low social strata and have a lower level of education than the first two groups. The political positioning also differs from the first two groups, since many of the people in this category hold right-wing beliefs. Such a positioning appears to favor a preference for joining the institutional reception model to support one's own economic needs rather than to fulfil a moral duty of solidarity. This attitude aligns with a tendency to judge different migrants as people more or less deserving of welcome. It emerged from the long discussions I had with people of this third group that one of the criteria for this judgment is the interviewees' view of the behavior of migrants within the reception center. Typically, those who oppose the rules of this institution are considered 'bad guests', while those who respect the rules are called 'good guests'. The archetype of the dangerous and unwanted guest is mostly identified with migrants from North Africa who have often organized protests and set fires in the reception center, while the docile and worthy guest is associated with sub-Saharan migrants who are less often involved in such episodes. Similarly, women and children are considered more vulnerable, less dangerous and more deserving guests than men. What emerges, then, is an idea of selective hospitality based on an assumed moral scale of merit.

The fourth position can be described as lying *between the second (solidarity) and third (work-centered) attitudes*. Most people in this group collaborate with both the humanitarian NGO and the institutional sectors. A number of them, for instance, work at the migrant reception center and are members of the Lampedusa Solidarity Forum. Like other Lampedusans employed in the migrant reception center, these people have a low level of

education and a low socio-economic profile. Unlike the workers described above (in the third category), however, these are closer to the leftist circles of the island. This difference emerges, for example, in the idea of universal hospitality that they seek to defend. For instance, in the opinion of Concetta, a 39-year-old cook, who is part of this fourth group, the commitment of local populations alongside the institutional and humanitarian sectors aims to improve the openness toward foreigners who arrive in Lampedusa, regardless of age, gender and nationality of origin.

These different positions (see table below) lead to conflicts within the local population, such as accusations made by those who collaborate with the humanitarian sector against those who work at the migrant reception center, who are considered to be benefitting from the migrants' plight, and rivalries between families that have been included or excluded from jobs at the reception center.

<i>Positioning of local population of Lampedusa</i>	<i>Collaboration with the state reception system</i>	<i>Collaboration with the humanitarian sector</i>
Radical attitude	–	–
Solidarity attitude	–	X
Work-centered attitude	X	–
Attitude between solidarity and work-centered approaches	X	X

Finally, a fifth attitude, which can be labeled as *anti-solidarity attitude*, clashes with the four positions described so far. This fifth attitude, which is strongly related to the growing attraction of anti-immigration parties (i.e. the Northern League party) in Lampedusa, demands the end of migrant arrivals on the island. According to people who share this position, unlike Northern Italian people, Lampedusa inhabitants had to cope with migrant arrivals for a longer time. In their opinion, it is now time to abandon the 'hospitable land brand' associated with Lampedusa in order to promote a new image of the island. Conflicts and accusations especially emerged regarding the relationship between immigration and tourism in Lampedusa: for those seeking a greater development of the tourism industry, the only foreigners who should be welcomed are tourists, while migrants' arrival is a problem that should be removed from the island; for those who are engaged in migrant hospitality, the growing presence of tourists over the last 20 years led to a model of society based on economic

profit, at the expense of solidarity and altruism; for those who work with both migrants and tourists, both are considered as sources of profit that can be managed together as complementary sectors of the local economy; finally, those who work neither with migrants nor with tourists tend to make nostalgic reference to a time before the tourism boom and migration crisis, when the prevailing hospitality model was the domestic one. These conflicts emerged clearly in the polarization of opinions during the last municipal elections (in 2017) where the left-wing mayor, who committed herself to an openness and solidarity attitude to migrants, was replaced with a right-wing mayor, engaged for the development of the tourism industry. The results of the European elections (in 2019) show, meanwhile, the growing political weight of the Northern League party in Lampedusa, which obtains the majority of votes (45.8%). Another example of conflicts within the local population can be found in the contrasting reactions to friction between the Italian government and international NGOs over allowing migrants rescued in the Mediterranean to enter the port of Lampedusa, for instance, the confrontation between the Italian Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, and the Sea-Watch ship's Captain Carola Rackete, in June 2019. During the weeks migrants were stuck on Sea-Watch's ship, a few miles off Lampedusa's coast, people who share a solidarity attitude carried out sit-ins and protests to ask for the migrants' landing. In contrast, supporters of the Northern League party mobilized against the arrival of migrants on the island. More recently, the COVID-19 epidemic has also resulted in contrasting positions within the local population. On the one hand, the epidemic has become an opportunity to demand the departure of the military bodies and reception professionals who come from outside the island. On the other hand, the global health crisis was used to strengthen anti-immigration positions, up to the outbreak of local protests in June 2020, which resulted in the decision to 'close' the Gate of Europe, a monument that the Italian artist Mimmo Paladino introduced in 2008 to symbolize Lampedusa as a hospitable land (see Fig. 2.1).

Another episode that occurred during the protests of June 2020 was the setting alight of the so-called migrant boat 'cemetery', located on the opposite side of the port of Lampedusa where migrants' landings usually take place.² In the same way as the 'closure' of the Gate of Europe, the attempt to destroy this symbolic place shows the desire to revise the historical memory of this borderland, by erasing the monuments that celebrate the hospitality offered to migrants over the years.

Fig. 2.1 Gate of Europe, before and after the symbolic closure on June 3, 2020. (Source: <http://www.mediterraneocronaca.it/2020/06/03/porta-deuropa-chiusa-a-lampedusa-sbarca-il-pessimo-gusto/>)

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter highlights how the tendency of Lampedusans to be hospitable to foreigners has nothing to do with the notion that hospitality is among the cultural values of the Mediterranean area. While it is true that Catholic moral principles of piety and solidarity partially explain their openness toward the outsider, the inclination to receive the foreigner derives much more from the history of this borderland, from the fact that the Mediterranean is a historically transnational region (Ben-Yehoyada 2017) and the island of Lampedusa a land of immigration and emigration. This situation, I argue, contributes to local populations' broad lack of difficulty in identifying with the foreigner and sympathy with the need to leave one's home to improve one's life. Finally, the openness of Lampedusa's inhabitants is nevertheless dependent upon the transitory nature of foreigners' stay on the island, confirming the law of hospitality as bounded in space and time (Pitt-Rivers 2012; Derrida 1997). As the Tunisian crisis of 2011 and the current global health crisis COVID-19 showed, foreigners

are welcomed and accepted on this island only as temporary guests. Despite this, some inhabitants of this island consider hospitality as a Lampedusan virtue to be proud of, claiming the local commitment to taking care of migrants over time. In parallel, I have tried to show how hospitality discourses and practices have changed in the last decades. State intervention and institutionalization of migrant reception produced spatial, social and symbolic distance between the local population and migrants. The shift in the representation of migrants, in the past considered as people to take care of and nowadays understood predominantly as a money-making opportunity, is emblematic of this process. A number of new tensions within the local population emerged, as a response to the various forms of hospitality the Italian state and the humanitarian sector have brought to Lampedusa in recent years. Additionally, although Lampedusan inhabitants continue to think of themselves as a particularly hospitable population, anti-immigration political positions are increasingly popular confirming even more to what extent openness toward foreigners does not find an explanation in a welcoming culture trait characteristic of the Mediterranean.

NOTES

1. In this chapter I will use the general category of ‘migrants’ to refer to people who cross the Mediterranean and avoid distinguishing between asylum seekers and economic migrants. According to local terminology, this category doesn’t refer to Italian tourists and northern Italians who have settled in Lampedusa (i.e. artists, retired people) who are classified as ‘foreigners’ (*forestieri*).
2. Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/06/sicily-launches-inquiry-into-fire-in-migrant-boats-graveyard>; <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/bruciati-i-barconi-dei-migranti-lampedusa-rabbia-e-1868302.html>.

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