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Abstract

This thesis explores the transnational dimension of Lampedusa, and how its symbolism can be used to address questions of identity and subjectivity in the cultural representation of migration. By examining the initiatives of the *Archivio delle Memorie Migranti*, the self-organised refugee group *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, and the Lampedusa-based *Collettivo Askavusa*, this work defines Lampedusa as a floating signifier. The discussion of the discursive formations composing what I defined, drawing on Benjamin, as the 'Lampedusa transnational constellation' highlights the centrality of cultural practices in affecting hegemonic representations of migration.

This thesis recognises that the marginalisation of migrant and refugee voices in the public debate on migration is also partially reflected in the cultural projects that attempt to restore the agency of these individuals. The production and collections of new films, exhibitions, memories focusing on migrant deaths, passage and presence on Lampedusa, from the perspective of migrants themselves, are therefore considered playing a fundamental role, but are not seen as a straightforward solution. This works emphasises the importance of analysing the 'moment of production' of these cultural products, proposing forms of participant observation and multi-sited ethnographic work as a means to directly engage with the questions of race, identity, and positionality embedded in cultural practices focusing on migration.

Acknowledgements

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First of all, I wish to thank my supervisor Professor Derek Duncan for his inspiring guidance and support over these four years of research. Since the first day of this PhD, he always found the time and the patience to listen to my thoughts and questions and to encourage me in pursuing new ideas. I will be forever grateful to him for giving me this opportunity.

I would also like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the School of Modern Languages for their generous support in funding this PhD. Furthermore, I am also very grateful to my brilliant colleagues of the *Transnationalizing Modern Languages* project, which were always ready to share their experiences and stimulating thoughts.

Despite the beautiful nature and the Sunday league football adventures, life in Scotland would have not been easy without the smiles and the company of Karthik, Mike, David and Sissela, the wholehearted friendship of Matt and Naike and laughs I shared with Alessio, Anna, Joanna and Panos. Thanks for the good times, the dances, the endless Simpsons jokes and the amazing weekends in the Scottish Highlands.

I am also thankful for the long-distance support of my friends in Italy and Germany. A special mention is dedicated to Alessio Bacciu for having brought a bit of Arbiola nostalgia into the long Scottish winters.

During this project I had the luck to meet so many brilliant people to whom I am grateful: the members of the AMM, Monica, Mario, Gianluca, Sandro, and Zakaria for their friendship and thought-provoking conversations. To the members of the Collettivo Askavusa for their hospitality and their patience in engaging in difficult discussions over their beloved island. Lastly, to Abimbola, Ali N, Adam, Shaban, Simone, Conni and the others: I couldn't have imagined that getting to know each other would have changed my life so much. Now I can't imagine a Friday evening without our 'Lampedusa meeting'.

Without doubt, I want to dedicate the last words to my family and Nina.

Non so come avrei fatto senza l'affetto incondizionato, il sostegno economico e la fiducia dei miei genitori. Questa tesi è per voi tutti. Per quelli che ci sono sempre, che non ci sono più e per quelli che arriveranno.

To my beloved partner, I just want to say thank you for being my muse and main critic, for widening my horizons, and firing up my heart and spirit. One day after the other, I cannot help thinking how I would have done it without you. On the rollercoaster of emotions of this PhD, you were always there, always finding the right words even when you were not sure about it:

> "Manchmal hat man eine sehr lange Straße vor sich. Man denkt, die ist so schrecklich lang, die kann man niemals schaffen. Ja, das denkt man. Und man fängt an sich zu eilen, und man eilt sich und eilt sich und trotzdem wird sie nicht kürzer die Straße. Sie ist noch immer genau so lang wie vorher. Und du strengst dich an, strengst dich an. Man kriegt's mit der Angst zu tun. Und am Ende ist man ganz außer Puste und kann nicht mehr. Du darfst nie an die ganze Straße auf einmal denken, verstehst du? An die ganze Straße. Man muss immer nur an den nächsten Schritt denken: Atemzug – und Schritt – und Besenstrich. Und Atemzug, und Schritt und Besenstrich. Dann macht es Freude. Das ist wichtig. Dann machst du deine Arbeit gut. Und so soll es ja wohl sein. Und auf einmal merkt man, dass man die ganze Straße gemacht hat. Schritt für Schritt nämlich. Und du hast gar nicht gemerkt wie." (Momo, 1986)

Funding

Ethical approval

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC). Approval Code: ML12219, approved on: 29 June 2016, approval expiry: 29 June 2021.

Research Data

Data are available at the University of Bristol data repository, data.bris, at https://doi.org/10.5523/bris.1k66c9sl7ag0a2pxkal4txbcv1.

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Introduction

On a cold and snowy Saturday in January 2016, I am standing at Hamburg *Hauptbahnhof* waiting for the *U-Bahn* in the direction of Ahrensburg. After a 30-minute ride, I am supposed to get on a bus, and finally walk to the sports hall of an anonymous school in the suburb North-East of Hamburg. While waiting, I look around hoping that some of the participants of the anti-racist football tournament will take the same train. I spot a group of teenagers, some carrying a sport bag with the words 'FC Lampedusa Hamburg' written on it. I recognise their distinctive symbol, which I got to know from their Facebook page: an anchor that becomes a fist in sign of resistance (also used by the refugee group *Lampedusa in Hamburg*), with the addition of a football. *Lampedusa in Hamburg*'s motto is changed from 'here to stay' to 'here to play'.

I get closer to them: "Hmm, are you FC Lampedusa? Are you going to the tourn…". One of them interrupts: "Ich spreche kein Englisch…". They look around and start looking for someone to help. A woman comes closer to me, and I try to introduce myself: "I am a fan, but also a researcher…". She turns out to be one of the coaches, and hastily replies: "Ja ja come along". One of the guys 'Motto' comes next to me and asks in English what I am doing there. "I am interested in your team and the name Lampedusa", I say. He asks: "are you a journalist?". "No, I am a student", I reply. He mentions Catania and Napoli, the first European stop-overs on his journey to Germany.

On the bus, I try to step aside; I do not want to annoy their coaches, but they call out: "Komm, komm her, sit with us!". I shake hands. Hagar (one of the coaches) says: "This is Jacobo, Jacopo. He came from Scotland to watch us; he is a fan…". The conversation goes on a bit in German and a bit in English. I say hi to all and I tell them that I am Italian. They seem amused by the fact that an Italian student is coming from Scotland to watch and support them in Ahrensburg. Me too. I cannot help but wonder how this has happened. How did I end up 'looking for Lampedusa', with all that has taken place around this Sicilian island during the last twenty years, in Northern Germany?

This particular encounter marked the beginning of my fieldwork, and gave me further inspiration for pursuing my unconventional journey to 'Lampedusa'. The stops on this journey did not necessarily follow a linear path towards the Sicilian island lying between Europe and Africa, but were centred on two premises: first, the presence of refugee

groups such as *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, associations as the *Collettivo Askavusa* and films like those of Zakaria Mohamed Ali and Dagmawi Yimer, are illustrative of that fact that the relevance of the name Lampedusa cannot be understood anymore within the limits of the Italian context. Therefore, to fully grasp the significance of this name, I considered Lampedusa as a transnational signifier, and followed its symbolism across different locations and contexts. Second, while most literature in Italian Studies concentrates on the increasing number of cultural productions focusing on Lampedusa's relationship with the migration apparatus, the perspectives of the key protagonists are often lacking. As such, I decided to focus on how migrants and refugees negotiate their subjectivities in the public debate on Lampedusa. In particular, this thesis asks whether there is space for them to assert their voices in what I conceptualise as a hegemonic regime of representation.

Why study Lampedusa?

Since the very beginning, the decision to focus on such a topical and over-scrutinised matter has revealed itself as a challenge. Not only because I faced the difficulty of keeping up with a vibrant literature and quite a few academic meetings, workshops and conferences specifically focusing on the island, but also because Lampedusa was regularly at the heart of current events, policy-making, and news stories. Indeed, over four years of research in the wake of the infamous shipwreck of October 3rd 2013, barely a month passed in which Lampedusa and the central Mediterranean route were not in the news.

From the peak of visibility following the so-called 'welcoming Lampedusa' and what I defined as the 'institutional take-over' of the cultural initiatives on the island, to the recent media backlash after the new mayor's election and the criminalisation of search and rescue NGOs, few places other than Lampedusa could symbolise the frenzied public debate on migration and border control in Europe. While places such as Calais and Lesbos were influential in news coverage on internal EU migration, with heightened arrivals in 2015 and 2016 in particular, Lampedusa is unique in symbolising the borders between Europe and Africa (arguably one of the boundaries most intensely bound up with postcolonial imaginaries and fears). Despite waxing and waning public interest in

migration across the eastern, central, or western Mediterranean Sea, the island has consistently been associated with migration, migration control, and migrant deaths for over two decades, exhibiting a notoriety matched by few, if any, other places.

Despite the challenges, the decision to focus on Lampedusa was thus inspired by two reasons. On the one hand, I had a scholarly interest in addressing and contributing to a literature that saw the island as the symbol of all 'the major issues of the current political and academic debate on migration-related border controls,'[1] and a place where 'overlapping racialogical histories of whiteness, colonialism and empire, and attendant anxieties about securing a nation's borders' coexisted with the amenities of a 'dream' holiday location.[2] On the other hand, my research interest was driven by an increasing dissatisfaction with the approaches taken by the media and political actors vis-à-vis the so-called 'Lampedusa issue'. I wondered if there were any hope for fairer, more nuanced ways to represent and debate these events, beyond the highly dramatic images intertwined with humanitarian and security arguments supporting an image of emergency. I was looking for representations that would bring different issues to the fore: most importantly, migrant subjectivities, EU member states' role in destabilising countries of origin, and the different regimes of mobilities affecting – on the one hand – EU citizens, and – on the other – people deciding to cross the Mediterranean Sea by boat. When I started this thesis, I was mostly concerned with what was happening on the island, and how to deconstruct this apparently unchanging and hegemonic interpretation of it.

My preoccupation with media reporting and political discourse was fundamentally changed by my work within the *Transnationalizing Modern Languages* project, and by the theoretical work of Stuart Hall, which can be considered as foundational to this thesis. The TML project's emphasis on promoting research highlighting the transnational dimension of Italian cultures, as well as Hall's focus on the role of culture as a critical site of social action, shifted my attention towards the role played by cultural practices in this regime of representation.

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[1] Paolo Cuttitta, '"Borderizing" the Island Setting and Narratives of the Lampedusa "Border Play"', *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 13.2 (2014), 196–219 (p. 197).
[2] Joseph Pugliese, 'Crisis Heterotopias and Border Zones of the Dead', *Continuum*, 23.5 (2009), 663–79 (p. 664) <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310903183627>.

As I was developing the rationale of this research, moreover, the name Lampedusa started being associated with the political struggle of 300 ca. refugees in the city of Hamburg who have been fighting for the recognition of their Italian working papers in Germany. Whilst the idea of going to Lampedusa – of being there and literally touching it – appeared (and still appears) to many as the only way of experiencing it, the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* protest reminded me that it was time to look at the so-called 'Lampedusa issue' no longer as a matter of Italian politics, but as a matter that crossed national borders and disciplinary boundaries.

What this thesis seeks to contribute

In the following pages, I will analyse the transnational dimension of Lampedusa, and how this symbolism can be used to address questions of identity and subjectivity in the cultural representation of migration. This will be achieved through cases studies of the *Archivio delle Memorie Migranti*, the self-organised refugee group *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, and the Lampedusa-based *Collettivo Askavusa*. As I will illustrate in chapter one, the work of Stuart Hall, Arjun Appadurai, and Walter Benjamin helped me to conceive a theoretical framework capable of holding together such diverse case studies.

In the field of Italian Studies, significant academic attention has been dedicated to the role of migrant self-representations, and of cultural productions highlighting migrant subjectivity in order to counter hegemonic discourses on migration. This literature has emphasised the 'postcolonial value' of the Lampedusa experience, contributing further to the expectations projected on the island.

In my opinion, considering Lampedusa as a symbolic place that offers the possibility to challenge negative stereotypes surrounding migration, and to reshape the idea of Italy and Europe, is an overly optimistic interpretation of the effects of film, artistic installations, literature, and so on. Contrary to much of the literature, this thesis does not take the 'effectiveness' of cultural practices in giving space to migrant voices and perspectives for granted, but will address the structural constraints shaping the production of such cultural products. Following Hall, I will focus on the 'dominant connotative codes' informing the cultural representation of Lampedusa. By adopting a 'contextualist' and 'anti-reductionist' approach, I will highlight the ability of hegemonic

discourses to adapt to new contexts, and to eventually absorb or undermine the value of alternative interpretations of Lampedusa's symbolism.

In addition, this thesis also contributes to existing debates by uprooting the significance of Lampedusa from its geographical location, shifting the attention from the 'heterotopic' processes taking place on the island to the transnational symbolism of this name. 'Transnationalizing Lampedusa' means conceiving a conceptual framework capable both of questioning the discursive formations constituting this hegemonic symbolism, and of taking into account the different subjectivities contributing to its omnipresence. Benjamin's notion of 'critical constellation' allows for connecting the apparently 'conflicting' nuances composing the Lampedusa symbol beyond the usual spatial and temporal limits offered by existing literature.

Lastly, the analysis of the three case studies will concentrate not only on the 'final products' (film, exhibitions, etc.), but will pay particular attention to the processes of production. By looking at these processes, the thesis will underline the difficult decisions involved in the creation of potential counter-hegemonic cultural products, encompassing issues of race, identity, audibility, and so on. More than merely circulating new 'positive' representations of migration by means of Lampedusa's symbolism, this thesis underlines how the various subjectivities involved in the struggle over representation are negotiated within the limits of the hegemonic paradigm. It also questions how these subjectivities, in turn, eventually affect the discursive formations constituting the dominant symbolism.

On the thesis time frame

While the first interviews for this thesis were recorded between February and March 2016, the preliminary contacts with the members of the *Archivio Memorie Migranti* and *Askavusa* and the explorative travels to Hamburg and Berlin had already taken place by the winter of 2014 and the summer of 2015. The four years between the establishment of these contacts and the submission of this thesis in September 2018 make it difficult to draw the temporal boundaries of this work.

It is clear that my judgement on the original primary materials collected between February and October 2016 has been deeply affected by recent developments in the

public discourse on migration in Italy and beyond. Therefore, it is not surprising to note the presence of some later amendments referencing more recent events, as well as a more pessimistic undertone inspired by the difficulty of undertaking antiracist activism in a context where xenophobic and racist rhetoric is increasingly legitimised. Furthermore, as we will see in the conclusion, the decision to leave Scotland and move to Hamburg has raised the question of the 'afterlife' of the oral testimonies collected in this PhD ahead of time.

In partnership with the members of the *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, the transformation of parts of these interviews into an output capable of reaching a public beyond academia has marked the last step of this research. Using mapping and critical commemoration as a form of political intervention meant being personally confronted with the same difficult questions posed to my interviewees, and inspired a further appreciation (despite the, hopefully constructive, criticisms shared in these pages) for the work of three initiatives analysed in this thesis.

A brief note on terminology

Before outlining the chapters constituting this thesis, I want to share some notes regarding the terminology used in this text. Given recent developments in public discourse regarding migration in Europe, I am aware that the use this thesis makes of labels such as 'migrant', 'refugee', 'asylum seeker', or 'people on the move' is not a neutral one. Especially in Italy, the 'language of migration' has often crossed the boundaries of stereotyping, sliding into open racism. The practice of associating specific adjectives regarding nationality with different racialised categories or archetypes is probably the most common one.

In writing this thesis, my interest in avoiding negatively-connoted terms frequently used to discuss 'migration' was quickly checked by the reality, in the words of Stuart Hall, of 'the necessity and the "impossibility" of identities'.[3] In navigating these challenges, I decided to opt for 'self-definitions' where they were available, as in

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[3] Stuart Hall, 'Who Needs "Identity"?', in *Questions of Cultural Identity: Sage Publications,* ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (SAGE, 1996), pp. 1–17 (p. 16).

Lampedusa in Hamburg's appropriation of the legal term 'refugee'. Where this was not the case, I decided to privilege the term 'migrant' for its ability to include all individuals that have decided to move to a different country for a variety of reasons, and to stress the forms of agency underpinning such journeys. Nevertheless, even this term is not free of contradictions. On the one hand, the term is often paired with adjectives such as 'illegal', 'clandestine', or 'undocumented' that invariably add a negative connotation. On the other hand, both the terms 'migrant' and 'refugee' are inevitably affected by questions of temporality. For the men and women that have decided to live and raise a family in Italy, Germany or the United Kingdom, the difficulty of escaping these categories is real. Being a migrant becomes a cultural category; an identity that goes beyond time and space, and that is not related to the mere act of moving.

Therefore, in this thesis, I have avoided the word 'migrant' wherever possible, using names or terms such as 'persons' or 'people' to undermine the process of othering entailed by these categories. As I do rely on the term intermittently for reasons of clarity or precision, this brief note is meant to acknowledge and problematise the existence of a series of power relations. These will be addressed in greater depth in chapter one, in the section discussing my subjectivity and positionality in relation to the participants.

Outline of chapters

In the first chapter, I situate the thesis within the wider field of Italian Studies, discussing the theoretical significance of Lampedusa in relation to the postcolonial and transnational turn of this literature. First, I will outline the theoretical framework of this thesis and the specific contributions made by this project. Second, I will discuss the case study selection, the methods, and issues of proximity and positionality raised by my approach. Building on this theoretical work, chapter two will discuss the role of the media and politicians in shaping what I define as the hegemonic symbolism of Lampedusa. The emergence of the discursive formations constituting this symbol will be traced through a wider historical approach, and a series of cultural representations from a transnational context.

Chapter three will introduce the first of the case studies constituting my thesis. The activities of the *Archivio delle Memorie Migranti* (AMM) will be contextualised in the

theoretical discussion of the role archives and museums play as a means of influencing public discourse on migration. The analysis of the *Archivio's* aims, methods and productions will be used to address the structural constraints faced by projects promoting the co-production of migrant self-representations. The artistic products and memories shared by AMM members Zakaria Mohamed Ali, Dagmawi Yimer, and Mahamed Aman will be considered as paradigmatic examples, highlighting issues of migrant subjectivity and their role in the construction and potential deconstruction of Lampedusa's symbolism.

In chapter four, I will introduce the case of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*. The experience of this refugee group will be used to address whether the signifier Lampedusa can be considered as a transnational diasporic identity, capable of restoring the centrality of migrant subjectivity. Here, I will not only consider the name Lampedusa as a tool of resistance and visibility, but I will also discuss the impact that the appropriation of this name has had on the identities and lives of these men. Living 'in the wake of Lampedusa' will be understood firstly as a means of unveiling the connections between the stories of *Lampedusa in Hamburg* members and histories of colonialism and racialized black suffering, but also as tool to emphasise the transformative power rooted in refugee empowerment and self-organisation.

The fifth and final chapter of this thesis will shift the focus to the 'local' Lampedusa. The case of the *Collettivo Askavusa* will offer a series of examples of how the *lampedusani* have actively contributed to the construction of the Lampedusa symbol. The hegemonic representation of the 'welcoming' locals will be challenged through the words and initiatives of *Askavusa* members. The Lampedusans' relationship with the migration apparatus is complicated. In this chapter, the concept of 'dark tourism' will be used to address ways in which the locals negotiate their identity and the symbolism of their island in relation to the increasing institutional attention to cultural initiatives memorialising the presence, passage, and death of migrants on the island.

Chapter 1 – Theory, Methodology and Methods

Introduction

Having outlined the significance of Lampedusa's symbolism as well as the challenges posed by focusing on an over-scrutinised topic, this chapter will focus on the theoretical premises and academic fields to which this research aims to contribute. Furthermore, the following pages will highlight the relevance of considering Lampedusa, no longer as an island geographically sited on the southernmost edge of Italy – a 'bridge' between the idea of Europe and Africa – but as a signifier floating on a transnational level.

What does Lampedusa as a 'floating signifier' tell us? Why should Lampedusa be examined through a 'transnational' framework? These are the questions underpinning this research. Nevertheless, before answering these questions, two more general, almost rhetorical questions should be posed: why Lampedusa? How did this island – and consequently its name –become such a meaningful keyword to discuss migration and borders in Europe? Is its symbolism needed? If yes, what sort of image of migration does the name Lampedusa convey?

This work does not aim to find definitive answers to these questions, but rather wishes to highlight the processes, practices and the subjectivities contributing to the meaningfulness of this name. In the first part of this chapter, I will highlight the – at times problematic – theoretical significance that Lampedusa has attained as part of a growing postcolonial consciousness within Italian Studies, reviewing relevant existing literature and outlining the specific contribution this project makes to the field. The second section of this chapter situates this research in relation to the 'transnational turn' of the disciplinary framework of Modern Languages, and in particular to the development of a focus on transnational Italian cultures suggested by the AHRC-funded project of which I am part.[1] The 'TML' experience, with its focus on 'Mobility, Identity and Translation,' developed the insights of this project by shifting attention to cultural

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[1] See among others Paul Jay, *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*, 1st edn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

practices beyond the limits of 'methodological nationalism', and I reflect on this broader project here to underline the contributions my research seeks to make.[2]

The final part of this chapter will discuss the methodological challenges posed by this work, not only by addressing the case studies selection and the methods adopted to collect and analyse the sources, but also by creating a self-reflective space contemplating the issues of proximity and positionality raised by my approach. As in all six chapters composing this PhD thesis, I will draw extensively from the work of Stuart Hall, Arjun Appadurai, Walter Benjamin, and (to a lesser extent) from other cultural theorists such as Paul Gilroy, bell hooks, and Homi Bhabha. The work of Hall will be used not only to address the specific issues of representation, race and identity characterising this work, but his re-elaboration of Gramsci's thought and concepts will serve as a fundamental premise to engage with hegemonic representations of Lampedusa.[3] The work of Appadurai will play an essential role both in discussing the questions of memory, belonging and spatiality posed by the 'flourishing' of archives and museums dedicated to the topic of migration, and in understanding the entanglement between the 'three levels' characterising the case studies constituting this work: the local, the national and the transnational i.e. the 'global production of Lampedusa's locality' (and symbolism).[4]

1.1 Lampedusa's relevance for Postcolonial Studies in Italy

> There is general agreement that the field of Italian studies has been behind the times, that there is a kind of amnesia or removal of the memory, effects and legacies of the Italian colonial past, but that contemporary patterns of immigration have suddenly prompted a new awakening and the elaboration of a new 'postcolonial consciousness' vis-à-vis new political, social, cultural and humanitarian emergencies, as brought to light by the many recent Lampedusa disasters.[5]

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[2] 'Transnationalizing Modern Languages' (TML) is one of three large grants awarded under the AHRC's Translating Cultures scheme. 'Transnationalizing Modern Languages | Mobility, Identity and Translation in Modern Italian Cultures' <https://www.transnationalmodernlanguages.ac.uk/> [accessed 13 February 2018].

[3] Stuart Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity', *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10.2 (1986), 5–27 <https://doi.org/10.1177/019685998601000202>.

[4] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

[5] Sandra Ponzanesi and Goffredo Polizzi, 'Does Italy Need Postcolonial Theory?', *English Literature*, 3 (2016), 145–61 (p. 148) <https://doi.org/10.14277/2420-823X/EL-3-16-8>.

In attempting to highlight Lampedusa's relevance for postcolonial Italian Studies, the words of Ponzanesi and Polizzi are an overt statement of the fundamental role played by the processes, actors and events connected to this island in contributing to the growth of this academic field. These words are also a reminder of the rather recent and contested history of this theoretical approach in Italophone contexts. Hence, before introducing the authors that have used Lampedusa as a paradigmatic example for discussing different themes connected to the postcolonial condition in Italy, it is necessary to briefly summarise the trajectory of this approach in Italian Studies.

1.1.2 The rise of postcolonial theory in Italian Studies

In light of the recent momentum gained by this theoretical trend, it is not easy to recall the difficulties and resistance faced by postcolonial theory in gaining legitimacy in an academic environment, such as that of Italy, still strongly characterised by an obsession with the literary canon and instances of cultural nationalism. As such, the first confrontations with the theoretical challenges and themes connected to the postcolonial paradigm in Italy began to appear only at the end of 1990s and in the early 2000s. In their introduction to 'Postcolonial Italy', Lombardi-Diop and Romeo see the translation into Italian of the works of Said, Bhabha, Spivak, Hall et al. as one of the fundamental motivating factors behind this turn.[6]

The first attempts to bring this focus outside an anglophone domain can be traced in two major publications both dating from 2005, the first edited by Ben Ghiat and Fuller and the second by Andall and Duncan.[7] These works discuss the legacy and memory of Italian colonialism through a series of examples which highlight the social, cultural and political significance of this experience, in order to address questions of identity, race and multiculturalism in contemporary Italy.

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[6] *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[7] *Italian Colonialism*, ed. by Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Jacqueline Andall and Derek Duncan, *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005).

The work edited by Andall and Duncan is essential in suggesting the concept of 'displacement' as a more fitting tool to debate the memory of Italian colonialism than the idea of 'forgetting' or 'repression' which had characterised academic discourse up to this point. Furthermore, these works shed light on how the colonial legacy has framed and still frames discourse around migrant presence in contemporary Italy.

According to Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, another significant episode in the rise of this approach is Ponzanesi's adoption of the postcolonial paradigm to discuss the literary production of the so-called 'seconde generazioni'.[8] A publication that, together with Burns and Polezzi's account of the role played by the history of Italian international migration and internal mobility in shaping the construction of Italian national identity and culture, has set the basis for a further widening of the field's scope.[9]

The focus on the significance of these multiple mobilities and their entanglement with the so-called 'questione meridionale', has not only reaffirmed the centrality of Gramsci's thought for addressing the major questions raised by the postcolonial condition in Italy,[10] but has in turn promoted renewed attention to the Mediterranean dimension of Italian history, identity and culture.[11]

The work of Chambers paved the way for an approach that re-evaluates and reinterprets the contributions of the various minorities that have populated the Italian peninsula, recalling how the often-displaced and close bonds with Arabic, North-African and Middle-Eastern cultures nurtured in the Mediterranean basin are gaining fresh meaning in the light of contemporary migration to Italy. Chambers' attention to the postcolonial dimension of the Mediterranean Sea, and the possibility for these new *Mediterranean Crossings* to challenge the cultural and political boundaries of the

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[8] Sandra Ponzanesi, *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture: Contemporary Women Writers of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

[9] Jennifer Burns and Loredana Polezzi, *Borderlines. Migrazioni e identità nel Novecento* (Isernia: Cosmo Iannone Editore, 2003).

[10] For Gramsci's relevance for the postcolonial see Neelam Francesca Rashmi Srivastava and Baidik Bhattacharya, *The Postcolonial Gramsci* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

[11] Iain Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Cristina Lombardi-Diop, 'Ghosts of Memories, Spirits of Ancestros: Slavery, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic', in *Recharting the Black Atlantic: Modern Cultures, Local Communities, Global Connections*, ed. by A. Oboe and A. Sacchi (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 162–80.

European context, creating a space for hybridity and a 'heterogenous modernity', has deeply influenced the recent academic debate on Lampedusa's symbolism.

It is evident that Gilroy's reflections on the *Atlantic Middle Passage* inspired and informed this debate. Chambers and Lombardi-Diop both hint at the potential parallels that could be drawn between the Atlantic slave trade and contemporary mobility of people from Africa to Italy and beyond. In particular, they highlight how these 'spectral presences' represent a warning about contemporary forms of slavery and dehumanisation, and contribute to the cultural memory of oceanic crossing'.[12]

Di Maio develops this comparison further by outlining the idea of the 'Black Mediterranean' or *Mediterraneo Nero*. Mirroring Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*, the author considers the various forms of exploitation endured by illegal migrants entering Europe via the stretch of sea dividing Sicily from the North-African shore as the cornerstone of the international circulation of capitals, sources and manpower, and as the major source of European wealth.[13]

Furthermore, traces of the cultural memory of the Atlantic slave trade are often replicated by mainstream media, as well as by migrants and refugees themselves, for instance in the recent media outcry against the consequences of EU-funded, unlawful, violent and inhumane migrant detention in Libya.[14] Duncan has underlined the potential limits of this trope:

> [W]hatever enslavement they endure must be considered to be of a different order and dealt with in its own terms. At stake here are question of national memory and of individual agency.[15]

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[12] Lombardi-Diop, p. 163.

[13] Alessandra Di Maio, 'Mediterraneo Nero. Le Rotte Dei Migranti Nel Millennio Globale.', in *La Città Cosmopolita. Altre Narrazioni*, ed. by G. De Spuches (Palermo: Palumbo, 2012), II, 142–62.

[14] Raja Razek and Lauren Said-Moorhouse, '"Where Is the World?": Libya Responds to Outrage over Slave Auctions - CNN' <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/23/africa/libya-reaction-slave-trade/index.html> [accessed 14 February 2018].

[15] Derek Duncan, 'Grave Unquiet: The Mediterranean and Its Dead', in *Mediterranean Travels: Writing Self and Other from the Ancient World to Contemporary Society, Ed. by Patrick Crowley, Noreen Humble and Silvia Ross* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2011), pp. 209–222 (p. 214).

Figure 1 Still from the Lampedusa in Hamburg Facebook page

In discussing the use of this analogy in Bellu's *I Fantasmi di Portopalo*,[16] Duncan highlights how this parallel does not necessarily stimulate emotive short-circuits capable of changing the public's reactions. On the contrary, the interpretation of the complex processes underpinning the migratory phenomenon through the lens of the Atlantic slave trade could potentially undermine the presence of migrant agency and narrative, creating in turn further forms of displacement.

> What kind of memory is in play when present-day events are made to stand in for what went before? Does this memory activate a chain of continuity, or is it more accurately diagnosed as a symptom of ongoing denial, a belief that what is happening now in the Mediterranean really isn't Italy's business? […] Yet while these tactics do possess clear emotive force, the unintended consequences of such rhetoric are less certain. For instance, the displacement in time effected by the demonizing charge of 'slave-trading' suggests an anachronistic practice; one that has no place in our time. Yet this chronological slippage risks losing sight of the rigorously contemporary dimensions of the Mediterranean passage in the interstices of national border control.[17]

Duncan points out that what 'divides the attempts of different individuals to operate effectively inside this network of knowledge and power is the difference made by race,' i.e. the 'whiteness' or the 'blackness' of the people that have lost and are still losing their lives on the crossing to Lampedusa or other European havens.[18]

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[16] Giovanni Maria Bellu, *I Fantasmi Di Portopalo. Natale 1996: La Morte Di 300 Clandestini e Il Silenzio Dell'Italia*, Strade Blu (Milano: Mondadori, 2004).
[17] Duncan, 'Grave Unquiet: The Mediterranean and Its Dead', p. 214.
[18] Duncan, 'Grave Unquiet: The Mediterranean and Its Dead', p. 215.

One of the major markers of this differential power is the 'enforced anonymity' or 'absence' of migrant narratives. Hence, the idea of countering this imposed-silence has become one of the main objectives or scopes of postcolonial theory in Italy, making the 'migrant' and the 'Mediterranean' the postcolonial subject and space *par excellence*. The legacy and memory of Italian colonialism have become almost a refrain in discussing contemporary migration to Italy. Whether commenting on Albanian migration or events related to Lampedusa, mainstream coverage and representation of migrant bodies and the conditions upon arriving in Italy has often triggered indirect or explicit references to the Italian migratory and colonial past.

Despite some appeals to read the arrival of migrants in Italy through the lenses of a 'national common past of migration' and of an often-belittled 'colonial burden', such pleas have rarely produced a self-critical re-elaboration of these fragmented memories in terms of openness or sympathy towards the new comers.[19]

Beyond the already mentioned displacement of colonial memories and responsibilities, a potential key of interpretation has been offered by the development of a critical reflection on the 'racial history of Italian identity'. The exploration in the works of Lombardi Diop and Giuliani of the construction of Italian identity as 'inherently white', and Romeo's account of the construction of the 'migrant other' in terms of 'blackness', have become seminal in introducing essential concepts to the discussion of migration, race and identity in contemporary Italy.[20]

Their analysis not only underlines the colonial and fascist roots of today's Italian national imaginary, but it also points out how the contemporary presence of black Italian

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[19] These narratives have accompanied the debate of the impact of migration in Italy since the very beginning. Examples can be found from the commentaries to the 'Albanian crisis' of 1991 to the very recent public debate on the reform of the access to citizenship. See for instance Gian Antonio Stella, *L'orda. Quando gli albanesi eravamo noi*, 1 edizione (Milano: BUR Biblioteca Univ. Rizzoli, 2003); Umberto Rapetto, 'Ius soli, quando gli immigrati eravamo noi', *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 2017 <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/06/20/ius-soli-quando-gli-immigrati-eravamo-noi/3671959/> [accessed 31 July 2018].

[20] Caterina Romeo, 'Evaporazioni. Costruzioni di razza e nerezza nella letteratura postcoloniale afroitaliana', in *L'Italia postcoloniale*, ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (Milano: Mondadori Education, 2014), pp. 207–24; Gaia Giuliani and Cristina Lombardi-Diop, *Bianco e nero. Storia dell'identità razziale degli italiani* (Milano: Mondadori Education, 2013); Gaia Giuliani, 'La Sottile Linea Bianca. Intersezioni Di Razza, Genere e Classe Nell'Italia Postcoloniale', *Studi Culturali*, X, N. 2 (2013) <https://doi.org/10.1405/74017>.

citizens and migrants hailing from various African countries have made explicit the racist underbelly of the nation, and the challenges of representing 'Italianness' in a context that has associated 'whiteness' with the norm.

Furthermore, to discuss the 'anxieties about the integrity of Italian national identity and culture' reawakened by the migrant presence in Italy, Andall and Duncan adopt the notion of hybridity to describe the productivity of these cultural encounters.[21] For the authors, despite negative, often 'unapologetically racist' attitudes towards migration, the 'advent of Italian postcoloniality' has compelled Italian society to recognise its multicultural character.[22] By recalling Bhabha's formulation, Andall and Duncan stress how the cultures and identities connected (but not limited) to Italy's colonial past, the coloniser and the colonised, 'are imbricated, never distinct, and always mutually dependent'.[23]

As we will see in the following pages, the presence of these multiple and often overlapping subjectivities is inscribed in the fabric of Lampedusa's symbolism. In the many representations of the island's role within the EU border regime, the boundaries between the colonial subject and the coloniser have become blurred. Representing the southernmost Italian periphery, the 'subalternity' of the *Lampedusano* is often compared to that of the migrants reaching the island by boat. As such, both within the limits of the hegemonic symbolism and in the counter representations of Lampedusa offered, for instance, by the activities of the *Collettivo Askavusa*, these two categories are subject to a conflation where the islanders end up comparing/connecting their condition to that of the people seeking access to Europe via Lampedusa.[24] While the potential limits of this parallel will be discussed in this work, for now it is important to highlight that these processes remind us of the unsettled and open scope of the 'postcolonial' in an Italophone context.

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[21] Jacqueline Andall and Derek Duncan, *National Belongings: Hybridity in Italian Colonial and Postcolonial Cultures* (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 11.
[22] Andall and Duncan, *National Belongings*, p. 10.
[23] Andall and Duncan, *National Belongings*, p. 12.
[24] Fabrizio Fasulo, 'Un Posto Da Dove Ci Si Tuffa ! | Askavusa' <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2015/05/06/un-posto-da-dove-ci-si-tuffa/> [accessed 17 November 2017].

The debate around the spatial and temporal limits of this field (when can we start talking of postcolonial Italy?) is still open. It is a particularity that has been addressed in various disciplinary contexts (including history, anthropology, literature, and film studies, amongst others), and characterised by definitions that reassert the significance or 'exceptionalism' of pursuing such framework from an Italian perspective.

Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, stressing the role played by the different mobilities that have affected the Italian context, have suggested the idea of a 'postcolonialità indiretta', in order to emphasise its post-national dimension.[25] For the authors, the presence of migrants not only hailing from former Italian colonies, and their adoption of the Italian language as a tool of empowerment and expression (not as an unnegotiable consequence of the colonial bequest), underline the critical relevance of such an approach in challenging the racial boundaries still shaping contemporary Italian identity.

Furthermore, Ponzanesi has pointed out that the 'belatedness' of such a theoretical tradition – rather than merely representing a limitation – can be seen as an opportunity to stimulate a further expansion of cultural studies within Italian Studies, a new European dimension in the postcolonial scope (one that looks at the transnational scale of the colonial experience), and renewed attention to the political relevance of such academic focus.[26]

To conclude, in works that deal with Italian language, identity or culture, as Duncan succinctly puts it: 'Everyone in Italy is a postcolonial subject albeit with different modalities of belonging and power'.[27] Therefore, in discussing Lampedusa, it is important to underline that its symbolism not only stands as a paradigm for discussing complex features of migration, but also appears to have been 'burdened' with the various expectations related to the affirmation of Italian postcolonial identity and context. Understanding Lampedusa's symbolism is vital for considering its reproduction

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[25] *L'Italia postcoloniale*, ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (Milano: Mondadori Education, 2014), p. 5.

[26] See Sandra Ponzanesi and Bolette Blaagaard, *Deconstructing Europe: Postcolonial Perspectives* (London; New York: Routledge, 2012); Marguerite Waller and Sandra Ponzanesi, *Postcolonial Cinema Studies* (London ; New York: Routledge Chapman & Hall, 2011).

[27] Derek Duncan, 'Translanguaging: Claudio Giovannesi's Postcolonial Practices', *Transnational Cinemas*, 7.2 (2016), 196–209 (p. 198) <https://doi.org/10.1080/20403526.2016.1217625>.

in academic work, which constantly reasserts the significance of this place for discussions of issues of mobility, identity, subjectivity, race etc.

Lampedusa as a postcolonial space

The theoretical significance of Lampedusa's symbolism for the 'postcolonial turn in Italian Studies' is attested by the quote opening this section, but also by a series of authors that, at different stages, have focused on the topic, producing a vibrant and variegated literature.[28] Ponzanesi, for example, uses the 'disasters' that took place on the island during the last ten-fifteen years both as a means of addressing broader theoretical issues – such as the need for postcolonial theory in Italian Studies – and as a tool for analysing more specific aesthetic instances in cinematic representations of migration. The author highlights the features (e.g. multilingualism, 'interstitial modes of production and distribution channels' etc.) which characterise postcolonial cinema as a critical category capable of questioning the notion of Europe.[29]

Using Lampedusa as a means to connect various films which engage in different ways with the experience of crossing borders (among others Rosi's *Fuocoammare*, Del Grande's *Io sto con la sposa* and Yimer's *Asmat-Nomi*),[30] Ponzanesi suggests that these films propose a new aesthetic of the border, capable of highlighting the encounters between the heterogenous postcolonial subjectivities taking place at the margins of Europe. According to Ponzanesi, together with their innovative aesthetic value, these films carry a politically subversive power capable of questioning and 're-signifying' the cosmopolitan meaning of Europe in more inclusive terms.[31]

While the 'subversive value' or political value of Rosi's film will be discussed and challenged in this work, Ponzanesi's focus on the cinematic production of Dagmawi

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[28] See among others the special issues of Italian Studies (Vol. 70 No. 4, November, 2015) and Crossing: Journal of Migration & Culture (Vol. 7, No. 2, 2016), the book edited by Gabriele Proglio and Laura Odasso, *Border Lampedusa: Subjectivity, Visibility and Memory in Stories of Sea and Land* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and the essays of Wright (2014) and O'Healy (2015).

[29] Sandra Ponzanesi and Verena Berger, 'Introduction: Genres and Tropes in Postcolonial Cinema(s) in Europe', *Transnational Cinemas*, 7.2 (2016), 111–17 <https://doi.org/10.1080/20403526.2016.1217641>.

[30] Gianfranco Rosi, *Fuocoammare*, 2016; Antonio Augugliaro and Gabriele del Grande, *Io Sto Con La Sposa*, 2015; Dagmawi Yimer, *Asmat-Nomi*, 2015.

[31] Sandra Ponzanesi, 'Of Shipwrecks and Weddings: Borders and Mobilities in Europe', *Transnational Cinemas*, 7.2 (2016), 151–67 <https://doi.org/10.1080/20403526.2016.1217627>.

Yimer and the new aesthetic of the border is a reminder of the expectations projected on this director by the different scholars who have focused on the subversive power of migrant cinematic takes on Lampedusa. Wright, Mazzara, and O'Healy have published a number of insightful critical reflections on the significance of Yimer's relationship with the island. Wright, for example, uses the work of the Ethiopian director to address how Lampedusa and the Mediterranean have become 'symbols, metaphors of a condition of deterritorrialization and of liquidity that is affecting our world,' and how these processes influence migrant subjectivities.[32] According to Wright, films such as *Come un uomo sulla terra* and *Soltanto il mare* create an opportunity for challenging hegemonic discourses on migration, and for a retelling of Lampedusa from a 'non-hierarchical' perspective.[33] Using the power of the camera, the director reverses the gaze of the hegemonic representations, creating a space where the often 'silenced' voices of the migrants and of the locals can offer a more nuanced interpretation of the significance of this island.

Similarly, Mazzara describes Lampedusa as 'a space for visibility' where the migrants can act as 'subjects of power' in challenging their visibility/invisibility and the negative stereotypes produced by mainstream media and political discourse, by means of 'emancipatory counter-representations' constructed 'in the realm of aesthetics'. Mazzara's attention to the artistic production of Yimer (and of the *Collettivo Askavusa*) acknowledges the 'spectacularisation' of Lampedusa, but also sees the 'realm of aesthetic' as a space where dominant discourses on migration could be challenged.[34]

Lastly, pairing *Soltanto il Mare* with Crialese's feature film *Terraferma* and two video essays on Lampedusa and Linosa, O'Healy highlights how the visibility and audibility of some of the actors playing a role in the island's symbolism often undermine or silence the perspective of others.[35] Reiterating the adoption of Foucault's concept of 'crisis

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[32] Simona Wright, 'Lampedusa's Gaze: Messages from the Outpost of Europe', *Italica*, 91.4 (2014), 775–802.

[33] Andrea Segre and Dagmawi Yimer, *Come Un Uomo Sulla Terra*, 2008; Dagmawi Yimer, Giulio Cederna, and Fabrizio Barraco, *Soltanto Il Mare*, 2011.

[34] Federica Mazzara, 'Spaces of Visibility for the Migrants of Lampedusa: The Counter Narrative of the Aesthetic Discourse', *Italian Studies*, 70.4 (2015), 449–64 (p. 460) <https://doi.org/10.1080/00751634.2015.1120944>.

[35] Emanuele Crialese, *Terraferma*, 2011.

heterotopias',[36] already used by Pugliese to describe the violent contradiction coexisting on the island,[37] O'Healy suggests how certain films and documentaries can provide a more nuanced understanding of the processes taking place on the island.[38] She also underlines how the shared precariousness and desire for a better life of the locals and the migrants has created a close, but also contradictory, relationship between the two groups. This relationship oscillates between solidarity and xenophobia, and it has become visible only through the artistic representations offered by these particular audio-visual products.

O'Healy concludes that, despite not necessarily providing the 'whole picture of life on Lampedusa' (she notes particularly the persistent absence of female accounts on the island), these films are playing a significant role in challenging and enriching the mainstream representations of this 'borderland'.[39] Therefore, a question to pose to the potential counter-representations of Lampedusa highlighted by this literature might be: do they actually challenge the dominant/hegemonic representation of the island? Can Lampedusa's postcolonial aura make of it a symbol, a tool, or a place capable of inspiring more inclusive and open interpretations or policies towards the migratory phenomenon?

1.1.3 Critique and new contributions

Finding an answer to these questions is not easy, or perhaps even possible, but it is important to question one of the fundamental premises of these analyses: the literature, and to various extents this research, share the conviction that mainstream media, and Italian and European politicians, play a fundamental role in conveying representations of Lampedusa that have become hegemonic. The political exploitation and spectacularisation of the various Lampedusa 'emergencies' or 'crises', and their reproduction through the entanglement between securitarian and humanitarian

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[36] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16.1 (1986), 22–27 <https://doi.org/10.2307/464648>.

[37] Pugliese, p. 671.

[38] Aine O'Healy, 'Imagining Lampedusa', in *Italian Mobilities*, ed. by Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Stephanie Malia Hom (London ; New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 152–74.

[39] O'Healy, p. 171.

readings of these events, have been widely acknowledged.[40] Lesser space has been dedicated to the question of how this regime of representation works and which actors, beyond the media and politicians, might also take part in the 'interplay' constructing the premises for the hegemony of such representations.

Questioning the nature and the discursive formations that constitute the hegemonic symbolism of Lampedusa is one of the objectives of this work. In particular, I will discuss the role of culture and of representations produced by those groups of people usually marginalised or silenced by the hegemonic regime of representation. The works of Mazzara, Wright and O'Healy are valuable in this respect in that they highlight the limits of dominant representations of the events taking place on the island. They show the multiple actors populating the island, and the limited space given to their subjective experiences of Lampedusa. More specifically, these authors consider the cultural practices portraying the migrants and the locals' point of views as a key for the production and the diffusion of more nuanced interpretations of the island's relationship with the border regime. All of them share the idea that Lampedusa is a symbolical place that offers the possibility to challenge negative stereotypes on migration, and to reshape the idea of Italy and Europe:

> Lampedusa and the Mediterranean are symbols, complex and evocative, of the contemporary human condition and at the same time provocative places from where can start to re-imagine, indeed re-conceptualize both Italy and Europe. […] Lampedusa emblematizes a place where marginalities meet and speak out to resist annihilation. A place that restores solidity, agency […].[41]

This reading of the European dimension and the potential for change rooted in the 'Lampedusa border' is also reiterated by Proglio and Odasso in the most recently

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[40] See among others Nick Dines, Nicola Montagna, and Vincenzo Ruggiero, 'Thinking Lampedusa: Border Construction, the Spectacle of Bare Life and the Productivity of Migrants', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38.3 (2015), 430–45 <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.936892>; Paolo Cuttitta, *Lo spettacolo del confine: Lampedusa tra produzione e messa in scena della frontiera* (Milano: Mimesis, 2012) For a more detailed discussion see chapter two of this dissertation.

[41] Wright, pp. 791–92.

published academic take on the island.[42] Theirs is an optimistic interpretation of cultural productions such as film, artistic installations, and literature, reporting the migrants and locals' subjective perspectives on the events taking place on the island. Mazzara, on the other hand, goes even further, affirming that the aesthetic can be the space where action is possible, and can bring emancipatory effects.[43]

The various publications focusing on the work of Dagmawi Yimer, the *Archivio Memorie Migranti* and the *Collettivo Askavusa* have enriched the current literature with new conceptual tools (such as the 'Black Mediterranean', the 'aesthetics of subversion', and notions of 'Lampedusa as a heterotopic space') which have proved vital in highlighting the spaces for agency between the interstices of the hegemonic symbolism of Lampedusa. Nevertheless, these works have seldom questioned the 'effectiveness' of these practices in challenging or leaving a mark on the hegemonic representations of the island's significance for discussions of migration. Questions addressing the ways these films, documentaries etc. are planned or produced, which audiences they are directed to, or the languages spoken in these materials are rarely asked.

Furthermore, existing literature seems to have taken for granted or bypassed a reflection on the character of the hegemonic representations, and on the capability of these to adapt to new contexts and potentially absorb challenging interpretations of Lampedusa. Categories like 'public opinion', 'mainstream' and 'hegemonic' are necessary simplifications (they will also be used in this research), but do not always account for the changing historical context, the various audiences and the different reactions or meanings that certain representations of migration might provoke or convey. Therefore, clarification of the use of the term hegemonic is a necessary starting point of this work.

Challenging a hegemonic regime of representation

The re-elaboration of Gramsci's concept of hegemony by Stuart Hall offers the theoretical premise on which my definition of the regime of representation surrounding the accounts of the events taking place on Lampedusa as 'hegemonic' is based. Hall

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[42] Proglio and Odasso, pp. 3–4.
[43] Mazzara, 'Spaces of Visibility for the Migrants of Lampedusa', p. 453.

clarifies that 'hegemony' is 'a very particular, historically specific, and temporary "moment" in the life of a society', and that we need to account for its 'multi-dimensional character'. According to Hall, among the multiple critical domains encompassed by Gramsci's concept (cultural, moral, ethical etc.), that of 'popular thought or beliefs' is a vital field where anti-colonial and anti-racist movements should engage in a struggle for change.[44]

It is clear that the themes entangled with the Lampedusa 'issue' reflect very closely those touched by these movements. Hall's adoption and account of this concept is fundamental to understanding the complexity of the negative and stereotypical images of migration inscribed in the dominant symbolism of Lampedusa, and to questioning whether it is possible to construct representations capable of challenging them. The focus should thus not only be directed at deconstructing the discursive formations composing this symbolism, nor at highlighting which actors have more or less space or power to offer representations of the island's 'meaningfulness' in discussing migration. Rather, drawing on Hall, the attention should be on the 'dominant connotative codes' shaping the production of different representations of Lampedusa.

In attempting to make sense of what has happened and is still taking place on the island, we are usually faced by a series of 'preferred readings' (often answering to 'national interests' or other institutionalised concerns) that directly or indirectly outline the limits within which these 'new, problematic or troubling events' can be understood.[45] It is in this sense that this research mobilises the concept 'hegemonic':

> The definition of a hegemonic viewpoint is (a) that it defines within its terms the mental horizon, the universe, of possible meanings, of a whole sector of relations in a society or culture; and (b) that it carries with it the stamp of legitimacy – it appears coterminous with what is "natural", "inevitable", "taken for granted" about the social order.[46]

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[44] Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity', p. 15.

[45] Stuart Hall, 'Encoding / Decoding.', in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972–79*, ed. by D. Hobson and others (London: Hutchinson, 1980), pp. 128–38 (p. 169).

[46] Hall, 'Encoding / Decoding.', p. 172.

Furthermore, not all audiences might listen or react in the same manner to 'hegemonic representations', i.e., to paraphrase Hall, decoding the message according to the reference code in which it has been encoded. Put simply, these representations are not always read and received passively, but they can in turn be decoded, creating opportunities for *negotiated* or *oppositional* readings of the events*.*

According to Hall, while a *negotiated code* acknowledges the legitimacy of the wider hegemonic definition (with allowances for only few local, situational specificities), an *oppositional* one is where taken-for-granted events begin to be signified in different ways: it is here where 'the "politics of signification" – the struggle in discourse – is joined'.[47]

It is precisely this struggle that we should pay attention to: building on Hall's theoretical work, I suggest that, to shed light on the 'struggle' for signification encompassing the Lampedusa events, we should concentrate not only on its outputs (films, documentaries, museums etc.), but on the practice of representation. The best place to see this struggle at work is in the moment of production: the theoretical reflection, the discussions and difficult decisions entailed in the planning of a given cultural product.

As we will see in the discussion of the activities of the *Archivio Memorie Migranti* (see chapter three) and the other case studies, reflecting on which themes, characters etc. are intentionally or inadvertently chosen to represent Lampedusa, or Italy more generally, from a 'migrant' point of view, is a revealing operation which exposes and addresses the questions of race, racism and identity embedded in our society.

Furthermore, Hall's attention to historical context (more precisely: his emphasis on the critical understanding of the notion of 'conjuncture' grounds this work in a 'radical contextualism'.[48] Put into practice, this suggests a particular attention to the historical

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[47] Hall, 'Encoding / Decoding.', p. 173.
[48] See Stuart Hall, 'Marx's Notes on Method: A "Reading" of the "1857 Introduction"', *Cultural Studies*, 17.2 (2003), 113–49 <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950238032000114868>; Lawrence Grossberg, 'Stuart Hall on Race and Racism: Cultural Studies and the Practice of Contextualism'', in *Culture, Politics, Race and Diaspora: The Thought of Stuart Hall*, ed. by Brian Meeks (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2007), p. 99.

moment in which certain representations are produced, circulated and received is necessary.

For instance, internationally-praised feature films like *Terraferma* and *Fuocoammare*, while touching on very similar themes, are debated by the literature in divergent ways. Whilst Crialese's film has been widely acknowledged as a thought-provoking interpretation of the relationship between the southernmost Italian islands and migration, Rosi's film has been labelled by some as a product of dominant institutionalised understandings of Lampedusa's role in the migratory phenomenon.[49] At the time of Rosi's portrayal of Lampedusa, the literature seems to consider the representation of the 'local' perspective and the complex relationship between the *Lampedusani*, their traditions, tourism and the migration apparatus (the very same themes highlighted by Crialese's film in 2011) to have lost their subversive connotation, becoming a constitutive part of the hegemonic discourse.

Therefore, Hall's contextualism and anti-reductionist stances are vital in highlighting how long certain readings can be considered challenging before becoming part of the dominant views. Drawing on Hall's reflections on the various strategies that may be adopted to 'challenge, contest or change' a hegemonic regime of representation, the present work wants to stress that the subjective and aesthetic retelling of the Lampedusa experience from a migrant point of view does not necessarily challenge the dominant discourse. The same statement can be applied to works representing the Lampedusan residents' perspective.

Following Hall's example, this research is more concerned with the 'forms of racial representation' than the production of new 'positive' or inclusive takes on Lampedusa's symbolism to discuss migration in Italy or Europe. This research therefore wants to shed light on how these potential counter-representations come to light within the limits of the hegemonic paradigm, pointing at how they are shaped by the discursive formations

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[49] For critical reviews if the film see Federica Mazzara, 'My Review of Fuocoammare (Fire at Sea) by Gianfranco Rosi' <http://movingborders.blogspot.com/2016/06/my-review-of-fuocoammare-fire-at-sea-by.html> [accessed 14 February 2018]; Leonardo De Franceschi, 'Fuocoammare - CINEMAFRICA | Africa e Diaspore Nel Cinema' <http://www.cinemafrica.org/page.php?article1633> [accessed 14 February 2018].

constructing the dominant symbolism, but also how they in turn influence the 'agenda' of the hegemonic actors. In the words of Hall:

> [T]he object of analysis is therefore not the single stream of "dominant ideas" into which everything and everyone has been absorbed, but rather the analysis of ideology as a differentiated terrain, of the different discursive currents, their points of juncture and break and the relations of power between them: in short, and ideological complex, ensemble or discursive formation. The question is "how these ideological currents are diffused and why in the process of diffusion they fracture along certain lines and in certain directions."[50]

In order to achieve this, this research starts from two fundamental premises that also constitute my contribution to the vibrant and fruitful literature on Lampedusa. First, this thesis does not only discuss the final products (films, plays, exhibitions etc.) representing Lampedusa from the migrant (and sometimes local) point of view, but focuses on the questions of selectivity, audibility, identity and race posed by the process of production of these cultural practices.[51] Secondly, my work considers Lampedusa as a signifier floating on a transnational level. This choice not only addresses the European significance of the island recalled by the above-mentioned studies, but also wishes to uproot this symbolism from its material location. The transnational symbolism of Lampedusa needs to be matched by empirical examples that go beyond the island's boundaries and the Italian context. Thus, in order to avoid reproducing the heterotopic power of this place, the focus is shifted from Lampedusa's spatiality and temporalities to its potential for becoming a tool of identity or a source of diasporic consciousness, as in the case of the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* or the players of *FC Lampedusa Hamburg*.

1.2 Lampedusa as a floating signifier

What does it mean to consider Lampedusa as a floating signifier? It is undeniable that Lampedusa is a material place, an island geographically situated between Sicily and the

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[50] Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity', p. 22.
[51] Hence the emphasis of this thesis in forms of participant observation and qualitative interviewing of the members of the *Archivio Memorie Migranti*, the *Collettivo Askavusa* and the *Lampedusa in Hamburg*,

North-African shore, but we need to remember that its name does not automatically carry a clear meaning in itself: its importance and its symbolism are not simply 'waiting out there to be found'. As described in the previous section, then, this meaning has been constructed through years of media coverage, political rhetoric, migrant accounts of their journey, local protests, NGOs reports, and other related factors. It is the result of a constellation of representations produced at different points in time, in different contexts, and by multiple actors, which in turn have often described this experience by means of institutionalised or dominant systems of meaning.

In this work, I want to stress how the word Lampedusa, more than the island itself, has become the main vehicle of a number of hegemonic understandings of the social and political significance of contemporary migration towards Italy and Europe. Defining Lampedusa as a floating signifier is way to summarise the ontological and epistemological assumptions entailed in considering the regime of representation shaping accounts of the island as hegemonic.

Mirroring Hall's renowned definition of 'race as a floating signifier', the adoption of this definition to analyse Lampedusa's symbolism implies an appreciation of the significance of this name for discussing migration as 'relational, and not essential', as something 'subjected to a constant process of redefinition and appropriation'.[52] Given that 'the meaning of a signifier can never be finally or trans-historically fixed,' this work aims to highlight the multiple connotations that this name has carried during the last twenty years.[53] In short, looking at Lampedusa as a floating signifier means highlighting which discursive formations constitute this symbol, and which meanings are in turn attached 'in apparent fixity' to this name.

Drawing on Foucault, Hall describes the discursive approach to representation as:

> [...] more concerned with effects and consequences of representation – its 'politics'. It examines not only how language and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge which a

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[52] Stuart Hall, 'Introduction', in *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, ed. by Stuart Hall (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1997), pp. 1–13 (p. 10).

[53] Stuart Hall and S. Jhally, 'Race: The Floating Signifier. Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation' (Northampton: Media Education Foundation, 1996) <https://msu.edu/course/ams/280/hall3.html> [accessed 14 February 2018].

particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied. The emphasis in the discursive approach is always on the historical specificity of a particular form or 'regime' of representation: not on 'language' as a general concern, but on specific languages or meanings, and how they are deployed at particular times, in particular places.[54]

This approach is the theoretical ground of this thesis. Consequently, I consider the symbolism of Lampedusa as the product of a number of hegemonic discursive formations that are conjoined in a 'constellation' that goes beyond the geographical boundaries of the island and the limits of the Italian national context.[55] The focus on the discursive value of this name, therefore, does not only underline how its symbolism is produced, but also aims at highlighting the potential problems entailed by such representations: the consolidations of the structural rift between the 'in-groups' and the migrants, the implementation of securitarian and exclusionary policies, and the redefinition of national identities in narrower and often racially-connoted terms. Discussing and adopting some of the theoretical tools of the work of Foucault, Hall clarifies that:

Whenever these discursive events 'refer to the same object, share the same style and … support a strategy … a common institutional, administrative or political drift and pattern', then they are said by Foucault to belong to the same discursive formation.[56]

Therefore, Foucault's concept of discursive formation is used in this thesis to highlight how the various stereotypical representations of Lampedusa may come together to support hegemonic strategies of migration control and management. This concept clarifies how these formations are not necessarily driven by an individual actor,

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[54] Hall, 'Introduction', p. 6.

[55] For more details on my use of Benjamin's concept see chapter two of this work. See also: Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London; New York: Verso, 2003).

[56] Stuart Hall, 'The Work of Representation', in *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, ed. by Stuart Hall (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1997), pp. 14–75 (p. 44).

organisation, or government, but, at the same time, they are subjected to what Foucault defined as 'rules of formation'.[57] Furthermore, although being shaped by certain rules, discursive formations are ever-changing; they do not have a clear origin, and they are also lacking a precise goal. Sometimes, as we will see with some of the discursive formations composing the Lampedusa symbol, they may appear to contradict one another.

This work regards the Lampedusa symbol as formed by a series of discursive formations that acquire different meanings and relevance according to the context in which they are deployed. For instance, as I will discuss in chapter five of this work, the trope of the 'welcoming locals' can stand both as sign of the *Collettivo Askavusa's* hope for the potential change residing in a transversal alliance between the locals and the migrants, and as a tool to reinforce institutional control of the migratory phenomenon. When the institutions adopt the 'welcoming locals' trope, the potential counter-hegemonic value of this image is transformed and re-deployed to legitimise the policies of the Italian government. If the Lampedusans are welcoming Italians, then by proxy the Italian government is welcoming, good and humanitarian.

As we will see in the next chapters, such representations not only help divert the institutional accountability for the various deadly shipwrecks that have taken place in the waters surrounding Lampedusa, but they also widen the gap between the migrants and the groups interacting with them. For instance, after the shipwreck of the 3rd of October 2013, the dead are mourned, the 'local heroes' are celebrated, but the survivors are detained. Furthermore, during the annual commemorations, the rescuers are very often interviewed, while the survivors are left in the background.

Hall underlines how Foucault's attention for the impact of discursive practices in specific institutional settings ('apparatus') on the life of certain subjects resembles closely Gramsci's definition of 'hegemony':

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[57] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 38.

> It is one of Michel Foucault's greatest insights that in order to become 'subjects' we must be 'subjected' to discourses which speak us, and without which we cannot speak.[58]

Both concepts can be used to define this never permanent, but dominant regime of 'truth' which, in our case, shapes any individual take on the significance of Lampedusa for discussions of migration.[59]

1.2.1 Spaces for subjectivity

Every single representation of Lampedusa can be considered as a meaning-producing practice constructing this symbolism. In the words of Hall, this means that Lampedusa's symbolism is open to 'the constant play or slippage of meaning, to the constant production of new meanings, new interpretations'.[60] This work, and the above-mentioned literature, emphasise the role of single individuals and their subjectivity in narrating and representing their own personal experience of Lampedusa. To find ways to deconstruct this regime of representation, the forms of racialisation and othering inscribed in dominant representations of the Lampedusa events, and the focus on the migrant experiences of Lampedusa, are seen as a means of restoring visibility and audibility to their conscious decision to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind the lesson of Foucault: in certain moments and contexts, some actors are considered more trustworthy than others. Their privileged position is grounded on wider issues of knowledge and power.

> It is discourse, not the subjects who speak it, which produces knowledge. Subjects may produce particular texts, but they are operating within the limits of the episteme, the discursive formation, the regime of truth, of a particular period and culture. […] The subject can become the bearer of the kind of knowledge which discourse produces. It can become the object through which power is relayed. But it cannot stand outside power/knowledge as its source and author.[61]

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[58] Stuart Hall, 'The Spectacle of the Other', in *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, ed. by Stuart Hall (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1997), pp. 223–90 (p. 274).
[59] Hall, 'The Work of Representation', p. 47.
[60] Ibid., p.32.
[61] Ibid., p. 55.

This does not mean that there no spaces for the migrant subjects to speak up, or to share challenging or more nuanced representations of their 'Lampedusa experience'. A certain agency within the limits of the *episteme* can be retained. The migrant 'subjectivity' is constructed in the wake of and in spite of these structural forces, but also as a consequence of individual aspirations and/or false assumptions informing the decision to undertake the migratory project.

As we will see in chapter four of this thesis, the subversive symbolism and 'celebrity' of *Lampedusa in Hamburg* could have not taken place without the acknowledgment and, then, the appropriation of the transnational symbolism of this name. Therefore, this research will adopt the concept of 'subjectivity' to define the condition of these individuals, which 'oscillates between the subject as subjected by power and the subject as imbued with the power to transcend the processes of subjection that have shaped it'.[62] The possibility for individuals to resist and subvert hegemonic assumptions about migration is definitely available, but it relies on more than the presence of a series of more 'positive' films, books, or other cultural products on the migrant experience, and instead implicates understanding and dismantling the dominant system of meanings that inherently affect the processes of production of these representations.

The struggle is therefore not about producing more stories highlighting the positive sides of the Lampedusa events (the new beginnings, the eventual solidarity of the locals etc.), but about questioning the very same categories that inform the language we use to talk about these events. Labels such as migrant, refugee, or asylum seeker, and the idea of borders (particularly the unquestioned 'necessity' to control them) should be the targeted and questioned. The doubts, the clashes, but also the new strategies proposed to challenge the hegemonic system of meanings will be highlighted through the discussion of the activities of the three case studies.

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[62] Nicholas De Genova and others, 'New Keywords: Migration and Borders', *Cultural Studies*, 29.1 (2015), 55–87 (p. 29) <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2014.891630>.

1.2.2 Transnationalizing Lampedusa

Seeing Lampedusa as floating signifier gives this research a flexible theoretical tool to address the significance of this name in other contexts. This name does not only provide a pertinent metaphor for the discussion of the postcolonial condition in Italy; it epitomises also the concerns and hopes constructed around migration on a transnational level.

'Transnationalizing Lampedusa,' moreover, does not only mean considering examples of representations of Lampedusa hailing from other national contexts, but means defining the hegemonic narratives conveyed by this name as dominant in other European contexts, such Germany, UK, Austria and so forth. The dominance of these discursive formations crosses the borders supplying the 'dramatic visual capital' necessary to spectacularise and politicise public debate on migration in other countries.[63] Only a few places (namely Calais and Lesbos) have managed, and still manage, to channel the 'right amount' of human misery, fears and potential for 'reassuring' state intervention as Lampedusa does.

Furthermore, 'uprooting' this name from its 'heterotopic' location brings to the fore new examples and unforeseen opportunities: the re-significations arising from the German context, for instance, illustrate that this name can also be appropriated and turned into a tool of resistance. Lampedusa can be used to construct an identity that does not carry the limits and stigmas of the 'refugee-label', and, at the same time, reminds us of the historical relevance of the individual choices behind many journeys towards Europe. This name can turn into an 'imagined homeland' to hold on to in the precarious limbo of the asylum process, or the impossibility of accessing the rights of full citizenship.

Hence, the adoption of a transnational framework will enrich the pre-existing literature, not only with a list of examples that go beyond the Italian context, but in emphasising the possibilities offered by such an approach. The arguments and conceptual tools produced by this work will therefore contribute to the ongoing debate

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[63] Nicholas De Genova, 'Spectacles of Migrant "Illegality": The Scene of Exclusion, the Obscene of Inclusion', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36.7 (2013), 1180–98 <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.783710>.

on the opportunity for a 'trans-national turn' in the broader field of Italian Studies. The transnational scope of this thesis will prove a fertile terrain for the cultivation of new, insightful takes on an extensively studied subject such as Lampedusa, and will bolster the adoption of such a framework.

Choosing to look at Lampedusa by means of a transnational framework helps this research, first of all, to move beyond the traditional methodological nationalism of Italian Studies. Drawing on the work of Wimmer and Glick-Schiller, this work starts from the premise that the naturalisation of the nation-state has deeply influenced the theory and methodology of the social sciences and the humanities, resulting in a 'compartmentalization' that has divided these disciplines into different 'national' academic fields.[64] Furthermore, this research recognises that 'nation-state building processes have fundamentally shaped the ways immigration has been perceived and received'.[65] In reaction to this traditional approach to academic research, the concept of 'the transnational' has been progressively adopted, along with related terms such as 'the global' or 'the cosmopolitan', in order to respond to the limits of methodological nationalism.

The idea of approaching a social phenomenon through a transnational framework questions the various geopolitical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries of the nation, creating a new, flexible space where the phenomenon under focus may be seen producing new meanings and experiences. Unlike the term international, this framework 'examine[s] the articulation of regions into global processes [...] breaking up the national focus of the development and modernization paradigm'.[66]

In summarising the various theoretical trends that have led to the affirmation of 'transnationalism', Vertovec clarifies that in describing the 'interactions between national governments [...] or concerning the to-ing and fro-ing of items from one nation-state context to another', the term 'inter-national' is still preferable. According to

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[64] Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, 'Methodological Nationalism and beyond: Nation–State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences', *Global Networks*, 2.4 (2002), 301–34 (p. 306) <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0374.00043>.
[65] Wimmer and Glick Schiller, p. 302.
[66] Wimmer and Glick Schiller, p. 323.

Vertovec, we can define as 'transnational' those practices and groups characterised by 'linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders'.[67] The analysis of the formation and maintenance of such relationships, and of their cultural potential, has made of migration and ethnic minorities the principal scope of this theoretical framework. Alongside this approach, this thesis draws on a series of notions such as 'hybridity, third space, diasporic consciousness'[68] that, rephrasing Vertovec, highlight the sense of 'openness and mutability' inspired by the transnational subjectivities characterising the Lampedusa phenomenon.[69]

Ong, furthermore, observes that *transnationality*, rather than seeing globalisation only as a consequence of economic rationalities, allows us to account for 'human agency and its production and negotiation of cultural meanings within the normative milieus of late capitalism'.[70] In other words, Ong sees in this framework a way to 'capture the *horizontal* and *relational* nature of the contemporary, economic, social and, cultural processes that stream across spaces'.[71]

> *Trans* denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the *trans*versal, the *trans*actional, the *trans*lational, and the *trans*gressive aspects of contemporary behaviour and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism [emphasis in original].[72]

With these words, Ong stresses how human practice and cultural logics should be placed at the forefront of the discussion of globalisation. Her notion of 'flexible citizenship' wishes to encapsulate the dialogical role of cultural agency for navigating within the structural constraints of economic rationality and state control:

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[67] Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 3.
[68] See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).
[69] Vertovec, p. 72.
[70] Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 3.
[71] Ong, p. 4.
[72] Ong, p. 4.

> Although increasingly able to escape localization by state authorities, traveling subjects are never free of regulations set by state power, market operations, and kinship norms.[73]

These conditions and limits are a reminder of how 'transnationalism' or the 'transnational' can be very fitting frameworks for emphasising the questions of memory, nostalgia, and identity ingrained in the analysis of mobility or diaspora. However, we should not consider them as a final or flawless answer to the challenges posed by global mobility.

According to Wimmer and Glick-Schiller, 'much of transnational studies overstates the internal homogeneity and boundedness of transnational communities', reifying and essentialising 'these communities in a similar way that previous approaches reified national communities'.[74] For these authors, focusing on notions of 'flexibility' and 'fluidity', or replacing 'being sedentary' with movement, is not enough to challenge methodological nationalism. The challenge of adopting a transnational scope is to account for 'cross-community interactions as well as internal divisions of class, gender, region and politics' within certain groups.[75] This will prove vital in addressing the complex composition of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*.

Therefore, despite the criticisms raised by Ong towards its 'top-down' overtone, I consider Appadurai's well-known description of the 'global production of locality' as a very fitting theoretical tool to connect the three levels characterising this thesis.[76] Although acknowledging the *horizontal* nature of many of the interactions taking place in a transnational context, seeing the relationship connecting the 'local', the 'national' and the 'transnational' from a *vertical* perspective helps to highlight the 'dialogic' but 'asymmetric' relationships between the hegemonic and the 'subaltern' discourse (and actors) contributing to the symbolism of Lampedusa. Following Appadurai, then:

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[73] Ong, pp. 19–20.
[74] Wimmer and Glick Schiller, p. 324.
[75] Wimmer and Glick Schiller, p. 324.
[76] Ong, p. 4.

> The capability of neighborhoods to produce contexts […] and to produce local subjects is profoundly affected by the locality-producing capabilities of larger-scale social formations (nation-states, kingdoms, missionary empires, and trading cartels) to determine the general shape of all the neighborhoods within the reach of their powers.[77]

On the one hand, Appadurai's work can be used to clarify how the transnational focus on the island has affected deeply the manner in which Lampedusa's *locality* is reproduced. His focus on the reach and role of new media offers a tool for underlining how representations conveyed by various media resonate globally, bringing Lampedusa to the transnational stage, and, at the same, become a factor shaping the locals' understanding of their direct relationship with migration.

On the other hand, the author emphasises the role played by 'imagination' in the 'complex terms of negotiation between imagined lives and deterritorialized worlds'.[78] Appadurai suggests that:

> [M]any lives are now inextricably linked with representations, and thus we need to incorporate the complexities of expressive representation (film, novels, travel accounts) into our ethnographies, not only as technical adjuncts but as primary material with which to construct and interrogate our own representations.[79]

Hence, the deterritorrialization affecting the members of the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* or the players of *FC Lampedusa*, the artistic work of Dagmawi Yimer and Zakaria Mohamed Ali, and *Askavusa*'s attempts to conciliate the safeguard of local heritage with a critical but welcoming attitude towards migration, should all be considered as part of a whole constellation capable of 'leaving the terrain open for interpretations of the ways in which local historical trajectories flow into complicated transnational structures'.[80]

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[77] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 187.
[78] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 52.
[79] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, pp. 63–64.
[80] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 65.

Italian transnationalism

As we have seen in the previous discussion on the development and circulation of the 'postcolonial' framework, the old and new mobilities covering the space of the nation create a complex context in which Italy can be considered both centre and/or periphery. Italy's liminal position in the European context is usually matched by its central position in the Mediterranean basin.

The postcolonial turn has finally brought fresh attention to the complex subjectivities animating the country. Nevertheless, the use of the postcolonial framework does not carry all the answers or the tools required to emphasise the nuances of these subjectivities. The history of transcontinental migration, of the internal divisions and mobilities (the North-South divide and the 'subaltern within'), is connected to contemporary migrant presence in Italy by mean of their visibile or less visible entanglement with (post)colonial themes.

Greene's review of the multimedia installation *Western Union: small boats,*[81] a cinematic production by artist and film-maker Isaac Julien, underlines the powerful and significant connections fashioned by work that: 'merges memories of Italian unification, immigration/emigration, and the racialized north/south divide with that of the transatlantic slave trade to comment upon current immigration to Italy'.[82] According to Greene, Julien's attempt to create a parallel between the 'defining historical moment of *Risorgimento* to the contemporary period of immigration and the appearance of *extracomunitari*' is a meaningful example of Chambers' renewed attention to the centrality of the Mediterranean space. Nevertheless, mirroring Duncan's critique of the 'Black Mediterranean', Greene reminds us that a direct parallel between these two significant, but distinct historical moments cannot be made without due attention to their differences.[83]

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[81] Isaac Julien, *Western Union Small Boats*, 2007 <https://www.isaacjulien.com/projects/western-union-small-boats/> [accessed 14 February 2018].

[82] Shelleen Greene, *Equivocal Subjects: Between Italy and Africa -- Constructions of Racial and National Identity in the Italian Cinema* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), p. 258.

[83] Shelleen Greene, 'Envisioning Postcolonial Italy', in *Postcolonial Italy*, Italian and Italian American Studies (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2012), pp. 253–62 (p. 259) <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137281463_17>.

As we will see in the next chapters, Lampedusa is not a straightforward postcolonial place; using its name to address the unresolved questions and legacies of Italian and – more generally – European colonial enterprises is vital, but can also become reductive. In this multifaceted context, where various actors, discourses, and conditions overlap and sometimes conflate, in the Italian context the transnational is often equated with the postcolonial. These frameworks are connected but not alike. Distinguishing the transnational for what it is means adding a further nuance to the discussion started by the various authors that have focused on the postcolonial value of Lampedusa. The postcolonial and the transnational are undoubtedly connected, and they work correspondingly. Nevertheless, the transnational, as significantly pointed out by Ezra, helps highlight new, unforeseen connections:

> The transnational is actually analogous to the postcolonial: as the postcolonial bears the traces of the colonial, so the transnational bears the traces of the national. In both cases, the past haunts the present. As we become more historically distant from colonial empires, postcolonialism as an explanatory narrative becomes no less valid, but it has to make room for other narratives that can help us understand the history of social inequality on a global scale.[84]

Alternative interpretations of Lampedusa's relevance for discussing migration can be found by means of a transnational framework. In this context, looking at Lampedusa from only an Italian, national and/or postcolonial perspective can be considered as undermining the wider context in which this symbol is set. Reading this name next to a multi-lingual graffiti in the streets of Hamburg, in the crest of a football team based almost three-thousand kilometres from the island itself, or in the playbill of the Soho theatre, indicates that this name has outgrown the limits these frameworks. The various works on Lampedusa's symbolism have focused on the numerous occasions in which the local Italian protagonists encounter the postcolonial other, but these stories are not necessarily connected to specific national colonial histories.

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[84] Elizabeth Ezra, 'Transnational Cinemas. A Critical Roundtable.', in *Frames Cinema Journal*, ed. by Austin Fisher and Iain Robert Smith, 2016, p. 8 <http://framescinemajournal.com/article/transnational-cinemas-a-critical-roundtable/#ahigson>.

Figure 2 FC Lampedusa in Hamburg, Winterthur (July 2016)

The experiences of *Lampedusa in Hamburg* and of *FC Lampedusa* are two examples of how the close and intimate relationship between this name and these multilingual and multinational groups of individuals cannot be reduced to or understood only in the wake of the colonial enterprise. The bonds, the friendships and, above all, the shared identities emerging from the encounters between men hailing, for instance, from Afghanistan or Syria and unaccompanied minors from Somalia or Eritrea, is built on 'new literacies […] created in nonstandard languages, tonalities, and rhythms'.[85] In defining these forms of 'minor transnationalism', Lionnet and Shih point out that:

> The national is no longer the site of homogenous time and territorialized space but is increasingly inflected by a transnationality that suggests the intersection of "multiple spatiotemporal (dis)orders" (Sassen, 221). The transnational, therefore, is not bound by the binary of the local and the global and can occur in national, local, or global spaces across different and multiple spatialities and temporalities.[86]

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[85] Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, *Minor Transnationalism* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 8.
[86] Lionnet and Shih, p. 6.

To conclude, the adoption of a transnational breadth alongside 'the postcolonial' creates new opportunities to address how the Lampedusa symbol and its representations can be used to analyse the (hyper)visibility and racialisation of migrants and refugees in the public sphere, and also reveals how the cultural products connected to this name and place can be used to address the 'audibility' of these subjects.

1.3 Choices and methods in the research process

Having situated this thesis in the wider literature of postcolonial and transnational Italian Studies, and having outlined how considering Lampedusa as a floating signifier encourages a connection between these two theoretical frameworks capable of exposing a series of conceptual reflections that are central to this thesis, this section will clarify how these theoretical assumptions are put into practice. After an introduction stressing the role of Stuart Hall's concept of 'articulation' as the methodological underpinning of this work, and a short statement of the necessity of adopting a critical standpoint in researching borders and migration, I will clarify the reasons and the opportunities that have driven the selection of my three case studies. Subsequently, I will outline the empirical sources addressed by this work, and the methods I used to collect and to analyse this material. Finally, given the use of semi-structured interviewing and forms of participant observation, I will provide a number of theoretical and personal reflections focusing on the issues of 'proximity' and 'positionality' entailed by my approach, highlighting questions of access and negotiation with the members of the three groups under study.

1.3.1 Theory and method of articulation

Having stated the theoretical premise of this work, in this section I clarify how Hall's radical contextualism and anti-reductionist stances are translated into practice. Reshaping a concept developed by Laclau, Hall defines 'articulation' as a 'useful way of thinking about the complexity of contemporary societies and cultures and what it is like to inhabit them as a social subject' and as a method of 'complicating the relationship between individual action (subjectivity) and the broader social (determining)

structure'.[87] This concept can be used to reassert a space for subjectivity within powerful social structures and ideologies, helping the investigation of the relationship between subjects and discursive formations.[88]

On the one hand, articulation can be seen as way to transform cultural studies from 'a model of communication […] to a theory of contexts'.[89] On the other hand, it can be seen as a methodological framework providing a strategy for 'contextualizing the object of one's analysis'.[90] In my thesis, this has translated into the necessity of adopting various methods according to the ever-changing contexts of my research. Methods needed to be adapted 'in relation to changing epistemological positions and political conditions,' and not be used as a transferable pre-fixed tool that could be carelessly adopted in one case after another.[91] Following Slack:

> [C]ultural studies works with a conception of method as 'practice', which suggests both techniques to be used as resources as well as the activity of practising or 'trying out'. In this double sense, techniques are borrowed and combined, worked with and through, and reworked. Again, the commitment is always to be able to adapt our methods as the new historical realities we engage keep also moving on down the road.[92]

Hence, the difficulty of finding a coherent methodological framework capable of putting together the three diverse cases composing my thesis is not seen as a limit, but as an opportunity to tie together cultural phenomena that would not normally be associated with one another.

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[87] Ann Gray, *Research Practice for Cultural Studies: Ethnographic Methods and Lived Cultures* (London: SAGE, 2005), p. 32.

[88] Stuart Hall, 'Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance', in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. by Houston A. Baker Jr., Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 16–60.

[89] See Lawrence Grossberg, 'Cultural Studies and/in New Worlds', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 10.1 (1993), 1–22 <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295039309366846> quoted in; Jennifer Slack, 'The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies', in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 113–30 (p. 113).

[90] Ibid.

[91] Slack, p. 113.

[92] Slack, p. 115.

According to Stuart Hall, articulation is:

> The form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. […] The so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness'. The 'unity' which matters is a linkage between the articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected.[93]

The aim of this research is not to produce a generalisation but, drawing on Hall, 'to think of how specific practices articulated around contradictions which do not all arise in the same way, at the same point, in the same moment, can nevertheless be thought together'.[94] Therefore, the practices of the *Archivio Memorie Migranti*, *Lampedusa in Hamburg* and *Collettivo Askavusa* are thought in 'unity and difference,' or as 'difference *in* complex unity,' without being bound to a narrow and rigid framework.[95]

To be conscious of the different contexts in which these actors are active is not a matter of 'situating a phenomenon *in a context*', but it is a matter of 'mapping the very identity that brings the context into focus'.[96] As Slack has excellently put it:

> [T]he context is not something *out there, within which practices occur or which influence the development of practices*. Rather, *identities, practices, and effects generally, constitute the very context within which they are practices, identities or effects* [emphasis in original].[97]

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[93] Stuart Hall, 'On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall', ed. by Lawrence Grossberg, *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10.2 (1986), 45–60 (p. 53) <https://doi.org/10.1177/019685998601000204>.

[94] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms', *Media, Culture & Society*, V.2.57–72 (1980), p. 69.

[95] Stuart Hall, 'Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-structuralist Debates', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 2.2 (1985), 91–114 (p. 93) <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295038509360070>.

[96] See Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (Psychology Press, 1992), p. 55 quoted in; Slack, p. 126.

[97] Slack, p. 126.

Furthermore, this careful assessment of the context should not only be adopted in relation to the actors or social phenomena under scrutiny, but pointed towards the researcher himself. In my case, as we will also see in the following pages, this was achieved by means of questioning my standpoint: asserting where I am socially, culturally and politically positioned in relation to the research participants, but also in relation to the wider discourse on migration and border control.

Concerning the questions raised by my decision to undertake research on migration, I found it useful to start from some insights offered by the field of critical border and migration studies. Doing research on migration, particularly at the present time, cannot be considered as an academic exercise without consequences. According to Düvell, Triandafyllidou and Vollmer, not only is objective research into border (or migration) not possible, but carrying out research uncritically risks generating knowledge or reproducing assumptions that might re-enforce discriminatory discourses and exclusionary policies.[98]

In this work, I do not want to shelter behind a supposedly neutral approach, but I openly state my personal political stance, advocating freedom of movement and the end of border controls. As we will see in the section discussing the question of positionality and proximity vis-à-vis the political and cultural activities of the members of my cases studies, this does not translate to a naïve belief in the potential power for change of this academic project. The present work is understood, rather, as a practice of engagement with the reality in which my participants are embedded, and as a means of reasserting the relevance of 'the cultural' in this political struggle.

1.3.2 The three case studies

The case study selection was driven by a reflection on issues of agency in the representation of Lampedusa and migration in general. To explore and understand the dynamics of production of these representations, I decided to look for three case studies capable of summarising the different levels (local, national, and transnational) and

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[98] Franck Düvell, Anna Triandafyllidou, and Bastian Vollmer, 'Ethical Issues in Irregular Migration Research in Europe', *Population, Space and Place*, 16.3 (2010), 227–39 <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.590>.

perspectives (migrant, non-migrant) characterising and contributing to the symbolism of this name. The selection of the *Archivio Memorie Migranti* (Chapter three), the self-organised refugee group *Lampedusa in Hamburg* (Chapter four) and the *Collettivo Askavusa* (Chapter five) was thus due to a mixture of visibility and opportunity.

On the one hand, the partnership between the TML project and the *Archivio,* and their entanglement with the recent history of *Askavusa,* have made the selection of the two an easy choice. On the other hand, the visibility and international echo of the *Lampedusa* protest in Hamburg, which at the beginning of my research was gaining further momentum, became an inevitable choice. Within a few months, the group had become a paradigmatic example of the process of transnationalization of the Lampedusa symbol in which I was interested. The AMM, with its approach that brings together 'migrant' and 'non-migrant' cultural-practitioners, was considered as an example of negotiated and participatory forms of representation on a national (Italian) level. The German-based movement was then seen as a transnational example of 'direct' and self-organised practices of representation, in which the migrants actively 'speak for themselves' without any form of mediation from an 'in-group'. Thirdly, *Askavusa* reflected 'indirect' ways to critically represent migrants' experiences from the perspective of the locals.

1.3.3 Sources and methods

The idea of going beyond the rhetoric of 'presence' besieging most of the discussions, representations, and academic work on Lampedusa played an essential role in the selection of the sources and methods adopted in this work. The methods and the material under scrutiny aimed at reflecting the necessity of 'uprooting' the symbolism of this name from its geographical location, which this research advocates.

To do this, I adopted a pluralist approach: a more traditional analysis of a range of text-based sources, videos and other cultural artefacts was integrated with an ethnographic approach that has involved interviewing and forms of participant observation. The choice of not carrying out a purely document-based analysis of the available textual and audio-visual sources is motivated by the aim of studying the dynamics of production of these forms of representation, and of not focusing only on

their final products as discussed above. The analysis of the process through which a representation is produced might offer important insights into the potential structural limits on the agency of the actors involved.

Secondary sources

The preliminary phase of data collection was dedicated to the analysis and selection of a series of articles from various Italian and international newspapers,[99] non-fiction and journalistic reportages on Lampedusa,[100] and, above all, to the scrutiny of recent filmic production on Lampedusa. Beyond the audio-visual works of the *Archivio Memorie Migranti's* members Dagmawi Yimer and Zakaria Mohamed Ali,[101] I have examined internationally-acclaimed feature films such as Gianfranco Rosi's *Fuocoammare* (2016) and lesser-known works like Peter Schreiner's *Lampedusa* (2013).

Furthermore, to reflect the fundamental role played by new media and social networks in amplifying the transnational symbolism of Lampedusa, I have also considered and followed a number of Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, 'web series' and YouTube videos.[102] Despite the challenge of constantly having to keep up with the latest episodes and news on the island, having collected, read and watched such a substantial amount of material has allowed me to proceed to the fieldwork phase with confidence. This detailed knowledge of the events surrounding Lampedusa, and of the

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[99] The choice of newspapers was mostly based on their circulation and international visibility. The composition of the sample did not involve specific parameters aimed at gathering systematically a 'representative' sample of articles. The timeframe was often dictated by specific episodes mentioned by the participants or cited in the literature (and in the films). The online database of 'La Repubblica' was used for a more structured research on the relationship between Lampedusa and migration during the 1990s.

[100] Such as Gabriele Del Grande, *Il Mare Di Mezzo. Al Tempo Dei Respingimenti* (Castel Gandolfo (Roma): Infinito, 2009); Gabriele Del Grande, *Mamadou va a morire. La strage dei clandestini nel Mediterraneo* (Castel Gandolfo (Roma): Infinito, 2007); Fabrizio Gatti, *Bilal. Viaggiare, Lavorare, Morire Da Clandestini* (Milano: BUR Biblioteca Univ. Rizzoli, 2007).

[101] In particular: Yimer, Cederna, and Barraco, Soltanto il Mare, 2011; Yimer, Asmat-Nomi, 2015; Zakaria Mohamed Ali, To Whom It May Concern, 2013.

[102] See for instance: the Facebook page of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, the various blogs of the *Collettivo Askavusa*, the website of the *Archivio Memorie Migranti* and the webseries *La Scelta di Catia* (2014) on the website of the 'Il Corriere della Sera'.

histories of the groups constituting my case studies selection, proved vital in obtaining access and gaining the trust of the participants.

Fieldwork and primary sources

Between June 2015 and October 2016, I carried out ethnographic work in Hamburg, Rome and Lampedusa, respectively spending around three months in Germany, two weeks in the Italian capital, and five days on the Sicilian island.[103] During my stay in Hamburg, I took part in the organisation of an 'international conference of refugees and migrants,'[104] promoted by *Lampedusa in Hamburg* and other refugee groups. I also visited various art exhibitions on the theme of migration, and I attended a number of political demonstrations for migrant and refugee rights in different cities.[105] Finally, I followed the players of the *FC Lampedusa* while they were taking part in an international anti-racist football tournament in Switzerland.[106]

After a series of individual and group conversations with the members of the *Archivio Memorie Migranti* in Rome, I concluded my fieldwork by meeting the members of the *Collettivo Askavusa* in Lampedusa. Here, I had the chance to attend various commemorative events and to visit, amongst other symbolic locations, *Porto M* and the *Museo della Fiducia e del Dialogo per il Mediterraneo*.[107] During these journeys, I managed to record a total of fifteen semi-structured interviews with the members of the *Archivio delle Memorie Migranti*, *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, *Collettivo Askavusa,* and a series of individuals collaborating with them. The interviews, together with the notes,

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[103] It is important to note that my sojourn in Lampedusa coincided with the 3rd anniversary and commemoration of the 368 victims of the shipwreck of the 3rd of October 2013.

[104] For more information see 'International Conference of Refugees and Migrants 2016 » Contact' <http://refugeeconference.blogsport.eu/contact/> [accessed 9 August 2017].

[105] A brief commentary and some pictures of my first sojourn in Hamburg and my visit of the locations and of the exhibition dedicated to the historical refugee protest of Oranienplatz in Berlin can be accessed here Jacopo Colombini, 'Transnationalizing Modern Languages | Looking for Lampedusa – Part 1' <https://www.transnationalmodernlanguages.ac.uk/2016/02/03/looking-for-lampedusa-part-1/> [accessed 14 February 2018].

[106] '*Kick ohne Grenzen*', 8-9 July 2016, in Winterthur (near Zurich).

[107] For more details see chapter five.

objects and photos taken during the periods of participant observation, constitute the core of the original material of this project.[108]

Adopting a certain degree of eclecticism, drawing on Dokter and Hills de Zárate, I consider my fieldwork:

> not a specific data collection technique but rather a multiple technique approach, by which the ethnographer can adapt and draw upon a mix of methods appropriate to a situation. Research and data collection takes the form of diverse experiences, workshops, encounters, relationships, observations, and conversations […].[109]

Not only did the set of questions vary according to the context and the interviewee, but the participants had the space to critically comment on the rationale of the project and propose new ideas or sources of inquiry.

The recorded material has been analysed drawing on some of the insights of 'Critical Discourse Analysis' to emphasise the role of language as a power resource.[110] CDA helped in underlining the linguistic-discursive dimensions of the phenomena, yet also took into account the role of non-discursive social factors. This approach supplied the necessary tools to identify the role played by certain discursive practices in furthering the interests of particular social groups and/or maintaining unequal power relations.[111] This method of analysis is 'interdisciplinary, problem oriented' (not only focused on specific linguistic aspects) and 'abductive' (allowing a constant movement between

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[108] All the interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes, have been carried out in English or in Italian, audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by myself with help of the software NVivo. I offered to all the interviewees a participant information sheet summarising the aims of the research and a consent form giving the opportunity to choose anonymity. While for the members of the *Archivio* or *Askavusa* this option was not necessary due to the size and visibility of these organisations, only few members of the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* opted for being anonymised. The consent forms and other supporting materials used has been reviewed and approved by the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC).

[109] Margaret Hills de Zárate, 'Voice of the Object: Art Psychotherapy and Translating Cultures', in *Intercultural Arts Therapies Research: Issues and Methodologies*, ed. by Ditty Dokter and Margaret Hills de Zárate (Routledge, 2016), pp. 152–71 (p. 154).

[110] Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: SAGE, 2009).

[111] For a comprehensive introduction to the various forms of discourse analysis see Marianne W. Jørgensen and Louise J. Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: SAGE, 2002).

theory and empirical data), but also takes into account 'intertextual and interdiscursive relationship, [the] historical context' and my own subjectivity.[112]

Finally, in addition to the material recorded and transcribed during my fieldwork, I collected a considerable number of flyers, short publications, pamphlets and objects. This attention to gathering and preserving tangible testimonies of my interactions with the members of the different groups under focus was encouraged by the rational underpinning of the wider project of which I am part. Indeed, as described by one of the project co-investigators, the TML project's research 'involves an examination of the role of objects in mediating constructions of identity in relation to transgenerational migration'.[113] It is worth mentioning, too, that part of these materials was shared with the other members of the project and displayed within the exhibition 'Transnational Italies'.[114]

Hills de Zárate, moreover, suggests that 'the link between the object, and what it represents involves the translation of material culture to a narrative,' and that the adoption of 'intermediality is a way of understanding the relations between two (or more) media, such as writing, speech and images, or the transgression of boundaries between them'.[115] In this way, the story of how the players of *FC Lampedusa Hamburg* chose to donate to me a small 'home-made' trophy carrying the team logo, to thank me for my decision to travel from Scotland to Hamburg to watch them play, should not only seen a spontaneous gesture of kindness, but should be considered for the narratives it carries: the sense of belonging and identity that binds this heterogenous group of youngsters to the name Lampedusa, and the unexpected access and trust gained after only few hours of contact.

As witnessed by this episode, the degree of involvement entailed by an ethnographic approach required a substantial amount of flexibility and reflexivity in adapting to the

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[112] Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: SAGE, 2001), p. 71.
[113] Hills de Zárate, p. 161.
[114] For more information see 'Transnationalizing Modern Languages | TML Conference Transnational Italies, BSR 2016, on YouTube' <https://www.transnationalmodernlanguages.ac.uk/2017/01/09/tml-conference-transnational-italies-bsr-at-rome-2016-on-youtube/> [accessed 14 February 2018] Different set-up of the exhibition were displayed in Rome, London, New York, Melbourne and Addis Ababa.
[115] Hills de Zárate, p. 161.

context, but also in questioning my 'own beliefs and feelings in the same way that [I] interrogate those of the others'.[116] Following the example of Hills de Zárate, this personal reflection encompassed 'self-awareness of bodily sensations and emotions and the attentional focus on memories, experiences and cognitions as evoked during the in-the-moment reflective episodes'.[117] This 'meta-theorized processing of events retrospectively' was put into practice by writing a number of autoethnographies which are also considered as primary sources for this work.[118]

Multi-sited ethnography

The methodology that provided the overarching framework tying together such diverse cases and locations is that defined by Marcus as 'multi-sited ethnography'. In Marcus' definition, this mode of research 'moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space'.[119] Thanks to this approach, the transnational symbolism of Lampedusa, which cannot be addressed by grounding the research scope on a 'single site of intensive investigation, is analysed along unplanned and 'unexpected' trajectories attempting to retrace and, in turn, create visible connections between the multiple sites visited during this research.

In my case, I followed the 'metaphor', the circulation of the Lampedusa symbol, all the way to Hamburg. The activities and international visibility of the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* protest obviously constituted the principal reason behind the choice of carrying out ethnographic research in the city. Nevertheless, the fact that during my sojourn in Hamburg I unexpectedly found members of the *Lampedusa* group, *Askavusa* and the *Archivio Memorie Migranti* all represented within a local project and exhibition

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[116] Hills de Zárate, p. 163.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] George E. Marcus, 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24 (1995), 95–117 (p. 96) <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.000523>.

of migrant and refugee artworks, strengthened my resolve in associating these three cases.[120]

More than a coincidence, my research retraced and highlighted the invisible threads connecting these three very different experiences following 'the social correlates and groundings of associations that are most clearly alive in language use and print or visual media,'[121] and creating a map of memories, subjectivities and identities that contribute to what I define as the 'Lampedusa transnational constellation'.

In addition to the sketching of the transnational routes followed by the Lampedusa symbol, during my work I also had to draw another kind of map, that of my own interests and beliefs in relation to the variously situated subjects that took part in my research. Marcus underlines how, in 'contemporary multi-sited research projects moving between public and private spheres of activity, from official to subaltern contexts, the ethnographer is bound to encounter that overlap with his or her own'.[122] Therefore, during the fieldwork, the researcher is faced with a series of contextual challenges that accordingly push him or her to adopt a series of personas, whilst, at the same time, having little power to affect the perceptions of the participants.

It is therefore not surprising that, during my travels, I have been defined and perceived by my participants in various ways, from 'brother', 'comrade' or 'supporter' to 'nosey researcher', 'inexperienced student' and 'respectable academic'. This research was conducted with 'a keen awareness of being within the landscape' and of the fact that this landscape changes across sites.[123] These various forms of 'renegotiation' were always interpreted as:

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[120] Zakaria Mohamed Ali's 'To Whom It May Concern' was presented during the exhibition; Askavusa brought the objects of Porto M for display; and Lampedusa in Hamburg was displayed by means of the portraits of the photo projects Lampedusa in Hamburg Professions. For more details see 'Ort_m [Migration Memory] Ausstellungsprogramm · Exhibition Program' <http://www.ort-m.de/programm.html> [accessed 8 January 2016].

[121] Marcus, p. 108.

[122] Marcus, p. 112.

[123] Ibid.

[a] constantly mobile, recalibrating practice of positioning in terms of the ethnographer's shifting affinities for, affiliation with, as well as alienations from, those with whom he or she interacts at different sites constitutes a distinctly different sense of "doing research".[124]

1.3.4 Positionality, proximity and co-production: personal reflections and access issues

Starting from personal curiosity, political assumptions and academic interests, this research developed in time into forms of active political work. Without undermining the significant political work of the *Archivio* and *Askavusa*, the relationships with the members of the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* played a fundamental role in this development. The idea of becoming an active contributor of the cause of this self-organised refugee group was not premeditated. I did not start this work with the presumption of knowing what the group needed, nor with the certainty that my presence would affect their condition or struggle. This political turn was more a consequence of a theoretical reflection on ethical ways of collecting interviews or other empirical data within my research.

To put it simply, during my fieldwork I always openly stated my identity as a researcher, yet underlined that recording interviews was not the priority of my relationship with the participants. In brief, I did not want to 'take away' knowledge, without also attempting to contribute to the groups' activities. Nevertheless, aware of the different impressions made by my status as an academic, as well as my identity as a white EUropean,[125] middle-class, able-bodied, cisgendered man, the question of access varied profoundly according to the cases.

It is clear that the ways I was perceived in Rome or in Lampedusa were totally different from those of an unaccompanied minor playing football for the *FC Lampedusa.* When M., one of the players, only few hours after our first encounter asked me to take a picture together and shared the story of his journey with me, I realised that I was perceived as a journalist looking for personal stories, but also how the desire to testify to and underline his success in Germany was important for him. Being unexpectedly granted such trust compelled me to share, in turn, something personal to re-balance the

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[124] Marcus, p. 113.
[125] Holding a Schengen passport.

conversation. We talked about school in Somalia and Scotland, then I was asked about my family. His reaction ('You're so lucky!') to the news that I held both a German and an Italian passport was a vivid example of the privileged stance from which my research started.

While in Rome I experienced more or less the same dynamics as those of an academic environment. Flying from Palermo to Lampedusa, sharing the airplane with a series of researchers, journalists, NGOs practitioners, celebrities, and survivors of the 3rd of October shipwreck gave me a first-hand feeling of the 'border spectacle' and of my role in contributing to it. Hence, my relationship with the members of *Askavusa* was deeply affected by their awareness of my close contacts with the *Archivio Memorie Migranti*, and by the 'stigma' of the journalist or academic tourist that, after few days on the island, presumes to explain Lampedusa to the locals.

As a consequence of this, a few times I found myself being caught in the crossfire of the ongoing dispute over the curatorship of the migrant objects recovered by the *Collettivo*. This proximity was indeed a challenge, but also revealed itself as a privileged standpoint from which to gain access to deeper meanings, and to the members' own judgments of their political and cultural activities.

Ethnographer as circumstantial activist

According to Marcus, this 'movement among sites (and levels of society) lends a character of activism to such an investigation'.[126] With this I do not want to state that by carrying out my research or writing my thesis I expect to play a 'vanguard role' in affecting political and societal attitudes towards migrants and migration. Rather, it is a sort of activism 'to the conditions of doing multi-sited research itself':

> In conducting multi-sited research, one finds oneself with all sorts of cross-cutting and contradictory personal commitments. These conflicts are resolved, perhaps ambivalently, not by refuge in being a detached anthropological scholar, but in being a sort of ethnographer-activist, renegotiating identities in different sites as one learns more about a slice of the world system.[127]

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[126] Marcus, p. 113.
[127] Ibid.

Following Marcus' definition, in my research experience a sense of 'circumstantial activism' emerges that has developed from my 'close personal affiliations with cultural producers (e.g. artists, filmmakers, organizers), who themselves move across various sites of activity'.[128]

Contributing to the printing of t-shirt with the logo of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, distributing flyers in the refugee camps in the outskirts of Hamburg, or taking part in academic workshops and film screenings on Lampedusa in London and Edinburgh are activities that do not necessarily correspond to a rational and coherent political project. Nevertheless, they represent my willingness to interrogate from the field, encouraging the sharing of power between researcher and research participants to the point where the participants feel like an active contributor to the design.[129] In the case of the *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, for instance, according to the participants' availability and willingness to do so, the transcripts of the interviews and the draft of the chapter on their activities where submitted to their criticism. Furthermore, parts of the collected material have been re-elaborated and used in order to produce information materials for their movement.[130]

To conclude, no matter how carefully I negotiated the access, made the collected material available for new initiatives supporting the group, and curated the close friendships that have followed my first meeting with some of the members, I remain aware of the privileges inscribed in my subjectivity. Unlike the members of *Lampedusa in Hamburg,* who are still struggling after five years to obtain legal status in Germany, I was always able to put aside my anti-racist motivations and concentrate on my private life or other political interests at any time. Hence, drawing on Yuval-Davis' *Gender and*

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[128] Marcus, p. 114.

[129] See Michael Pickering, *Research Methods for Cultural Studies,* ed. by Gabriele Griffin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 112.

[130] See the recent co-production of a 'memorial-touristic map' highlighting the principal locations, episodes and demands of the 5-years history of LiH with the financial support of the TML project and the University of St Andrews, in June 2018.

Nation[131] and other postcolonial theorists like bell hooks and Gayatri Spivak,[132] I considered the conversations and relationships which arose from my work as 'transversal dialogues' based on 'common systems of value' despite different social positions.[133] However, I also accept that not all conflicts of interest can be reconciled.[134]

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[131] Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (SAGE Publications, 1997).

[132] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Routledge, 1992).

[133] See Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), p. 19.

[134] For these final remarks on 'critical whiteness' and 'power of definition' I am indebted to this booklet produced by various activists involved in the German anti-racist networks and alliances 'Transact! How Is Your Liberation Bound up with Mine?', 6 (2014) <https://transact.noblogs.org/> [accessed 14 February 2018].

Chapter 2 – What does Lampedusa mean?: The construction of the Lampedusa symbol.

Introduction

> There were tears as Jill Cook defiantly unwrapped her cross in front of the museum's director and other senior staff. She remembers a great silence before she stuttered something about it being living history and deserving a place in Britain's greatest collection of historical artefacts. More silence followed until the museum's then head, Neil MacGregor, announced that not only would he accept the cross into his collection but that he would select it as the last acquisition of his directorship. And so a crude, wooden cross with blistered blue, green and yellow paint now stands in a large glass exhibition case at the British museum, a testimony to history in the making.[1]

With these words, BBC news recounted the last acquisition of former British Museum's director Neil MacGregor. According to the curators, the collection and display of the so-called 'Cross of Lampedusa', 'a testimony to history in the making' and of the shipwreck of October 3rd 2013, will allow the British Museum: 'to represent these events in a physical object so that in 10, 50, 100 years' time this latest migration can be reflected in a collection which tells the stories of multiple migrations across millennia'.[2]

Making this cross a tangible icon of the latest migratory movements across the Mediterranean Sea is a significant marker of the construction of Lampedusa as the paradigmatic example for contemporary discussions of migration.[3] The importance of this object is not only limited to the religious and commemorative role of the cross, but

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[1] Emma Jane Kirby, 'Migrant Crisis: How Lampedusa Memorial Reached British Museum', *BBC News* <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35360682> [accessed 24 January 2016].

[2] 'MacGregor's Last Acquisition', *British Museum* <https://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/news_and_press/press_releases/2015/macgregors_last_acquisition.aspx> [accessed 3 January 2016].

[3] The British Museum's cross is not a unique object. Different crosses have been commissioned to the author Francesco Tuccio after Pope Francis' visit to the island. Some of them have been donated to different institutions in Italy and other European countries Marco Angelucci, 'La Croce Simbolo Dei Migrantida Lampedusa Al Brennero', *Corriere Della Sera*, 2016 <http://www.corriere.it/cronache/16_maggio_25/croce-simbolo-migranti-lampedusa-brennero-papa-barconi-ad31a022-22b8-11e6-889d-0e478b0d5f56.shtml> [accessed 7 November 2016].

its features are a reminder of some of the discursive formations constituting Lampedusa's transnational symbolism. The words used by local carpenter Francesco Tuccio to describe the context in which he chose to start carving a series of religious objects out of the abandoned migrant boats on the island, highlight how a positive representation of the 'lampedusani' has played a fundamental part in the construction of the symbolic relevance of Lampedusa that will be discussed in the following pages. Furthermore, Tuccio's decision to sell the crosses to the tourists visiting the island can be seen as a mark of the complex relationship between the migration apparatus and tourism characterising many representations of life on Lampedusa.

In the following pages, Walter Benjamin's concept of 'critical constellation' will be used to unfold the discursive formations characterising Lampedusa's transnational symbolism.[4] The destruction and (re)construction of wood fragments from Lampedusa's boat cemetery, and their 'afterlife' in museums and churches across Europe, shows us the important role that objects, but also films, songs, and other cultural initiatives can play in the construction of what Lampedusa has come to represent.

Tracing the exact moment when this name became such a meaningful keyword to discuss migration and borders in Europe is not the aim of this work, but the following pages wish to identify the traces of the fragmented emergence of this symbol. Benjamin's focus on processes such as translation, appropriation, reproduction, and remembrance will work as a reminder of the constant re-signification undergone by the name Lampedusa. Benjamin's notion of 'constellation' is not only used as a fitting framework to discuss the different apparently 'conflicting' nuances composing the Lampedusa symbol, but also underlines the role of the critic in juxtaposing disparate sources to draw the imaginary lines connecting the 'stars' of the 'Lampedusa constellation'.[5]

In this chapter, I argue that this imagery is not only related to an object or a place – this small island, the southernmost part of Italy – but that the very same name Lampedusa has become a floating signifier, a sort of keyword, to represent the relationship between migration and the EU border regime. My argument is that this

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[4] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.
[5] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.

representation, entangled with securitarian and humanitarian discourses, has become hegemonic, not only in the Italian context, but also at a transnational level. When new 'refugee crises' or 'migration emergencies' appear on the EU's public arenas, the transnational signifier 'Lampedusa' is often deployed as an easy, clear-cut explanation of events.

The following chapter is structured in two sections. The first, drawing on political science and media studies, will discuss what an 'emergency-crisis' representation of Lampedusa means, how it can become hegemonic, and how this regime of representation shapes public debate on migration. This section will focus on the actors taking part in the 'interplay' constituting the premise for the hegemony of such representations, and on the role played by a rhetoric of 'presence' or 'proximity' in legitimising these narratives. In the second section, I will then deconstruct and analyse some of the discursive formations constituting the transnational Lampedusa symbol. Building on the theoretical discussion of chapter one, I will offer a series of empirical examples that will unfold the nuances and limits of this hegemonic symbolism.

2.1 Representing migration and migrants in Italy. Media, politics and the 'crisis-emergency' discourse.

In the following pages, three major criticalities in the construction of the Lampedusa symbol will be highlighted: the hegemony of a 'crisis-emergency' representation of the island, media and political actors' part in co-creating the 'cyclical' visibility of the island, and the legitimising role of a rhetoric of 'presence' or 'proximity'.[6]

Before delving into this discussion, it needs to be noted that sketching a history of the events contributing to the construction of the Lampedusa symbol is a daunting task. The literature does not offer a single shared periodisation. While the first so-called 'emergenza Lampedusa' in 2009, the 'Arab Spring' of 2011, and the shipwreck of

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[6] This section is based on sources available online (news websites, social media, blogs etc.) and on secondary literature such as Paolo Cuttitta's 'Lo spettacolo di confine', which gives a detailed account of the so-called first (November 2008 – March 2009) and second (January – April 2011) 'emergenza Lampedusa'.

October 3rd 2013 have been key elements of academic interest, this is often driven by the exceptional political and media attention given to the island at those times.[7] Challenging this rationale, this chapter argues that Lampedusa's significance in discussing migration can be understood beyond the limits of these dates. Importantly, Gianluca Gatta retraces the association between migration and Lampedusa back to the 1990s, outlining three major phases: 1993-1998, 1998-2002, and 2002-present. According to Gatta, these periods differ not in the number of persons reaching Lampedusa by boat, but in 'una progressiva strutturazione di un meccanismo burocratico, repressivo e diplomatico di controllo delle migrazioni', i.e. the institutionalisation of an anti-immigration machinery that took place between 1998 and 2002.[8]

Following Gatta's periodisation, boat arrivals are not the only factor drawing attention to Lampedusa: the emergence of the transnational signifier appears to be related to the local impact of the EU border regime. As such, one might draw a distinction between a 'pre-border' Lampedusa (a romanticised fishermen community seen as open and hospitable), and a 'borderised' Lampedusa, where traditional social dynamics have been irreversibly compromised by migration and border control. However, rather than attempting to find the exact moment when Lampedusa has become such a symbol, or establishing a comprehensive historical reconstruction of Lampedusa's recent history, I consider the episodes and examples quoted in the next pages as a subjective collection and construction of various historical events, drawing on Benjamin's notion of 'origins'. For Benjamin, 'origin […] has nothing to do with

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[7] See among others Marco Bruno, 'The Journalistic Construction of "Emergenza Lampedusa". The "Arab Spring" and the "Landings" Issue in Media Representation of Migration', in *Destination Italy: Representing Migration in Contemporary Media and Narrative*, ed. by Emma Bond, Guido Bonsaver, and Federico Faloppa (Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 59–83; Cuttitta, '"Borderizing" the Island Setting and Narratives of the Lampedusa "Border Play"'; Giuseppe Campesi, *The Arab Spring and the Crisis of the European Border Regime: Manufacturing Emergency in the Lampedusa Crisis* (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, 1 November 2011); Heidrun Friese, 'The Limits of Hospitality: Political Philosophy, Undocumented Migration and the Local Arena', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 13.3 (2010), 323–41 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431010371755>.

[8] Gianluca Gatta, 'Corpi Di Frontiera. Etnorgrafia Del Trattamento Dei Migranti Al Loro Arrivo a Lampedusa', *AM. Rivista Della Società Italiana Di Antropologia Medica*, n. 33/34 (2012), 129–61 (pp. 129–30).

genesis [*Entstehung*],' but 'origin is an eddy in the stream of becoming'.[9] This means that the critic has a fundamental role in recognising and outlining the ever-changing constellation.[10]

2.1.1 Crisis, Emergency and 'State of Exception'

During the last two decades, public discourse in Italy and beyond has been characterised by a growing focus on migration and borders. Among the wide range of themes in migration and borders studies, considerable attention has been dedicated to analysing how political actors and the media have shaped the representation of migrants, refugees, and migration. In highlighting the prominent role these have in constructing the Lampedusa symbol, political science and media studies have mostly focused on three periods: November 2008–March 2009, January–April 2011 and October 2013. The two so-called 'emergenza-Lampedusa' and the shipwreck of October 3rd 2013 suggest a connection between this symbolism and an image of emergency or crisis. However, this equivalence should not only be attributed to the specific historical moments mentioned. The Italian government had already officially declared a 'state of emergency' on the island in 2002, and the word 'emergenza' has been used to describe migrant arrivals on the island since the 1990s.[11]

When looking at Italian press coverage of Lampedusa through a wider historical framework, the emergency-crisis discourse has been the dominant way to represent and discuss migration for the last twenty-five years. Examples of this association can be found from the early 1990s until today.[12] In February 2018, boat arrivals to Lampedusa

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[9] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 45.

[10] For an introduction to Benjamin's 'critical constellation' see Graeme Gilloch, *Walter Benjamin, Critical Constellations* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity ; Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

[11] The 'state of emergency' was declared for the first time in 2002 and renewed every year until 2007. For more details see Fulvio Vassallo Paleologo, 'Stato Di Emergenza Immigrazione: Prove Di Democrazia Autoritaria' <http://www.meltingpot.org/Stato-di-emergenza-immigrazione-prove-di-democrazia.html> [accessed 15 April 2014].

[12] Fabrizio Ravelli, 'I Caronte del Mediterraneo', *Archivio - la Repubblica.it*, 1998 <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1998/08/10/caronte-del-mediterraneo.html> [accessed 4 August 2018]; 'Immigrati, Maxi Sbarco Nella Notte a Lampedusa Di Nuovo Emergenza - Cronaca - Repubblica.It' <http://www.repubblica.it/2009/02/sezioni/cronaca/immigrati-4/nuovi-sbarchi/nuovi-sbarchi.html> [accessed 29 November 2016].

continue to be framed as unexpected and impossible to manage without 'extraordinary' means, despite having been ongoing for almost twenty-five years.[13] While a range of actors with widely different aims (e.g. humanitarian vs. security motivations) have spoken out about migration in recent years, their readings tend to share the idea that migration, and particularly the 'refugee phenomenon', are an anomaly, an emergency, a problem that must be solved.[14] The focus on 'solving' this 'issue' has prompted a lack of reflexivity with regards to the motivations and consequences of the recurrent emergency representation, and shows the difficulty in moving beyond the emergency-crisis paradigm.

In considering the implications of understanding migrant arrivals as an 'emergency', Agamben's work is particularly insightful. In his acclaimed take on Schmittian 'exceptionalism', Agamben has highlighted that the state of exception 'tends increasingly to appear as the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics'.[15] As such, his work illustrates how exceptions are part of a wider process of legitimating modern states' sovereignty. Following Agamben, the sovereign political community is a social construction, and the national sense of belonging is something in constant need of re-shaping and reaffirmation. A nation is discursively constructed through dichotomies, by inclusion and exclusion. The constitution of 'normality' requires a 'constitutive-other' through which the coherence and unity of sovereign states and subjectivities are constituted and maintained. In this sense, the migrant-refugee identity is 'not the exception but the rule'.[16] As such, the idea of an emergency is actually what makes normality possible, and is therefore a part of it.

Following Agamben, the existence of an 'emergenza Lampedusa' is not a self-evident objective fact, but the product of a struggle over the nation-state and its collective

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[13] 'Nuovo sbarco a Lampedusa, arrivano 38 migranti: trasferiti all'hotspot', *AgrigentoNotizie* <http://www.agrigentonotizie.it/cronaca/sbarco-lampedusa-38-migranti-17-febbraio-2018.html> [accessed 4 August 2018].

[14] Scott Watson, 'The "Human" as Referent Object? Humanitarianism as Securitization', *Security Dialogue*, 42.1 (2011), 3–20 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010610393549>.

[15] Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception / Giorgio Agamben ; Translated by Kevin Attell* (Chicago, Ill. ; London : University of Chicago Press, 2005., 2005), p. 2.

[16] See Peter Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees: Beyond State of Emergency* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 2.

identity. Importantly, however, the construction of Lampedusa as an emergency is not only a consequence of political actors' dominant role in the public sphere. For Weldes, crises/emergencies are culturally produced through the discursive construction and deconstruction of state identity.[17] If culture plays a relevant part in this process, the role of civil society must be considered. Intellectuals, artists, religious authorities, activists, and actors all produce representations. Signifiers circulate and create meaning even beyond the political sphere; their 'effectiveness' depends on power dynamics. As discussed in the previous chapter, this 'regime' of representation is shaped by the specific historical context and shifting geopolitical configuration in which the floating signifier Lampedusa is placed. However, it is equally important to consider how the presence of a dominant interpretation of migration connects with power, shapes identities and subjectivities, and 'defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied'.[18]

2.1.2 Reporting migration in Italy

In addition to politicians, mainstream media is often recognised as playing a fundamental role in framing the discourse on migration.[19] In fact, it appears difficult to find Italian media representations of Lampedusa that do not make any reference to a war-like scenario in which new arrivals are described as 'invasions', 'waves', or 'flows' of an 'army of clandestines besieging' the island.[20] Nevertheless, the continuous association between Lampedusa and an emergency imaginary should not be considered

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[17] Jutta Weldes, *Cultures of Insecurity : States, Communities, and the Production of Danger / Jutta Weldes [and Others], Editors ; Foreword by George Marcus*, Borderlines: V. 14 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 40.

[18] Hall, 'Introduction', p. 6.

[19] In this work, mainstream media is understood as national broadcast networks (tv and radio), daily newspapers, and websites that have wide circulation and appeal to large audiences. For instance, in the Italian case, the Rai TV network and 'La Repubblica'.

[20] Examples of the association of this narrative and Lampedusa can be found from the 1990s to today. See Federico Geremicca, 'A LAMPEDUSA ASSEDIATA DAI CLANDESTINI', *Archivio - La Repubblica.It*, 1996 <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1996/10/29/lampedusa-assediata-dai-clandestini.html> [accessed 12 October 2016]; Francesco Viviano, 'Un Esercito Di Clandestini All' Assalto Di Lampedusa', *Archivio - La Repubblica.It*, 2003 <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2003/06/19/un-esercito-di-clandestini-all-assalto-di.html> [accessed 17 October 2016]; Anna Sampino, 'Migranti al centro del dibattito politico, Salvini: "Invasione senza controllo". Sbarchi a Lampedusa', *Giornale di Sicilia*, 2018 <http://gds.it/2018/01/16/migranti-al-centro-del-dibattito-politico-tornano-gli-sbarchi-a-lampedusa-salvini-e-uninvasione-senza-controllo_786595/> [accessed 4 August 2018].

as something static and unchanging. Notably, the entanglement of security vs. humanitarian emergency discourses, and the shifting between these two registers, has created a flexibility that allows the reproduction of this imaginary in various ways across different periods and geopolitical contexts.

Looking at the words used to describe the situation in Lampedusa in July 1998, a continuity with the themes constituting the transnational symbol today (to be discussed later) is apparent:

> Speranze e morte viaggiano assieme in questa striscia d' acqua dai riflessi argentati che separa la Tunisia da Lampedusa […] Arrivano a frotte […] volti bruciati dal sole, gli occhi spenti, separati dai bagliori delle vacanze da una rete metallica che li trattiene nella vecchia base aerea militare dove, appena sbarcati vengono ammassati in attesa del primo traghetto per la Sicilia, la burocrazia, un decreto di espulsione, la fine del sogno italiano […] Fino a quando non raschieranno ancora la loro miseria, metteranno assieme i soldi per soddisfare traghettatori famelici […] Pregando il loro Dio di non finire in mare, buttati come avanzi, di non morire in vista delle coste italiane […] Ma chissà come i battelli evitano radar e binocoli, sgusciano tra le maglie dei controlli […] Il ritmo degli sbarchi è frenetico. "D'estate non c' è tregua" […]"è una storia infinita […] Lampedusa vive con preoccupazione questo acutizzarsi di una emergenza che dura da anni […] Il Molo Favaloro è stipato di legni fradici […] pronti per andare a fondo o al cimitero di vecchi natanti accanto al porto. […] l'impennata di luglio ne ha vomitati più di mille e ha destato l'allarme perché rischia di compromettere la stagione turistica. […] "Io li rassicuro i miei clienti […] "ma in molti hanno già rinunciato a fare la vacanza qui a Lampedusa". […] Anche adesso, assicura, vorrebbero far credere che ci sia un'emergenza insostenibile […] E poi...dove sono questi clandestini, che fastidi, che problemi danno? "Se neppure si vedono in giro..." […] In verità si vedono. Si vedono quando arrivano e quando se ne vanno. […] Si vedono intruppati in colonna, in fila per tre, come soldatini di un esercito straccione sconfitto […] Prima la sorveglianza era leggera. Qualcuno scavalcava la rete e s'intrufolava tra i vacanzieri. Adesso sono arrivati rinforzi in divisa per tenerli a bada. Se non è un carcere o un lager è qualcosa che ci somiglia.[21]

With small differences in the nationalities and in the definitions of the protagonists (e.g. from 'clandestini' to 'migranti'), the tropes characterising the debate around Lampedusa today are already in place: the 'passivity' of the migrants at the mercy of the

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[21] Pantaleone Sergi, 'L'invasione Di Lampedusa in Mille Pronti Allo Sbarco', *Archivio - La Repubblica.It*, 1998 <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1998/07/22/invasione-di-lampedusa-in-mille-pronti.html?ref=search> [accessed 12 October 2016].

ruthless smugglers; the militarisation of the island; the Italian authorities' duty to *control* and to *rescue* them; the visibility/invisibility of the migrants on the island; the impact of migration on local tourism, and the comparison between the conditions in the local reception centres with those of a detention camp.

Importantly, the construction of the 'emergenza Lampedusa' is only the latest episode in a process that has characterised public discourse on migration in Italy since the end of the 1980s. While scholarly debates on the role of the media and political actors in the politicisation of migration initially focused on the Albanian 'exodus' almost thirty years ago, they since have moved on to Lampedusa. Analyses then and now stress the prominent role of the Italian media in reproducing a hegemonic emergency representation of migration.[22] Media representations have taken the framework used to describe the Albanian crises and proposed it again in order to understand the unfolding of the so-called 'emergenza Lampedusa'.[23]

For years, scholars have primarily focused on the presence of racism in the Italian media, contributing to a 'hyper-simplified' understanding of the relationship between the media and the public. According to this literature, the media has played a fundamental role in the construction of migrants as the principal cause of the social crises and collective fears of the 'Italian public'.[24]

Recent research on the representation of migrants in mainstream media reiterates this focus on 'never-ending' security or humanitarian emergencies. While analyses in media studies, such as those conducted by Bruno and Ieracitano and Rumi, offer

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[22] For instance, King and Mai consider the media to be the main factor in fostering the stigmatisation and marginalisation of the Albanians in Italy. Russell King and Nicola Mai, *Out of Albania: From Crisis Migration to Social Inclusion in Italy* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008).

[23] For a more nuanced analysis, see instead Alessandro Dal Lago, *Non-persone: l'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale* (Milano: G. Feltrinelli, 1999), pp. 146–48.

[24] Marco Binotto and Marco Bruno, 'SPAZI MEDIALI DELLE MIGRAZIONI Framing e Rappresentazioni Del Confine Nell'informazione Italiana', *Lingue e Linguaggi*, 25 (2018), 17–44 <https://doi.org/10.1285/i22390359v25p17>; Pierluigi Musarò and Paola Parmiggiani, *Media e migrazioni: etica, estetica e politica del discorso umanitario* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2014).

excellent accounts of recent events in Lampedusa, they remain limited by their focus on very short timeframes, and by basing their analyses solely on secondary sources.[25]

Following wider tendencies in critical security studies, authors like Cuttitta offer important tools for understanding political agency in the construction of the Lampedusa symbol.[26] Drawing on Edelman and Huysmans,[27] Cuttitta argues that politicians have an active role in constructing the Lampedusa 'emergency'. From a material point of view, they have the power to overcrowd the island by not evacuating the local reception/detention centre, and, in a discursive context, they produce official interpretations that alternate narratives of 'toughness, humaneness, or emergency'.[28] In his analysis, however, Cuttitta – like much of critical security studies – neglects the possibility that actors beyond the political sphere might play a role in the representations of these events. In sum, these two literatures lead to a sort of 'representation duopoly', where either the media or politicians appear as the only actors determining the hegemonic representation of Lampedusa.

2.1.3 Addressing the 'interplay'

Seeking to overcome this duopoly, Buonfino proposes the idea of an 'interplay' between public opinion, mass media and national governments, where the media plays a decisive role in channelling and strengthening pre-existing attitudes and opinions toward migration. Nevertheless, a discourse can become hegemonic 'if (and only if) political authorities will transform it into the dominant policy discourse and into actual political action'.[29]

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[25] Bruno; Francesca Ieracitano and Camilla Rumi, *La rappresentazione mediale dell'emergenza: il caso degli sbarchi a Lampedusa: Published in Sociologia1/2014 - Rivista quadrimestrale di Scienze Storiche e Sociali - Culture politiche in mutamento* (Gangemi Editore spa, 2015).

[26] Cuttitta, '"Borderizing" the Island Setting and Narratives of the Lampedusa "Border Play"'.

[27] Murray J. Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1985); Jef Huysmans, 'The European Union and the Securitization of Migration', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 38.5 (2000), 751.

[28] Cuttitta, '"Borderizing" the Island Setting and Narratives of the Lampedusa "Border Play"', p. 200.

[29] Alessandra Buonfino, 'Between Unity and Plurality: The Politicization and Securitization of the Discourse of Immigration in Europe', *New Political Science*, 26.1 (2004), 23–49 (p. 25) <https://doi.org/10.1080/0739314042000185111>.

Vultee examines this relationship further, proposing to conceive the securitisation of migration as a media frame invoked by political actors and 'amplified or tamped down by the news media'.[30] For instance, Berlusconi's decision to visit the island to reassure the public that Lampedusa would be 'liberated' from 'unwanted' migrants is an example of how a political actor capitalises on a constructed 'emergency'.[31] Berlusconi's political power and popularity at the time gave him a privileged position in framing the events. Without the Italian media's attention to reporting his words, however, he would not have had the same resonance.

With their focus on media and policymakers, Buonfino and Vultee seem to view the public as passively following hegemonic representations offered by the media and political actors. In complicating this assumption, Stuart Hall's reflection on the audience's capability of decoding a message according to different reference codes discussed in the previous chapter is crucial, as it allows for spaces of subjectivity that might go beyond the dominant political and media discourse. Hence, within the 'struggle' to signify Lampedusa, the role of the public should also be considered. Indeed, Kriesi offers a model of the reciprocal relations between decision-makers, media and the public. According to Kriesi, different actors narrate events to attract audience attention, and to possibly affect decision-making. As such, 'the public sphere can be conceived as a loosely bound communicative space in which a variety of individual and collective actors compete for public attention and support'.[32] The relations between these actors leads to a 'symbiotic constellation of mutual dependence,' where all participants try to optimise their control over the events.[33]

In this tension between the visibility and invisibility, and the eventual politicisation of specific events, lies the difficulty in understanding attention to Lampedusa. As the next

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[30] Fred Vultee, 'Securitization as a Media Frame. What Happens When the Media "Speak Security"', in *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, ed. by Thierry Balzacq (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 77–93 (p. 78).

[31] 'Le Promesse Di Berlusconi a Lampedusa "Immigrati via in 60 Ore e Nobel per La Pace"', *La Repubblica*, 2011 <http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2011/03/30/news/berlusconi_show_a_lampedusa-14274993/> [accessed 4 August 2018].

[32] Hanspeter Kriesi, 'Strategic Political Communication "Mobilizing Public Opinion in "Audience Democracies"', in *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges*, ed. by Esser and Pfetsch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 184–212 (p. 189).

[33] Kriesi, p. 194.

section will show, not all shipwrecks and deaths attract the same media, political, and public interest. The silence over some shipwrecks, in striking contrast with others, poses difficult questions regarding the conditions needed to draw attention to what is taking place on the island. The dominant connotative codes shaping the production of different representations of Lampedusa are not only the outcome of how mainstream media and politicians frame these events. They should also be seen as the product of the process of 'legitimation' bestowed by a rhetoric of 'presence/proximity'. By looking at the Lampedusa symbolism through the lenses of this rhetoric, I also highlight how a wider number of actors takes part in the construction of the Lampedusa transnational constellation. Beyond political actors, the media, the public, border guards, NGO practitioners, locals, and, above all, migrants themselves play a vital role in 'staging' the eventual emergency.

2.1.4 The rhetoric of 'presence'. Who can talk of Lampedusa?

The differences between the public response to the shipwrecks of the 3rd and the 11th of October 2013 can be used to address the various layers in which 'presence' or 'proximity' affect the representations of the episodes that have contributed to the island's symbolism. While the 3rd of October 2013 has become a fundamental tool in the reproduction of the hegemonic Lampedusa symbol, becoming the official date for the commemoration of migrant deaths at sea in Italy,[34] the 11th of October did not attract an analogous media and political attention, notwithstanding the equal or even higher amount of deaths and reports over the Italian authorities' failure in promptly rescuing the boat in distress.[35]

The symbolic resonance of the former event cannot be accounted for by the political context, the media exposure or the number of deaths alone. The 3rd of October has

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[34] 'Il 3 Ottobre è Giornata Nazionale in Memoria Delle Vittime Dell'immigrazione | Ministero Dell'Interno' <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/3-ottobre-e-giornata-nazionale-memoria-vittime-dellimmigrazione> [accessed 24 July 2016].

[35] 'Salvataggio migranti, la comandante della Marina indagata per omicidio colposo - Cronaca', *L'Unione Sarda.it*, 2016 <http://www.unionesarda.it/articolo/cronaca/2016/10/25/salvataggio_migranti_la_comandante_della_marina_indagata_per_omic-68-544158.html> [accessed 4 August 2018].

prompted an extensive response of civil society and has attracted unprecedented cultural attention. Short films, documentaries, plays, exhibitions, and several public commemorative initiatives produced in the wake of this shipwreck have contributed to its symbolic afterlife.[36] The possibility for the creators of these cultural outputs to affect the representation of events like the 3rd of October appears to be situated in their capability to have direct access to the island ('presence'), to claim a close relationship with the migrant protagonists, or to be in the position to 'speak for them' ('proximity').

In the case of the two shipwrecks of October 2013, this presence/proximity can also be understood in terms of the visibility/invisibility of the events themselves. The 3rd of October shipwreck took place only a few miles from the harbour of Lampedusa. The authorities' ability to recover many of the victims' bodies, and the images of Lampedusa's airport hangar filled by more than a hundred coffins, further contributed to its high visibility.[37] The material presence of these bodies seems to have shaped the 'grievability' of these men, women and children by Italian and European authorities and civil society.[38] In the case of the 11th of October, the absence of victims' bodies and their location far off the Italian coastline appears, conversely, to deprive them of meaningful political attention and the right to be publicly mourned.[39]

Furthermore, without the work of a very active group of survivors and civilian rescuers bearing witness to the event and engaging in memorial initiatives, the 3rd of

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[36] Among others see the association Comitato 3 ottobre and a documentary promoted by the Collettivo Askavusa 'Home', *Comitato 3 Ottobre* <http://www.comitatotreottobre.it/> [accessed 5 October 2015]; LiberaEspressioneDocumentary, *I Giorni Della Tragedia 03 Ottobre 2013 Lampedusa* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HjMRcMlG9E>.

[37] 'Lampedusa: 111 Bare Nell'hangar Trasformato in Obitorio Fotogallery | Sky TG24' <http://tg24.sky.it/tg24/cronaca/photogallery/2013/10/05/lampedusa_bare_hangar_morti_naufragio.html> [accessed 30 November 2016].

[38] See Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London; New York: Verso, 2009).

[39] It is not difficult to find other cases where hundreds lost their lives trying to reach Europe. One of the deadliest examples is the shipwreck taking place off the coast of Libya on the 19th of April 2015, where between 600 and 800 people died. Although the number of deaths was twice that of the 3rd of October, there was very little media resonance. Only a later attempt to recover the remains of the deceased brought renewed media attention to this shipwreck. Francesco Viviano, 'Augusta, Riemerge l'orrore: I Cadaveri Nel Barcone Sono Centinaia, Tanti Quelli Dei Bambini', *Repubblica.It*, 2016 <http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/07/02/news/augusta_riemerge_l_orrore_i_cadaveri_nel_barcone_sono_centinaia_tanti_quelli_dei_bambini-143257809/> [accessed 30 November 2016].

October would likely not have benefited from such a response.[40] The public resonance of these cultural outputs is a reminder of the influential role played by local and transnational subjects that are not usually considered as affecting representations of Lampedusa. Indeed, recent attention to the 11th of October is not only a result of the investigative work of journalist Fabrizio Gatti, but also a response to survivors' testimonies recorded in a documentary shared on various online platforms.[41] As this illustrates, cultural products like documentaries and films about Lampedusa have profoundly shaped the island's dominant symbolism.

Beyond the visibility of victims' bodies, the concepts of presence/proximity allow for analysing particular actors' positions in contributing and/or controlling images depicting the island. Here, the security forces and the workers of the reception centre are influential. According to Gatta, police officers actively create stereotypical representations of the 'landings' by controlling access to the dock: 'anonymised' groups of people, often covered in 'shiny' thermal blankets, escorted by police officers wearing sanitary gloves and masks – a 'treatment spectacle' that is widely reproduced in media footage.[42] This privileged proximity to migrants' bodies is also shared by the operators of the reception centre, who have a key role in showing/hiding migrants by managing access to the centre. While the armed forces, NGOs, journalists, politicians, researchers, and artists etc. have become the main speakers of Lampedusa's 'reality', locals often denounce the difficulties they themselves face in representing the phenomenon. As with many others, they face barriers when trying to have direct contact with migrants, highlighting how security forces and reception workers can profoundly affect the visibility/invisibility of disembarkations.[43]

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[40] Most notably, local business owner Vito Fiorino. Fiorino has engaged in a series of initiatives with the Italian-German cultural association 'Unser Herz schlägt auf Lampedusa', which has staged more than 300 scenic readings retelling the events of the 3rd of October 2013. 'Lampedusa-Hannover – Eine szenische Lesung – Ein soziales Projekt' <http://www.lampedusa-hannover.de/> [accessed 4 August 2018].

[41] 'Il grande massacro: il film evento', l'*Espresso*, 2017 <http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2017/10/06/news/il-grande-massacro-il-film-evento-1.311667> [accessed 4 August 2018].

[42] Gatta, 'Corpi Di Frontiera. Etnorgrafia Del Trattamento Dei Migranti Al Loro Arrivo a Lampedusa', p. 151.

[43] See also Friese's reflection on the role played by journalists. Friese, p. 333.

However, a rhetoric of presence is also mobilised by other actors. *Amnesty International,* for instance, conducted a training camp on the island in 2016. In the description of the activities, including meetings with *Lampedusani*, the importance of physically being on the island in order to understand/speak about it is reinforced.[44] These examples illustrate that journalists, border guards, researchers, and NGO practitioners, amongst others, have a key role in the construction of Lampedusa's significance, more so than the migrants themselves.

The idea of going to Lampedusa, of being there and literally touching it, seems to many as the only way of experiencing it. In the juxtaposition of mobilities that populate the island, it is important to keep in mind that all the actors constituting the so-called 'migration industry' enjoy a high amount of mobility, whereas the 'subjects/objects' of their work often do not have such privilege.[45] Migrants seem to be reduced to 'objects' of discourse, depicted as 'desperate people' without choices, incapable of having agency. They are forced to risk their lives at the hands of the 'smugglers', compared to 'slavers':

> LAMPEDUSA – Sono stati caricati come bestie […] un mare forza 6 che non ha fatto cambiare però i piani degli schiavisti. Ammassati in duecentocentocinquanta […] gli ultimi disgraziati che venivano da ogni paese dell'Africa si sono ritrovati al largo in mezzo alla tempesta.[46]

Despite being the only actors able to give a first-hand account of the migratory trajectory to Lampedusa, migrants' narratives are absent from dominant representations. As Fabrizio Gatti's undercover reportage in Lampedusa's reception centre of 2005 powerfully showed, public outrage emerged only when an Italian

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[44] Notably, locals are described as 'attivisti per scelta o necessità' and as 'insofferenti da anni di riflettori, domande, promesse, arrivi e partenze', reflecting the trope of the 'welcoming Lampedusano' that will be discussed later in this chapter. 'Campi Amnesty 2016 | Lampedusa 18-35' <http://campi.ai-italy.it/campo/lampedusa-1/> [accessed 4 December 2016].

[45] See Ruben Andersson, *Illegality, Inc.: Clandestine Migration and the Business of Bordering Europe*, 1st edn (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2014).

[46] 'Affonda La Nave Dei Disperati Duecento Dispersi in Mare', *Archivio - La Repubblica.it*, 2003 <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2003/06/21/affonda-la-nave-dei-disperati-duecento-dispersi.html> [accessed 17 October 2016].

journalist disguised himself as a migrant.[47] In the interplay creating the hegemonic representation of Lampedusa, the migrants thus appear as the real excluded. Made voiceless by the sea or silenced by the logics of the media, 'sanitising procedures', and military control, they face violence when reclaiming visibility and agency through protest.[48]

However, migrants attempt to challenge this dynamic with new ways of representing their experience, such as self-produced films and documentaries. Hegemonic actors, on the other hand, counter the 'personalisation' of migrant experience and the overturning of the dominant gaze offered by Dagmawi Yimer and Mohamed Zakaria Ali's films with a series of documentaries, TV films etc., telling Lampedusa's story yet again from 'our' Italian and European point of view. New symbolic figures such as Pietro Bartolo and Catia Pellegrino are created 'to help migrants tell us their stories,' thereby re-affirming the centrality of 'our' identity.[49]

The second part of this chapter will explore the role of such cultural devices in the construction of Lampedusa's hegemonic symbolism, stressing its transnational dimension. While focusing on examples of 'institutional' political and media representations of the island, it will also include representations produced by artists, activists, religious authorities, and so on. Following Benjamin's reflections on the role of the critic as an 'polytechnical aesthetic engineer', the next section will connect apparently unrelated transnational representations of Lampedusa in a fragmentary but politically charged critique of this hegemonic symbol.[50]

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[47] 'Repubblica.It » Cronaca » Nell'inferno Di Lampedusa l'odissea Di Un Falso Clandestino', 2005 <http://www.repubblica.it/2005/i/sezioni/cronaca/sbarchi3/fabrigatti/fabrigatti.html> [accessed 19 July 2016].

[48] Sky News Italia, 'Lampedusa, Scontri Violenti Tra Polizia, Tunisini e Lampedusani (21/09/2011)' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5L5MWuyixo>; 'Migranti: protesta eritrei a Lampedusa - Cronaca', *ANSA.it*, 2016 <http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2016/01/05/migranti-protesta-eritrei-a-lampedusa_b348e0ff-e6c9-44d6-9e29-9bbfc8797f1a.html> [accessed 5 August 2018]; 'Migranti, la protesta a Lampedusa con le bocche cucite - Sicilia', *ANSA.it*, 2018 <http://www.ansa.it/sicilia/notizie/2018/01/26/tunisini-a-lampedusa-bocche-cucite_7fe9f31a-fbbd-4801-bc20-70e44458cc35.html> [accessed 5 August 2018].

[49] Pietro Bartolo, Lampedusa's GP, is a protagonist of Rosi's *Fuocoammare*. Catia Pellegrino is a captain of the Italian Navy starring in a web-series and a book on operation *Mare Nostrum*.

[50] Gilloch, p. 2.

2.2 'Drawing the constellation'. Deconstructing Lampedusa's transnational symbolism

Having seen the complex relationship underpinning the public debate of Lampedusa and of migration in general, this section focuses on a series of empirical examples outlining some of the major discursive formations constituting the Lampedusa symbol. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, this work stresses how this name has become the main vehicle of a series of hegemonic understandings of the social and political significance of migration. The interplay between politicians, journalists, artists etc. and the local and migrant counterparts outlined in the previous pages, is a reminder of the contested meanings carried by the name Lampedusa. This name does not automatically carry a fixed connotation, but its significance has been constructed through a constellation of representations produced by multiple actors in different periods and contexts.

To stress the progressive deterritorialisation of this symbol and its receptiveness to the cultural outputs of the subjectivities characterising the Lampedusa events, this section will draw on a series of examples hailing both from an Italian and a transnational context. The process of transnationalization described in chapter one entails that the Lampedusa 'issue' cannot be understood without a flexible framework that takes into account multiple places, subjects, languages, and temporalities. Hence, to analyse the following examples, I propose to adopt W. Benjamin's analogy of 'constellation'.[51]

In order to express the importance of connecting phenomena in more complex constructions such as concepts or ideas, Benjamin writes that 'ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars'.[52] Similarly, this work sees the different, apparently competing, representations of Lampedusa listed in the following pages as constitutive parts of a symbolism that has assumed a dominant role in the transnational discussion of migration. In the Lampedusa symbol, as in a constellation 'the most remote objects are conjoined to form a unique, legible figure, which cannot easily be undone,' which

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[51] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*.
[52] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 34.

means that all the representations depicting the island or mobilising the name Lampedusa are inextricably entangled with one another.[53]

The 'constellation', moreover, can be used to highlight the movement from subjective instances towards a more choral or collective perspective of a phenomenon without, at the same time, losing the individual significance of the particular ideas constituting the constellation. For Benjamin, 'the idea is a monad – that means briefly, every idea contains the image of the world'.[54] Therefore, the specific examples discussed in the next pages can be seen both as illustrations or syntheses of the tropes constituting the hegemonic Lampedusa symbol, and as cultural products directly or indirectly influencing the constant reshaping of this not yet historicised symbol.

This formulation expresses all its interpretive power by positioning the potential 'counter representations', or alternative takes on Lampedusa coming from the cultural practices of people with migratory background or not (highlighted by the literature discussed in chapter one), within the dominant paradigm (the constellation). At same time, it allows them to retain a certain amount of agency and independence. Once this constellation has emerged or it has been individuated:

> [A] meaningful image jumps forward from the previously disparate elements, which from that point onward can never be seen as merely disparate again. In this way the phenomena are rescued from their status as phenomenal or fragmentary, without simultaneously sacrificing the phenomena in the name of an abstract concept.[55]

Moreover, if 'every idea is a sun and is related to other ideas just as suns are related to each other,' every sun will often have planets orbiting around it.[56] Similarly, the different discursive formations forming the Lampedusa symbol can have more alternative imaginaries connected to them.

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[53] Gilloch, p. 70.

[54] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 48.

[55] Max Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the Play of Mourning* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), p. 70.

[56] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 37.

In this section, I see the topics of border control and humanitarian relief (1), of the 'welcoming *Lampedusani*' (2), of the impact of migration on tourism (3), and of the construction of the island as a place for mourning, commemoration and religious encounter (4) as the four major discursive formations (stars) constituting the transnational constellation of the hegemonic Lampedusa symbol. Nevertheless, as with every theoretical construction, I do not consider this structure as an exhaustive and definitive description of the Lampedusa symbol. Other analyses might highlight different aspects. Moreover, I am not arguing that there is no space for an appropriation of the signifier and the production of eventual counter-representations. Rather, I use this formulation to show how the hegemonic symbol develops, adapts, and often 'absorbs' representations that are or have been considered capable of challenging the dominant understanding of migration conveyed by the name Lampedusa.

The choice of taking into account only certain themes and grouping others under these four 'umbrella' categories is mostly due to analytical reasons. Its aim is to facilitate the reading of the signifier Lampedusa. Nevertheless, some of the following examples reveal themselves as difficult to categorise, often sharing commonalities with more than one thematic group. Instead of considering this a limit, however, I use these common traits to sketch the existing connections between the discursive formations. These relations seem to create forms of 'reciprocal nourishing' (each imaginary contributes to the success of the other) that are also reproduced when the signifier Lampedusa is adopted in different contexts.

In order to bring together and legitimise the intersections between the spatialities and temporalities (the 'here and now and then') of this transnational constellation, this work considers the following examples as a snapshot ('image is dialectic at a standstill') capable of highlighting the shape of this constellation.[57] According to Benjamin:

> It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past: rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation.[58]

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[57] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1999) N2a,3, ARC p.462.
[58] Ibid.

Therefore, the critic plays a fundamental role in assembling this constellation that, given the ever-changing symbolic value of Lampedusa, appears as a 'temporary disturbance and correspondence, within an eddy in the flow of history, at a point of origin'.[59]

Finally, seeing this issue through examples coming from a transnational background, contributes to the unearthing of new connections, associations that could not have been conceived of before the emergence of Lampedusa as a symbol of migration-related issues. This 'global' or transnational thinking does not entail that attention for the very local issues needs to be dropped. On the contrary, we should see the transnational and the local not as necessarily oppositional concepts, but rather as being in a relationship of reciprocity. A relationship – that drawing on Appadurai can be defined as the 'global production of Lampedusa's locality' – that will be discussed more in detail in chapter five. Keeping in mind this dual, but not opposing, dimension will be useful for unpacking the examples to follow.

2.3.1 Border control and humanitarian relief

The first half of this chapter has briefly outlined how the entanglement between discourses on security and humanitarianism underpins the dominant representation of migration, and of the Lampedusa events in particular, in terms of crisis or emergency. Despite the so-called 'spectacle of bare life' of detention and deterrence against migrants and refugees arriving on the island having progressively given way to a more humanitarian-focused understanding of the 'Lampedusa issue', the practical answer to the movement of people across the Mediterranean has remained the same: a militarised control of the border.[60]

In this section, I will analyse some examples of how these two discursive formations are deployed in two filmic representations focusing on Lampedusa: the web series *La*

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[59] Gilloch, p. 229.
[60] Dines, Montagna, and Ruggiero, p. 432.

scelta di Catia (2014), and award-winning film *Fuocoammare* (2016).[61] Without looking at the films in detail, this section uses the two to give a snapshot of how securitarian and humanitarian discourses are translated in the visual representations of the island.

The dialogues, images and aesthetic choices of *La scelta di Catia* and *Fuocoammare* can be considered as two fitting examples of how the 'humanitarian turn' has shaped the representations of Lampedusa after the events of October 2013. The representation of the SAR (search and rescue) operations of the Italian navy in the two films not only stands as a vivid testimony of the increasing militarisation of the Lampedusa, but also shows how such cultural products have contributed to the legitimation of a controversial correspondence between military operations and humanitarian relief.

La scelta di Catia

The ten episodes composing *La scelta di Catia* describe the story of Captain Catia Pellegrino's last sixty days in charge of 'nave Libra' during operation 'Mare Nostrum'. Despite the documentary form chosen by the director, and the description as live testimony of 'everyday drama at the border', the series should be seen more as a PR operation. Co-produced by Rai TV and 'il Corriere della Sera' and financed by the Italian navy, it stands as a vivid illustration of the many tropes used to represent migrants and migration in the public sphere. In addition to the inevitable reference to the Lampedusa symbol (the subtitle of the series is '80 miglia a sud di Lampedusa'), the series deploys several stereotypical and controversial frames exemplifying the entanglement between the humanitarian and security concerns mentioned before.

The film juxtaposes interviews with the often-emotional Captain and her crew ('salvare tanti migranti ha cambiato anche noi') with moments of high tension (always emphasised by thriller-style background music), due to the sudden sighting of the inevitably crowded and battered 'barcone'. Furthermore, the 'professionalism' of the Italian navy – always ready for a new 'cfm' case ('controllo flussi migratori') with their white masks and sanitary suits to avoid contact with the potential diseases brought by

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[61] Roberto Burchielli, *La Scelta Di Catia. 80 Miglia a Sud Di Lampedusa*, 2014 <http://www.rai.tv/dl/RaiTV/programmi/media/ContentItem-2828a68f-12bd-405c-9300-dde3eeb31b23.html> [accessed 15 August 2016].

the migrants – is always matched with scenes of convivial life on board ('il pranzo della domenica e la nostalgia per casa'), and the boastful humanity of the Italians.

The retelling of these stories of the border is enacted through a series of individual plot lines following the daily routine of the crew. Beyond the leading figure of Captain Pellegrino, the narration juxtaposes the crew-members' interactions with their partners, children and friends with the tense scenes of the rescues, creating a narrative rhythm that reinforces the sense of emergency/crisis. The individual stories thus appear as flashes of 'normality' among the continuous and 'exceptional' rescue of one boat after another.

The striking contrast between the individualised representations of the marines, their mundane conversations, and the depiction of the rescued, is a clear example of the essentialising dominant practices of representing migration. Conversely to the Italian protagonists, the migrants are always depicted in group scenes, and are rarely given a chance to share their point of view. This representation leads to the annulment of any opportunity for the rescued migrants to assert their subjectivity. The few moments in which they appear as individuals are when they are assigned their new provisional identity: a number.

Figure 3 Stills from La scelta di Catia

This process is exemplified by a long sequence focusing on the bare feet of the migrants lining-up on the deck and by the examination of their belongings. In the scene, the migrants' faces appear not to be relevant; these individuals are represented as an anonymous series of feet. Their voices and stories are not to be heard or asked about; they can only be told through their objects by the members of crew. This choice reiterates the hierarchy in the retelling and understanding of these events, the implicit 'us and them' within the dominant discourses on migration:

"La disperazione si vede proprio in questo: quando si aprono le borse dei migranti e si vede quello che sono riusciti a portare dal loro paese natio [...]".[62]

The camera not only captures the process of anonymisation entailed by the migrants' entry into the humanitarian apparatus, but the director appears to play with a series of cinematic tropes hailing from the iconography of the 'middle passage'. The scene focusing on the migrants' bare feet is accompanied by the song 'Freedom' by Anthony Hamilton & Elayna Boynton from the O.S.T. of Quentin Tarantino's film *Django Unchained* (2012). As such, this can be read as a veiled allusion to the association between contemporary migration from North Africa and the Atlantic slave trade discussed in chapter one.

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[62] 'La Metà Più Ambita Dei Migranti? «Svezia, Chissà Se Ci Arriveranno» - Corriere TV' <http://video.corriere.it/meta-piu-ambita-migranti-svezia-chissa-se-ci-arriveranno/d7637512-48c3-11e4-a045-76c292c97dcc> [accessed 18 August 2016].

Figure 4 Still from La Scelta di Catia

Moreover, the trope of the feet shackled together not only further undermines the subjectivity of the rescued migrants, bringing to an extreme the 'victimisation' or 'helplessness' of these persons, but it also prompts a series of references hinting at the 'blackness' and 'masculinity' characterising the migrant figure in hegemonic representations of migration. This process appears to be reiterated by the bridging shot closing the scene: a quick montage of close-ups of black male migrants, accompanied by the fading out of the song.

By contrast, the 'victimisation' of the migrants is matched by the 'heroism' of the Italians, who do not only rescue the migrants from the risk of drowning, but also save them from the violence of the 'modern days slaver' personified by the 'smugglers' described in another episode of the series.

[C]omandante c'è uno che usa una frusta come arma impropria verso gli altri […] Plancia, plancia, da secondo, imbarcherà uno con un turbante grigio ed un cappello nero, si vedono solo gli occhi. È da visionare, e porre in stato di controllo, perché era lui uno di quelli che alzava le mani.[63]

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[63] 'Sul Barcone Lo Scafista Frusta i Migranti:«Ci Vuole Sangue Freddo» - Settima Puntata', *Video Corriere* <http://video.corriere.it/sul-barcone-scafista-frusta-migrantici-vuole-sangue-freddo-settima-puntata/c853262c-48c2-11e4-a045-76c292c97dcc> [accessed 15 August 2016].

The orientalised description of the 'sospetto scafista' is another trope supporting the securitarian and humanitarian discourse, in which the process of othering appears to feed into stereotypical representations of Islam and 'barbary as genre and discourse'.[64] The 'orientalised smuggler', the 'anonymised migrant', and the 'heroic' Italian rescuers (either military or civilians) are presented as the main characters of this narrative of the border.

From the outset, these representations enforce an asymmetric distinction between the subjectivity of the *in-group* (the Italians), and that of the migrants. The juxtaposition between one of the few migrant voices recorded in *La scelta di Catia* – '[I]f we didn't was lucky, we was die, if we didn't find you we now die, but we thanks god' [sic] – and the following comment from a member of the crew – '[S]pero nel mio cuore magari che si ricordino di noi, e abbiano un buon ricordo e una buona immagine dell'Italia e quindi la rispettino sapendo che gli abbiamo salvato la vita' – exemplifies the hierarchy awaiting the new-comers. The words of the sailor not only underline the generous act of rescue and welcoming performed by the Italian state, but also paternalistically suggest that the migrant ought to be thankful and respectful during their time in Italy.

Fuocoammare

Although its aesthetic quality and artistic value cannot be compared with *La scelta di Catia*, Rosi's *Fuocoammare* shares many commonalities with the former. In *Fuocoammare,* the cumbersome presence of the military apparatus is also juxtaposed with a series of individual story-lines depicting the 'Italian' perspective: this time, that of Lampedusa's inhabitants.

While the camera follows the adventures of the young 'Lampedusano' Samuele Pucillo, and listens carefully to the testimonies of the resident GP Pietro Bartolo and the music of local DJ Pippo Fragapane, the migrant subjectivities are once again captured only through a series of individual or group scenes in which their corporeality is privileged over their voices. The gaze of Rosi's camera lingers on the eyes and faces of

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[64] For a historical account of this discourse see Lotfi Ben Rejeb, '"The General Belief of the World": Barbary as Genre and Discourse in Mediterranean History', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire*, 19.1 (2012), 15–31 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2012.643607>.

the rescued people, but, as if separated by a transparent film, the director and the migrant protagonists never come into direct contact. The omnipresent camera follows the migrants from the boat to the reception centre, yet it constantly looks at them only from a distance, delegating the commentary or the interaction with the migrants to the Italian protagonists of the film.

Figure 5 Still from Fuocoammare

In *Fuocoammare*, the operations of the Italian navy are often comment-less, except for the sounds produced by the sea, the radars or the helicopters. The human aspect is mainly dedicated to portraying the 'underrepresented' daily life of people living on Lampedusa. The only sections of the film in which the voices of the migrants can be heard are a collective gospel scene recorded in Lampedusa's reception centre, where a group of migrants retells the perils of their journey, and the crying of a recently rescued woman on the deck of an Italian ship. The powerful words of the song ('This is my testimony, we could no longer stay in Nigeria […] many were dying […] we flee to Libya and Libya was the city of ISIS […] and we run to the sea […]') appear to underscore the film's humanitarian undertone.

Like *La scelta di Catia*, *Fuocoammare* seems to privilege a narrative of Italian 'heroism' and 'compassion'. From Captain Pellegrino to Lampedusa's GP Bartolo, both films underline how the Italian counterparts, despite the various difficulties, are always ready to rescue and help the new-comers. Nevertheless, the contested academic reception and critique of *Fuocoammare* reveals the difficulty in expressing a clear-cut

judgment on the images conveyed by Rosi's film.[65] Indeed, it is not easy to define Rosi's detached representation of the military operations in the water surrounding the island, and its inquisitive gaze towards the faces and the corpses of the migrants, as either critical or supportive of the militarisation of Lampedusa. The images of the military vessels punctuating the horizon of young Samuele's adventures in the more rural area of the island stand as an on open question.

Figure 6 Stills from Fuocoammare

These images can be interpreted in many ways: they can symbolise the continuity between life on the island during the war and today – a connection that is made even more explicit by the film's title, and the stories told by Samuele's grandmother – but can also stand as an indirect denouncement of the militarisation of Lampedusa, or as a testimony of the fact that life on the island goes on regardless of the cumbersome presence of the border apparatus.

Contrary to the didactic and sometimes paternalistic commentary accompanying *La scelta di Catia*, in *Fuocoammare* the apparent absence of the director's perspective leaves to the spectator the task of interpreting the images. In Rosi's detached 'neoverismo', the boundaries between a critical representation of the border apparatus and an aesthetic lyricism endorsing the military control of the waters surrounding Lampedusa are narrow and often subjective.[66] These features make the film a fitting example for discussing how the discursive formations constituting the hegemonic Lampedusa symbol come into place. Beyond the critique of the narrative and aesthetic

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[65] See for instance the critical reviews from Mazzara and De Franceschi, but also the more positive reviews of film by Ponzanesi and O'Healy.

[66] See O'Healy's commentary in TML Project, *3. Roundtable on Fuocoammare - TML Conference Transnational Italies, BSR 2016* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygRS9J0xxbY>.

choices of Rosi, *Fuocoammare* is a fundamental example for highlighting how the manners and contexts in which a film is presented to the public play a fundamental role in supporting the hegemony of certain discursive formations.

The unprecedent transnational success, visibility and institutional endorsement of *Fuocoammare* – the film has won the *Berlinale*, been nominated for an Oscar, and been screened in the European Parliament – has turned the film into a vehicle for the reassertion of institutionalised discourses of border control and humanitarian relief.[67] This connection is further exemplified by former Italian PM Matteo Renzi's decision to donate DVDs of the film to other European leaders during a summit on migration policies with Turkey.[68] The cultural device of the film, which for Renzi 'racconta la poesia dell'accoglienza di Lampedusa,'[69] is used to support the humanitarian tone of policies that, in reality, continue to focus on a securitarian management of the EU's external borders.

In his public statements, even the 'detached' Rosi clarifies that his intention was that of reminding the viewers of the *Lampedusani's* generosity, and the necessity of a humanitarian European approach towards migration.[70] In the countless interviews given by the director, it is not difficult to retrace the dominant connotative codes underpinning the construction of Lampedusa's dominant symbolism. In short, although Gianfranco Rosi's film reflects a very local and Italian point of view, the film's widespread success and global resonance has further contributed to turning Lampedusa into a

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[67] '"Fuocoammare" di Gianfranco Rosi vince l'Orso d'oro al Festival di Berlino. Meryl Streep: "Da Oscar" - Cultura & Spettacoli', *ANSA.it*, 2016 <http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cultura/2016/02/20/berlino-fuocoammare-verso-premio-_3919a576-1440-44f5-bb90-e62b6d137013.html> [accessed 5 August 2018]; 'Migranti: Toia (Pd), "Fuocoammare" presentato a Europarlamento - Altre news - ANSA Europa', *ANSA.it*, 2016 <http://www.ansa.it/europa/notizie/rubriche/altrenews/2016/04/25/migranti-toiapdfuocoammare-presentato-a-europarlamento_ae34e2db-746c-41cf-9643-9dd7f1f3b633.html> [accessed 5 August 2018]; Chiara Ugolini, 'Oscar 2017, "Fuocoammare" Candidato Come Miglior Documentario', *Spettacoli - La Repubblica*, 2017 <http://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli/cinema/2017/01/24/news/oscar-156743675/> [accessed 24 January 2017].

[68] Sky TG24, 'Foto Migranti, Renzi Regala Il Dvd Di', 2016 <http://tg24.sky.it/tg24/mondo/photogallery/2016/03/07/renzi-vertice-ue-dvd-fuocoammare.html> [accessed 24 July 2016].

[69] Ibid.

[70] '"Fuocoammare" di Gianfranco Rosi vince l'Orso d'oro al Festival di Berlino. Meryl Streep'.

transnational symbol, as openly stated in the film's description on the *Berlinale*'s website:

> The island is Lampedusa which has become a metaphor for the flight of refugees to Europe, the hopes, hardship and fate of hundreds of thousands of emigrants. […] Rosi's observations of everyday life bring us closer to this place that is as real as it is symbolic, and to the emotional world of some of its inhabitants who are exposed to a permanent state of emergency […].[71]

The partial view of life on the island offered by Rosi (see, for instance, the total absence of any reference to Lampedusa's relationship with tourism), and the film's climax with the images of the bodies of several asphyxiated migrants, directly or indirectly reinforces the sense of urgency and necessity of a militarised control of migration.

Furthermore, the definition of *Fuocoammare* as the obvious winner of Berlin's film festival 'the right film at the right time', and the international praise from British,[72] American, French etc. reviewers, should be considered as a good example of how cultural practices play a relevant role in public discourse on migration, but also how the humanitarian-turn of the Lampedusa symbol carries a sort of 'self-complacency'.[73] Focusing on the life of the locals, essentialising the complex social dynamics characterising the island into a general attitude of 'welcoming' towards the 'new-comers', displaces the major problem. Like the 'lazy eye' of young Samuele, it could be argued that 'we' do not want to see properly: the acknowledgement of a humanitarian Italian or European approach towards migration hinders confrontation with the real causes of the phenomenon, continuing to justify the adoption of restrictive policies under the rhetoric of 'accoglienza'.

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[71] 'Berlinale Archive 2016: Programme - Fuocoammare/Fire at Sea' <https://www.berlinale.de/en/archiv/jahresarchive/2016/02_programm_2016/02_Filmdatenblatt_2016_201614479.php#tab=filmStills> [accessed 12 August 2016].

[72] Peter Bradshaw, 'Fire at Sea Review – Masterly and Moving Look at the Migrant Crisis', *The Guardian*, 9 June 2016, section Film <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/jun/09/fire-at-sea-review-masterly-and-moving-look-at-the-migrant-crisis> [accessed 23 July 2016].

[73] Peter von Becker, 'Das blinde Auge', *Der Tagesspiegel Online*, 13 February 2016 <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/kultur/fuocoammare-auf-der-berlinale-das-blinde-auge/12960028.html>.

2.3.2 The 'locali brava gente' and pre-border Lampedusa

The reproduction of humanitarian rhetoric is not the only aspect worthy of discussion in *Fuocoammare*. The success and the representative power of the film provide substantial resources for underlining the second discursive formation included in this analysis: the romanticised representation of island life before its 'borderisation', and the idealisation of the hospitality and generosity of its inhabitants.

In this section, I summarise the overwhelmingly positive representation of the Lampedusans with the definition of 'locali brava gente'. The adoption/adaptation of 'il mito degli Italiani brava gente' seeks to create a parallel between the critique and exposure of Italian colonial violence and war crimes, begun with the work of historian Angelo Del Boca, and the ways in which the institutionalisation of the humanitarian discourse and its entanglement with security concerns has been used to justify and continue the militarisation of border control and of the island itself.[74] This metaphor does not seek to make a direct comparison of the extreme forms of violence highlighted by Del Boca with the events unfolding on and around Lampedusa, but rather aims at stressing the forms of displacement that this myth might provoke.

As for the stereotypical representations of the Italian population as inherently pacific, and of Italian soldiers as more 'human' than other occupying forces, the focus on the 'welcoming Lampedusano' creates a similar displacement. Mainstream coverage and institutional discourse use this trope as a tool to divert the focus from the Italian and European governments' responsibilities in the illegalisation of the migratory phenomenon, and in its direct connection to the still ongoing history of colonial power and black enslavement. The stress on the humanitarian 'nature' of the *Lampedusani* not only supports a sanitised reading of the events in which the Italian are always ready to help the migrants and contain the 'emergency', but also displaces the multifaceted reactions of the locals onto the migration apparatus. Indeed, as we will see in the discussion of Lampedusa as a 'dark tourism' site in chapter five, not all the Lampedusans have responded to the arrival of the migrants or to the presence of armed forces, NGOs,

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[74] For a recent summary of Del Boca's work on Italian colonial violence and more see Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani, brava gente?* (Vicenza: BEAT, 2014).

and so on with 'open arms' and hospitality. Some have also responded with forms of xenophobia, economic 'opportunism', or indifference.

This statement does not seek to undermine the several and sincere acts of humanity in which the *Lampedusani* have willingly or unwillingly engaged. Rather, this section seeks to stress how the hegemonic representation of these events has reduced the complex topic of daily life on the island – a context in which various political, economic, and other interests are at stake – to a stereotypical narrative of 'welcoming' and 'goodness' which favours the institutional approach to migration.[75]

The consequences of this simplistic representation of the inhabitants' relationship with the migration apparatus are not only shaping the public debate on the island, but they create an apparent contradiction between a media-political discourse and films like *Fuocoammare*. The former flattens the historical depth of the Lampedusans' relationship with migration to the 'always exceptional' present; the latter focuses on the island's 'authentic Mediterranean soul' and 'fishermen's traditions', overlooking the almost thirty year long unregulated, often speculative, development of the tourist industry in Lampedusa. These two apparently antithetical positions, in practice, work hand in hand in constructing the trope of the welcoming locals supporting the hegemonic Lampedusa symbol.

Hence, it is not surprising that Rosi presents his film by saying that 'Lampedusans, as fishermen, accept everything that comes from the sea'.[76] Samuele's use of the sling-shot, the traditional songs played by the local DJ on the radio, and the focus on the stories of war and fishing of the child's father and grandmother construct the 'authenticity' of Rosi's Lampedusa. This authenticity is constructed through a focus on

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[75] See for instance the activities of the Collettivo Askavusa (chapter 5) and the refusal of some of the civilian rescuers of the 3rd of October, like Vito Fiorino, to take part to some of the institutional initiatives promoted by the Italian government and the Comitato 3 ottobre or to actively promote the trope of the 'welcoming locals'. Alessandra Ziniti, 'Naufragio Lampedusa, le polemiche "Potevamo salvarne molti di più"', *Repubblica.it*, 2013 <http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/10/05/news/naufragio_lampedusa_le_polemiche_potevamo_salvarne_molti_di_pi-67923568/> [accessed 5 August 2018].
[76] Arianna Finos, 'Gianfranco Rosi: "Ho obbligato l'Europa a guardare Lampedusa e il dramma dei migranti"', *Spettacoli - La Repubblica*, 2016 <http://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli/cinema/2016/02/21/news/rosi_ho_obbligato_l_europa_a_guardare_lampedusa_e_il_dramma_dei_migranti_-133901975/> [accessed 5 August 2018].

the past, a 'traditionalism' that sometimes turns into anachronism, which does not only amplify and stress the distance between the migrants' world and that of the locals, but also presents the locals' genuine and welcoming attitude as a legacy of its fishing community.

As noted by Ponzanesi, the figure connecting the 'two worlds' coexisting on the island is that of doctor Pietro Bartolo.[77] While the daily-routine of the other locals appears almost timeless, the doctor brings the viewer to the migrants' present. His testimonies on treating migrants' wounds, or on the identification of their corpses, open a window on the island's harsh reality. Rosi's film makes of Bartolo a sort of icon of the 'welcoming Lampedusa'. The doctor, either in proposing to adopt a rescued baby orphan named 'Favour' or in underlining the shocking amount of people that are dying during the crossings, personifies the indisputable humanity of the people living in Lampedusa.[78]

However, the representation of the locals as inherently good has evident limits. First, as with the above-discussed humanitarian discourse, the lack of any direct reference to the reasons that motivate the migrants to risk the crossing in often deadly conditions hinders a reflection on the EU's visa policy, or on the various regimes of mobilities affecting the actors present on the island and the migrants' subjectivity in undertaking the journey.

An example of the forms of displacement produced by the hegemonic focus on the humanitarian or welcoming perspective can be found in the scene in which Bartolo discusses the picture of a crowded migrant boat: the protagonist describes the conditions in which people are loaded on the boats deck and hold, describing how travelling in 'first, second or third class' often makes the difference between life and death.

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[77] Ponzanesi, 'Of Shipwrecks and Weddings', p. 152.
[78] 'Bimba Salvata a Lampedusa, Il Medico Di "Fuocoammare":" 'La Adotterei Se Potessi'"', *Repubblica Tv - La Repubblica.It*, 2016 <http://video.repubblica.it/edizione/palermo/bimba-salvata-a-lampedusa-il-medico-di-fuocoammare--la-adotterei-se-potessi/240928/240894> [accessed 29 May 2016].

Figure 7 Still from Fuocoammare

It is in this powerful description – which is amplified by the film's finale where Rosi films the corpses of several migrants found dead in the hold of a boat during a SAR mission of the Italian navy – that the potential for a challenging reading of the events is missed. Instead of highlighting the lack of safe and legal routes to Europe for migrants and refugees, the finger of Bartolo and the images captured by Rosi's camera point only at the most visible and deadly consequences of crossing the Mediterranean Sea by boat, not at its political underpinnings.

This observation does not stand as a criticism of Bartolo's actions, neither does it expect that the brief international celebrity of this character or of Rosi's film can affect such a complex phenomenon. Nevertheless, it seeks to underline how hegemonic representations of the Lampedusa events have the power to make visible or invisible certain sides of the story, oversimplifying the historical depth of this phenomenon.

Beyond Rosi's film, articles or video materials exemplifying the tropes of the 'good Lampedusan' or the island's 'welcoming traditions' are not difficult to find. For instance, they can be found in the proposal of journalist Fabrizio Gatti to award the *Nobel Peace Prize* to Lampedusa, as in the symbolic value given by the British Museum to the work of Francesco Tuccio or in the international visibility of Lampedusa's former mayor Giusi

Nicolini.[79] Even the episodes of intolerance that took place during the Arab Spring appear to be framed as unintended incidents or isolated acts of hostility in maturing/re-discovering the empathy of this welcoming culture:

> A quel tempo [during the Arab Spring] i migranti erano «turchi», secondo un modello archetipico. Ma presto hanno imparato a chiamarli «*sciatu mio*», fiato mio, il respiro della solidarietà. Li hanno vestiti e dato da mangiare.[80]

Nevertheless, the overstatement of the welcoming nature of the *Lampedusani* should be considered as a recent development of the hegemonic Lampedusa symbol. This shift illustrates the capability of this signifier to adapt to new contexts and assimilate potentially challenging discursive formations. The dominant symbolism coexists with the concurrent presence of an image that stresses the consequences of border control on the lives of the locals. As observed by Orsini, Lampedusa appears as a place where the hospitality of local fishermen struggles between the need to rescue people in accordance with the 'law of the sea', and the potential risk of being targeted as 'facilitators' or smugglers.[81] Therefore, it should not be surprising that people living on the island, for different reasons, are not all hospitable and open to the presence of migrants.

The relationships between the locals and the migrants is more complex, and often contradictory. Episodes of racial intolerance are not isolated, and before the election of mayor Giusi Nicolini the island has also had a deputy mayor from the xenophobic right-

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[79] Fabrizio Gatti, 'Perché Lampedusa Merita Il Premio Nobel' <http://gatti.blogautore.espresso.repubblica.it/2013/10/03/perche-lampedusa-merita-il-premio-nobel/> [accessed 12 August 2016]; Nicolini received various international awards for her work and was also received at the White House. 'Nicolini: a Obama racconterò dell'accoglienza di Lampedusa', *Giornale di Sicilia* <http://gds.it/2016/10/16/nicolini-a-cena-con-obama-gli-raccontero-dellaccoglienza-di-lampedusa_577794/> [accessed 6 August 2018].
[80] Valerio Cappelli, '«Fuocoammare» Sbarca a Lampedusa: Per La Prima Volta Proiettato Il Film Sull'isola', *Corriere Della Sera*, 2016 <http://www.corriere.it/cronache/16_aprile_16/fuocoammare-sbarca-lampedusa-proiezione-del-film-in-piazza-22ffd044-03fb-11e6-b48d-5f404ca1fec7.shtml> [accessed 25 July 2016].
[81] Giacomo Orsini, 'Lampedusa: From a Fishing Island in the Middle of the Mediterranean to a Tourist Destination in the Middle of Europe's External Border', *Italian Studies*, 70.4 (2015), 521–36 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00751634.2015.1120945>.

wing party Lega Nord.[82] The criminalisation of the NGOs between 2017 and 2018 and the international backlash after the failed re-election of Giusi Nicolini would have not been that surprising if the trope of 'welcoming Lampedusa' had not been accompanied by forms of 'selective amnesia'.[83] The populist and xenophobic rhetoric of newly-elected Martello is thus not a shocking departure from the 'inherently welcoming' nature of the Lampedusans; the new mayor appears to react to the renewed landings of Tunisian boats on Lampedusa and Linosa with the same xenophobic rhetoric as Nicolini's predecessor, Pasquale De Rubeis.[84]

"Chiediamo a Maroni di svuotare l'isola, perché Lampedusa ha dato e non vuole più dare!".[85]

The chaos of the 'Tunisian revolt' of September 2011, in which some *Lampedusani* joined the police in violently repressing the vehement protest of a group of Tunisians citizens who had escaped the island detention centre, is symptomatic of how hegemonic representations can overshadow certain episodes according to latest symbolic image that Lampedusa should convey.

The stereotype of the 'welcoming island' is not only supported by mainstream media or politicians, but can be in turn strategically used by local administrators. One testimony to locals' agency in alternating this trope to security concerns can already be found in De Rubeis' promotion of the 'Porta d'Europa' in 2008; the very same promoter of the racist revolt against the Tunisian citizens has also sponsored and inaugurated a place for commemoration and 'openness' towards the new-comers.

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[82] Claudia Fusani, 'Lampedusa, Una Vicesindaco Leghista "Farò Una Scuola Al Posto Del Cpt" - Politica - Repubblica.It', 2007 <http://www.repubblica.it/2007/05/sezioni/politica/elezioni-amministrative/lampedusa-leghista/lampedusa-leghista.html> [accessed 17 August 2016].
[83] For a commentary on the elections see Daniela DeBono, 'After the Mayor's Defeat, Lampedusian Voters Face a Global Media Backlash', *The Conversation* <http://theconversation.com/after-the-mayors-defeat-lampedusian-voters-face-a-global-media-backlash-80340> [accessed 13 July 2017].
[84] Giusi Spica, 'Lampedusa, Il Sindaco Martello Contro i Migranti: "Minacce e Molestie, Isola Al Collasso"', *Repubblica.It*, 2017 <http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/09/16/news/lampedusa_il_sindaco_martello_contro_i_migranti_ora_basta_chiudere_hotspot_-175663032/> [accessed 18 November 2017].
[85] Sky News Italia.

Per noi è un immenso piacere ospitare l'opera, di grande valore morale, in memoria dei migranti morti in mare [...] "Siamo accoglienti e solidali pur tenendo fermo l'obiettivo di combattere la criminalità e il business economico che stanno dietro i viaggi degli immigrati clandestini [...].[86]

The words of De Rubeis, once again, highlight how the humanitarian focus on remembrance and welcoming can effectively coexist with reference to the security concerns of stopping 'illegal migration'. If De Rubeis or Martello can be seen as the beneficiaries of a securitarian rhetoric of an 'island on the brink of collapse',[87] then the 'humanitarian turn' of the discourse representing Lampedusa's context is personified in the figure of Nicolini. According to the following commentary, Nicolini had changed the image of the island:

Perché è vero che la Nicolini – per usare un eufemismo – non è amata universalmente sull'isola, ma [...] gli alberghi e le case vacanza scoppiano di turisti. Il disastro mediatico dell'assedio dei migranti si è trasformato nella narrazione di un'isola sicura e accogliente. E questo, a detta anche dei nemici, è merito suo.[88]

Although the latent xenophobic feelings also inhabiting the island have been overshadowed by the post 3rd of October 2013 'rituals', in which Nicolini played a central role, their recent re-appearance should not shock us. They should be considered as a reminder of the capability of the Lampedusa symbol to adapt to new political contexts.

On the one hand, then, it can be highlighted how the hegemonic discourse, by means of films like *Fuocoammare*, creates a sort of 'illusione della prima volta', in which often

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[86] 'Lampedusa: Inaugura La "Porta d'Europa", Omaggio Ai Migranti / Notizie / Home - Unimondo' <http://www.unimondo.org/Notizie/Lampedusa-inaugura-la-Porta-d-Europa-omaggio-ai-migranti-44749> [accessed 18 November 2017].
[87] Spica.
[88] Laura Anello, 'Pd Spaccato Sulla Sindaca Di Lampedusa, Lei Si Ricandida Ma Con Una Lista Civica - La Stampa', 2017 <http://www.lastampa.it/2017/04/21/italia/politica/il-sindaco-di-lampedusa-si-ricandida-ma-molla-il-pd-correr-con-una-lista-civica-wGVGVJDD6XjXsrOeBM0xhK/pagina.html> [accessed 17 November 2017].

the latest cinematic or journalistic depiction of life on the island is defined as 'the first true attempt' to describe the 'real life' of the locals.[89] In the case of *Fuocoammare*, it is evident that a long series of feature films, documentaries and short films on life on the island, have been conveniently forgotten. Despite promotional articles presenting it as the first real cinematic depiction of daily life in Lampedusa, other films have already represented this aspect without the same publicity.[90]

On the other hand, the construction of a sort of a mythical 'pre-border Lampedusa', a traditional and 'normal' Lampedusa conveyed by films like *Fuocoammare* or by initiatives like the *Charter of Lampedusa*, appears as a sort of reaction to and consequence of an apparently frenetic relationship with the migration apparatus.[91] Nevertheless, life on the island does not revolt around the topic of migration. As vividly represented in the less-publicised documentary *Lampedusa im Winter*: the crisis of the fishing industry, the transformation of the whole island into a tourist resort, seasonal unemployment, the lack or difficulties in accessing basic social services like medical assistance, and the connection with inland Italy are at the core of local politics.[92]

Thus, the complex realities affecting the transition from the traditional forms of solidarity and mutual aid characterising this fishermen community, to the often harsh competition of a disorganised and speculative tourist industry, become fundamental in understanding local dynamics, and the island's relationship with the migration apparatus.[93] It is between these overlapping processes, also highlighted by Friese's

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[89] Salvo Catalano, 'Fuocoammare, l'immagine Più Vera Di Lampedusa. «Rosi Qui per Più Di Un Anno, è Diventato Un Amico»', *MeridioNews*, 2016 <http://meridionews.it/articolo/40815/fuocoammare-limmagine-piu-vera-di-lampedusa-rosi-qui-per-piu-di-un-anno-e-diventato-un-amico/> [accessed 6 August 2018].

[90] Leaving aside, a number of short film and less visible documentaries, it is important to highlight Yimer's *Soltanto il mare* (2011), Mohamed Ali's *To whom it may concern* (2013), Rai TV fiction 'Lampedusa – Dall'orizzonte in poi' (2016) and the less successful Peter Schreiner's *Lampedusa* (2016).

[91] 'Lampedusa is a necessary transit point, but it has found itself behind a frontier […] With the Charter of Lampedusa we want, instead, to return the island and its islanders to their normal roles.' 'The Charter of Lampedusa - Preamble', 2014 <http://www.lacartadilampedusa.org/preamble.html> [accessed 18 August 2016].

[92] Jakob Brossmann, *Lampedusa Im Winter*, 2016.

[93] Orsini, p. 531.

reflection on the 'limits of hospitality',[94] that the trajectory of the 'welcoming Lampedusa' trope needs to be understood.

2.3.3 Tourist business and the migration industry

The relationship between migration and tourism is another fundamental source of debate in discussing Lampedusa. The arrival of people from the North-African shore is not the only mobility that concerns the island. Lampedusa is also subjected to the movement of armed forces, journalists, researchers and, above all, tourists. The 'heterotopic' coexistence between migrants and tourists on the island has been conceptualised in the work of Joseph Pugliese.[95] Furthermore, the fear that mass migration to the island has a negative impact on tourism revenue for local operators has been in the spotlight since the early years of the so-called 'emergenza Lampedusa'.

The visit of then Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi in 2011 is probably one of the most spectacular examples of this long-lasting narrative. In his address to the locals, Berlusconi proposes to 'save' Lampedusa from the economic negative effects of migration by making it a tax-free haven, by building a casino and a golf-course, and by buying himself a villa on the island.[96] In pointing to the necessity of implementing initiatives boosting the touristic appeal of Lampedusa, Berlusconi feeds into a general belief that migration has negative effects on local business.[97] Despite there being no specific data that would attest a real decrease in the number of tourists reaching the island, this assumption appears as being taken for granted by a conspicuous part of the local population and by mainstream media.[98]

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[94] Friese, p. 332.

[95] Pugliese, p. 671.

[96] 'Le Promesse Di Berlusconi a Lampedusa "Immigrati via in 60 Ore e Nobel per La Pace"'.

[97] A recent analysis of tourists' presence on Lampedusa does not hint at any relevant decrease of costumers on the island. See Giovanna Di Matteo, 'Turismo e Immigrazione. Lampedusa Come Laboratorio Di Sostenibilità Sociale' (Universita Ca' Foscari Venezia, 2017) <http://dspace.unive.it/handle/10579/9753> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[98] The significant amount of votes for the local Lega Nord's candidate has been interpreted as consequence of these narrative. 'Elezioni:a Lampedusa Lega quasi al 15%,nel 2013 aveva 3 voti - Sicilia', *ANSA.it*, 2018 <http://www.ansa.it/sicilia/notizie/2018/03/06/elezionia-lampedusa-lega-quasi-al-15nel-2013-aveva-3-voti_7a5546f5-8f47-493c-882d-da8051019c87.html> [accessed 6 August 2018].

As I will discuss in detail in chapter five, this idea obfuscates the fact that migration has produced various opportunities for local hotels, restaurants, and other businesses to make profit during the low season, and also offered the island many chances to gain positive visibility. In fact, it is rare to find an article discussing border control in Lampedusa that does not mention the island's attractions and natural wonders.[99] In practice, the migration industry seems to coexist fruitfully with tourism.

While the multifaceted development of a migration-related tourism on the island will be discussed later through the case of the *Collettivo Askavusa*, this section seeks to highlight how the coexistence between migration and tourism, the striking comparison between the 'misery' of the migrants and the 'enjoyment' of the tourists on the island, has become another constitutive trope of the Lampedusa symbol. To stress the transnational character of this symbol and the role of cultural practices in contributing to hegemonic representations of Lampedusa, the example of German rappers Fatoni and Dexter's song '32 grad' and Jason deCaires Taylor's sculpture the 'The Raft of Lampedusa' will be briefly used to highlight some of the characteristics of this trope.[100]

The lyrics of the rap song offer an ironic, but sharp account of the contradictions of a gluttonous society, whose members are free to move anywhere and able to enjoy cocktails and holidays against a backdrop of death and desperation.[101] For the singer, for those that are not able to look away, or benefit of the numbing effects of alcohol, 'luckily' there is always the protection of a fence:

> Barkeeper, kannst du mir einen Mai Tai mixen?
> (Ah yeah) und noch'n bisschen Eis rein kippen?
> Ich nehme ein' Schluck von meinem Drink (Cheers!)
> Wenn ich was nicht sehen will, dann gucke ich nicht hin

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[99] See for instance one of the recent reportage on the 'Corriere della Sera'. Micol Sarfatti, 'La grazia di Lampedusa Piccola, lontana e coraggiosa', *Corriere della Sera*, 2017 <http://www.corriere.it/sette/17_agosto_24/lampedusa-immigrazione-turismo-7948763c-8757-11e7-b2b6-63a8cab5b37c.shtml> [accessed 6 August 2018].

[100] Noisey Staff, 'Fatoni Und Dexter Machen Urlaub Auf Lampedusa', *NOISEY*, 2015 <http://noisey.vice.com/de/blog/fatoni-dexter-video-32-grad> [accessed 17 August 2016]; 'New Underwater Museum in Lanzarote: Museo Atlantico' <http://us1.campaign-archive1.com/?u=cc2635caea4cd7d13806fa608&id=24cc8e2724> [accessed 11 August 2016].

[101] "Weil diese Schreie da draußen den Appetit versauen! / Es heißt "All You Can Eat" und genau das werd' ich tun / Geh mir aus der Sonne, denn ich hab sie gebucht!" (line 33-35)

[…] Egal wohin man sieht, überall Drama (Trauer)

Nein, das hält man alles nüchtern nicht aus (no)

Doch dieser Club hier hat zum Glück einen Zaun, eyo (7-17)

The Youtube videoclip of the song juxtaposes images of scantily-clad women and the rapper seemingly enjoying a number of holiday activities with images of migrant-boat arrivals, heap of life-vests, and improvised tent-camps.
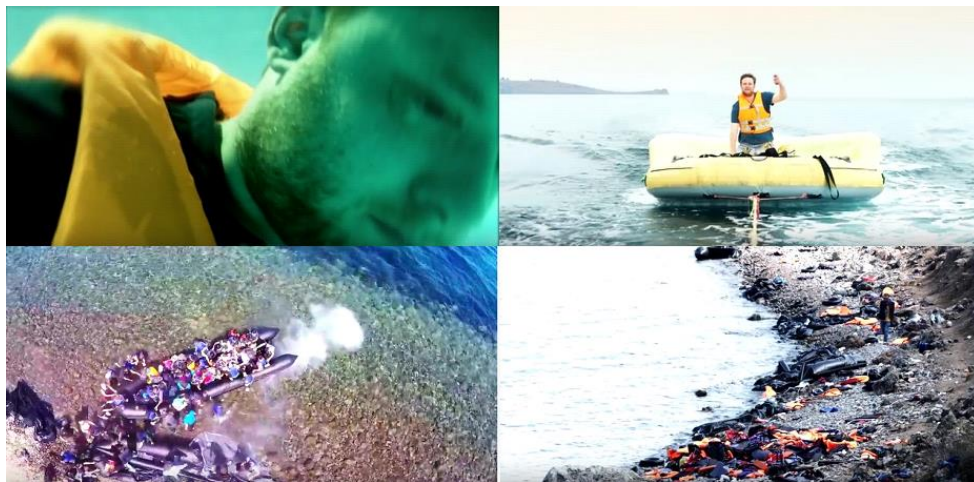
Figure 8 Stills from the Youtube clip of the song

In between, the singer takes the position of the migrants, sitting on rubber dinghy or pretending to drown, reproducing visually the controversial ambiguity of the lyrics:

Ich bin Gast in diesem Land

Ich kam hier an mit meinem Pass in meiner Hand

Meine Haut ist an vielen Stellen verbrannt

Ich hab die Sonnencreme vergessen,

doch liege ständig am Strand! (1-4)

Beyond the powerful contradictions highlighted by the video and the potentially controversial, although political, use of real footage from the Greek border, the refrain stands as the most significant aspect of the song. The words show how the name

Lampedusa is used to swiftly summarise the heterotopic coexistence between tourism and the dark, often deadly, consequences of migration:

32 Grad hat es auf Lampedusa

Spürst du diese frische Brise vom ander'n Ufer?

32 Grad hat es auf Lampedusa

Und wir sind smooth wie Kamasutra (18-21)

The evocative power achieved by this name has also led to its use in the description of migrant arrivals taking place along other European borders. Not only are the images composing the video that accompanies the song clearly filmed in Greece, but the song also makes a clear allusion to what is happening at other infamous borders:

(Hey!) Man sieht mich pfeifend am letzten Loch

Hole-in-one und alle am ausflippen

(Hey!) Die Zuschauer, die da oben auf dem Zaun sitzen (39-41).

The reference to the golfers and the 'public' sitting on the fence are an evident hint at the migrants climbing the fences surrounding Ceuta and Melilla. Remarkably, the song does not only conflate the most recognisable images of the Southern European borders, but the name Lampedusa appears to be chosen to summarise these striking contradictions.

The preference for the use of the name Lampedusa in contexts that already have a local and distinctive migration background is also echoed in Jason deCaires Taylor's sculpture.

Part of a new underwater museum project in the water surrounding Lanzarote's harbour, the 'The Raft of Lampedusa', mirroring famous Géricault's 'The Raft of Medusa', draws a parallel between this historic image of abandonment and sufferance, and the contemporary drama of migrant-boats shipwrecks. The reference to migration is only one aspect of the artist's work; however, the sculpture is another example of the symbolic resonance of the name Lampedusa.

Despite being placed in waters only 115 kilometres distant from the West African shore and being cast from the body of migrants crossing from Western Sahara to the Canary Islands, the artist has opted to name the work after Lampedusa. In his words:

> The Raft of Lampedusa is not meant as a tribute or a memorial, but serves as a reminder of our passivity, and our collective responsibility. "Wherever you put it, this is a powerful sculpture," says Jones, "a disturbing image of the world we're creating.".[102]

This statement not only unveils new ramifications in the Lampedusa constellation, but it also introduces the fourth and last discursive formation underlined by this analysis: the construction of Lampedusa as a symbol for mourning, commemoration, and religious encounter.

2.3.4 La 'Porta d'Europa': Symbol of mourning, commemoration, and religious encounter

Of all the aspects associated with the name Lampedusa, death and mourning are probably the saddest and most controversial ones. Since June 2008, when local authorities inaugurated Mimmo Paladino's 'Porta d'Europa' to commemorate the migrants that have lost their lives at sea, Lampedusa has been at the centre of numerous shipwrecks prompting continuous minor or major commemorative initiatives.[103] These commemorations, often accompanied by institutional visits to the island, have played a fundamental part in the construction of the hegemonic Lampedusa symbol.

In addition to the religious feature given to these events, two points are worthy of discussion: on the one hand, the tendency of institutional figures to use these events as

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[102] Susan Smillie, 'Drowned World: Welcome to Europe's First Undersea Sculpture Museum', *The Guardian*, 2 February 2016, section Art and design <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/02/drowned-world-europe-first-undersea-sculpture-museum-lanzarote-jason-decaires-taylor> [accessed 3 February 2016].
[103] Fabio Ilacqua, *Amani Ong Onlus: Lampedusa Porta d'Europa*, 2012 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=286&v=XdowiD9ob6w> [accessed 25 July 2016].

a source of political endorsement or legitimation.[104] On the other hand, the habit of framing any new deadly shipwreck as a point of no return, in which the emotional aftermath of the incident is used to highlight the 'helplessness' of the locals and of the Italian authorities.[105]

While for religious authorities like Pope Francis, shipwrecks like that of the 3rd of October can be used to appeal for a change in the migration policies, for the Italian and local authorities the construction of an image of 'helplessness' becomes, in turn, a tool to ask as for more financial and political support from their European counterparts:[106]

> Il governo italiano, però, non ci sta ad accollarsi tutte le colpe. "Speriamo che l'Unione Europea si renda conto che non è un dramma italiano ma europeo", spiega il ministro dell'Interno Angelino Alfano.[107]

The self-absolutory undertone of the representation of the local and Italian institutions' impossibility to foresee and prevent such deadly incidents is further developed in the different commemorative initiatives that, especially since October 2013, have been dedicated to the victims. While chapter five will frame the commemorative practices in the wider discussion of the relationship between the island's tourist industry and its coming to term with the presence of the migration apparatus, in this section it is important to critically highlight how the previously-discussed tropes of humanitarian relief and of the 'welcoming locals' come together in events dedicated to the memory of the persons that died during the crossing.

The placing of the 'Porta d'Europa' is the first iconic moment for the construction of the Lampedusa's symbolism in this regard. Erected by a centre-right mayor who spoke

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[104] See, among others, the visits of Berlusconi, Barroso, Letta, Schulz, Renzi, Mattarella, Grasso and Salvini.

[105] 'Lampedusa, naufraga barcone di migranti. Il sindaco Giusi Nicolini a Enrico Letta: "Venga a contare i morti con me"', *L'Huffington Post*, 2013 <https://www.huffingtonpost.it/2013/10/03/lampedusa-naufragio_n_4034577.html> [accessed 6 August 2018].

[106] 'Papa Francesco: "Mai più tragedie come Lampedusa"', *Repubblica Tv - la Repubblica.it*, 2013 <http://video.repubblica.it/dossier/il-nuovo-papa/papa-francesco-mai-piu-tragedie-come-lampedusa/151214/149718> [accessed 6 August 2018].

[107] 'Lampedusa, naufraga barcone di migranti. Il sindaco Giusi Nicolini a Enrico Letta'.

out publicly against receiving migrants on the island, the monument has quickly turned into one of the island's most frequented sites. Politicians, but also tourists, NGOs, and artists, have contributed to the elevation of this artistic installation to the status of one of the most recognisable images of Lampedusa.[108] Within the multitude of publications, reports, newspapers articles, and videos dedicated to the island, the image of the monument has become a source of 'authenticity', a point of visual access to Lampedusa's relationship with migration.

Figure 9 Flyer for Sferlazzo's tour 'Lampemusa' and logo of the LampedusainFestival

Inaugurated to commemorate the people that lost their life at sea before 2008, this monument has become – by juxtaposition – a symbol for one shipwreck after another. For instance, none of the (by now) annual 3rd of October ceremonies would be complete without a visit to the 'Porta'. Despite the recurrence of these deadly incidents, Lampedusa's relationship with migration is still represented in exceptional or emergency terms. To understand the persistence of this emergency/crisis discourse, the role of these commemorations should not be underestimated.

As chapter five will show in greater detail, it could be argued that after any memorial service or institutional visit, in which survivors are often excluded or relegated to a secondary role, the island appears to be somehow 'purified' of the latest disaster.

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[108] Among others, it is worthy to mention that the location has been chosen for the religious commemorations of the 3rd of October, it has appeared on the flyers promoting Giacomo Sferlazzo's spectacle 'Lampemusa' or stage of theater or artistic interventions.

Local, national or international institutional figures – by means of discourses imbued with references to hospitality, human rights, Mediterranean identity and multi-cultural encounters – can be considered as the executers of this 'self-absolving ritual'. My argument is that these memorials contribute to forms of 'selective amnesia' that allow for the commemoration of the dead whilst simultaneously underplaying political responsibilities and institutional accountability for the recurrent deadly shipwrecks.

A similar argument has been offered by Ida Danewid's critique of what she defines as 'grief and pro-refugee' activism.[109] Using the example of the 'Porta d'Europa' and the actions of the German *Zentrum für politische Schönheit,* Danewid draws on concepts such as 'white innoncence' and 'white amnesia' to highlight how 'the calls for hospitality, empathy, affective identification with the fate of migrants,' promoted by such monuments or campaigns, 'rather than challenge, [convey] dominant interpretations that portray Europe as an innocent bystander'.[110]

The work of Danewid touches on the fundamental issue of race in criticising the 'welcoming' and the memorial value of Lampedusa or other 'pro-refugee' campaigns' focus on grief, which, according to her reading, fail to recognise the colonial 'interconnected histories that link Europe and the migrants washed up on its shores'.[111]

If the symbolic power of a visit to Lampedusa is to be seen as a tool to reinforce the 'innocence' and 'humanity' of the 'in-group', it can be argued that these visits are exploited by institutional figures even in the absence of recent incidents or shipwrecks. A practical example of how the Lampedusa symbol is used by politicians to capitalise on the humanitarian reading of migration can be found in Matteo Renzi's decision of making of the island his first destination as newly-elected Democratic Party secretary:

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[109] Ida Danewid, 'White Innocence in the Black Mediterranean: Hospitality and the Erasure of History', *Third World Quarterly*, 38.7 (2017), 1674–89 <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1331123>.
[110] See Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: DUKE UNIV PR, 2016).
[111] See Danewid's critique of Butler.

Comincio la mia storia di segretario da quest'isola perché qui comincia l'Italia. E Lampedusa è un posto dove i valori della fratellanza e dell'accoglienza sono molto forti.[112]

With these words, Renzi not only defines Lampedusa as central to the Italian nation and identity, but reiterates the narrative of the 'locali brava gente'. Similarly, Pope Francis also opted to pick the island for his first official pastoral visit. Addressing the locals, he repeats his blessing and thanks to a place that should be considered an example for all the world:

Prima di darvi la benedizione voglio ringraziare una volta in più voi, lampedusani, per l'esempio di amore, per l'esempio di carità, per l'esempio di accoglienza che ci state dando, che avete dato e che ancora ci date. Il Vescovo ha detto che Lampedusa è un faro. Che questo esempio sia faro in tutto il mondo, perché abbiano il coraggio di accogliere quelli che cercano una vita migliore.[113]

While Pope Francis' understanding of migration appears to challenge political approaches driven by security concerns, and the silence of his predecessor Benedict XVI, the results of his numerous appeals appear to answer and contribute to the humanitarian side of the dominant Lampedusa symbol.[114] The examples of love, charity, and welcoming mentioned by the Pope, can be considered having little effect on the wider political understandings of the phenomenon. The above-mentioned capability of hegemonic discourse to assimilate and incorporate such humanitarian statements, making them part of the rhetoric supporting a militarised control of the European borders, appears to undermine any potential 'subversive' effect of statements like that of Pope Francis.

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[112] 'Renzi in Visita a Lampedusa "La Mia Storia Inizia Da Qui"', *Palermo - La Repubblica* <http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/12/21/news/renzi_in_visita_a_lampedusa_la_mia_storia_inizia_da_qui-74207263/> [accessed 23 December 2013].
[113] Pope Francis, 'Visita a Lampedusa - Santa Messa Nel Campo Sportivo "Arena" (8 Luglio 2013) | Francesco', 2013 <https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa.html> [accessed 19 August 2016].
[114] See also his visit to Lesbos. Helena Smith, '"Before They Are Numbers, These People Are Human Beings": Pope's Poignant Visit to Refugees in Lesbos', *The Guardian*, 16 April 2016, section World news <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/apr/16/pope-refugees-vatican-lesbos-eu-humanity> [accessed 17 April 2016].

It is clear that Italian and European political institutions have a major role and interest in affecting the meanings and the significance of the Lampedusa symbol. Hence, it is important to highlight that, after the 3rd of October 2013, we have witnessed a progressive 'institutional take-over' of the Lampedusa symbol and of its cultural representations. The now-official annual commemorations taking place on the island, the international visibility of former mayor Giusi Nicolini, the establishment of new festivals like *Sabir*, and the opening of the *Museo della fiducia e del dialogo per il Mediterraneo* are only the latest episodes in a process of historicisation/memorialisation of the island's relationship with migration that will be discussed in chapter five.[115]

2.3.5 'Heterotopias and transnational constellations'

During the last ten to fifteen years, Lampedusa has been associated with the theme of migration in an almost indissoluble manner. As already discussed in chapter one, the works of Ponzanesi, Mazzara, Odasso and Proglio etc. consider Lampedusa not only as an island that for geographical reasons has become one of the principal gateways for migration to Europe. They also see it as a place that combines, at the same time, violently contradictory differences, and has a fundamental symbolical role for the construction of a European identity and the discussion of the postcolonial condition in Italy. In the previous pages, border control, humanitarian relief and tourism, but also fundamental questions around migrant subjectivity, have been brought together by the ubiquity of the name Lampedusa.

Among the authors that have tried to conceptualise the complex processes taking place on the island, Pugliese, drawing on Foucault, has suggested we ought to understand Lampedusa as a 'crisis heterotopia'.[116] According to Pugliese, the capability of 'heterotopia to juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in

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[115] 'Lampedusa, Mattarella Inaugura Il Museo Della Fiducia e Del Dialogo: "La Piccola Favour è Ormai Italiana"', *Repubblica.It*, 2016
<http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/06/03/news/lampedusa_migranti_museo_dialogo_preside nte_mattarella-141200798/> [accessed 18 November 2017].
[116] Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces'.

themselves incompatible'[117] theorised by Foucault can be used to describe how, in Lampedusa, tourists can enjoyed their holidays whilst ignoring the cumbersome traces of migrant death and detention and their connection with the long aftermath of colonialism.[118]

In the previous pages we have seen that these 'two worlds', although rarely meeting, have an essential role in contributing to the discursive formations constructing Lampedusa's symbol. The conceptualisation offered by Pugliese has consequently been adopted by authors that have focused on cinematic representations of Lampedusa, as a theoretical cornerstone to highlight the significance of these films in offering representations potentially challenging hegemonic reading of the island. Among others O'Healy and Bayraktar, focusing on films or documentaries like Cuomo and Iorio's *Sudeuropa* and Crialese's *Terraferma*, have pointed at the different locations where the 'heterotopic' Lampedusa can emerge: at its airport, on its beaches, or in the migrant boats directed towards the island.[119]

O'Healy's focus on the potential of 'self-consciously "oppositional" audiovisual texts' – which, for Ben Ghiat, 'adds a critical and long overdue dimension to the dialogical construction of contemporary circumstances at Europe's southernmost border'[120] – describes these films as 'counter-representations' challenging hegemonic understandings of Lampedusa.[121] According to O'Healy, the films show 'the complex lives of the islanders, the challenges of tourism and the disproportionate presence of police, military and journalists,' and highlight the difficulties for migrants' voices and representations to find a receptive audience.[122] These analyses undoubtedly play an essential part in adding a specific cultural dimension to the exploration of alternative perspectives in the construction of the Lampedusa symbol. Moreover, 'heterotopia'

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[117] Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 25.

[118] Pugliese, p. 664.

[119] O'Healy; Nilgun Bayraktar, 'Heterotopic Intersections of Tourism and Undocumented Migration in Southern Europe: The Video Essay Sudeuropa (2005–2007)', *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film*, 10.1 (2012), 17–43 <https://doi.org/10.1386/ncin.10.1.17_1>.

[120] Ruth Ben-Ghiat, 'Introduction', in *Italian Mobilities*, ed. by Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Stephanie Malia Hom (London ; New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1–20 (p. 13).

[121] O'Healy, p. 154.

[122] Ibid.

appears as a very fitting concept to analyse the complex processes involved in 'imagining Lampedusa'.

However, as a result of the overview offered by this chapter, I argue that the concept of 'heterotopia' presents two limits. First, it conceptualises the Lampedusa-symbol only within the boundaries of the Italian context, 'anchoring' it to the role of the Italian media and politicians in constructing it. As Bayraktar explicitly claims:

> Lampedusa's unique cultural and political position is best understood within the context of Italian politics of migration.[123]

Secondly, understanding Lampedusa through the concept of 'heterotopia' risks inescapably rooting it to specific spatial and temporal coordinates: the island of Lampedusa at the time of the 'emergency'.

In addition to these spatial and temporal limits, this chapter has suggested that the idea of seeing films such as *Fuocoammare* as 'distinctive' counter representations that somehow challenge the hegemonic representation of Lampedusa offers an oversimplified understanding of what this name and place has come to be. An example of this trend can be found in O'Healy's observation that the daily 'real' life of the *lampedusani* has been widely underrepresented or overshadowed by a dominant regime of representation.[124] This statement can been countered by highlighting the media coverage of the various protests that periodically re-assert the locals' subjectivity and point of view on what is taking place on the island.[125] As it will be discussed in more detail in chapter five, the locals have a fundamental role and agency in supporting and/or shaping the tropes constructing Lampedusa's hegemonic symbolism.

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[123] Bayraktar, p. 23.

[124] O'Healy, p. 154.

[125] One of the most recent examples involves the new mayor Martello. 'Svanisce il "caso" migranti a Lampedusa, il sindaco ringrazia: "Alzare la voce serve"', *Giornale di Sicilia* <http://agrigento.gds.it/2017/09/17/migranti-svanisce-il-caso-lampedusa-il-sindaco-ringrazia-alzare-la-voce-serve_726817/> [accessed 6 August 2018].

The works of O'Healy and Khrebtan-Hörhager consider films like Crialese's *Terraferma* – representing the trope of the fishermen community struggling between the 'ancient law of the sea' and the new dynamics imposed by tourism and border politics – as representations capable of challenging hegemonic readings of the Lampedusa events.[126] In this chapter, I have argued that, according to the context in which these films or other cultural products are presented and deployed, these representations should also be seen as constituting the hegemonic Lampedusa symbol. Instead of focusing on the spatial and temporal boundaries of the events taking place on the Pelagie islands, I have highlighted that understanding Lampedusa as 'floating signifier' can help show the continuous development of this dominant symbolism and its recognisable transnational dimension.

A very fitting example of the achieved transnational resonance of this symbol can be found in a recent article published by *The Guardian* (August 28th 2015). In the context of the 'long summer of migration' and the so-called 'crisis' taking place on the Balkan route towards Germany, the newspaper opts to use the name Lampedusa to summarise how Passau, a city at border between Germany and Austria, faces the challenges of migration.

Figure 10 The Guardian 28 August 2015

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[126] Julia Khrebtan-Hörhager, 'Italia – La Terra Promessa? Lampedusa and the Immigrant Crisis of the European Union', *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, 10.1 (2015), 85–99 (p. 95) <https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2014.956750>.

When Passau is described as the 'German Lampedusa', this word does not only trigger a self-explanatory image of crisis or emergency, but also replicates the different discursive formations and consequently the hegemonic understandings of the impact and management of migration associated with the name Lampedusa. The article not only replicates the heterotopic comparison between the 'drama' of migration and the 'indifferent' holidaymakers, but also highlights the locals' fears that this phenomenon will have negative effects on tourism:

> This is where the global upper class and underclass come face to face: American and Japanese groups arrive by luxury cruise ships on the Danube River. Syrians and Afghans come by foot or on buses and trains sent across the Austrian border, a mere two miles away at the nearest point. [...] "They call us the Lampedusa of Germany," Passau's mayor, Jürgen Dupper, said one recent evening. And like that Italian island, one of Europe's southernmost points and a symbol of the mass migration toward the Continent, Mr. Dupper's hometown has become emblematic of a crisis that challenges European unity and identity. [...] Instead of abandoned smuggler boats on Italian and Greek beaches, there are confiscated vans at Passau's police stations.[127]

Another example of the transnational resonance of the name Lampedusa can be found in Anders Lustgarten's play *Lampedusa*.[128] In his drama, Lustgarten matches the image of a local fisherman coping with the crisis of fishing industry and the recurrent discoveries of migrants' bodies in his nets with the ethical and economic difficulties of a woman struggling with the consequences of neo-liberal policies in London. Through the monologues of these two characters (Stefano and Denise), Lustgarten attempts to connect British politics to the 'global migration crisis' symbolised by Lampedusa.[129] Examples such as the play 'Lampedusa' and the above-mentioned acquisition of *Cross of Lampedusa* by the British Museum, but also the song by German rappers Fatoni and

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[127] Katrin Bennhold, 'German City by the Danube Is Tested by a Different Kind of Flood', *The New York Times*, 7 November 2015 <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/08/world/europe/german-city-by-the-danube-is-tested-by-a-different-kind-of-flood.html> [accessed 24 July 2016].

[128] Anders Lustgarten, *Lampedusa* (2015).

[129] Anders Lustgarten, 'Anders Lustgarten Introduces His Play Lampedusa - Soho Theatre' <http://sohotheatre.com/news/anders-lustargen-introduces-his-play-lampedusa/> [accessed 8 January 2016].

Dexter, show that the Lampedusa symbol has become something more than an issue understandable only within the Italian context.

To analyse the role played by these distinctive cultural takes and understandings of the symbolic value of Lampedusa within the hegemonic representations of migration – moving beyond the interpretation of Lampedusa as a 'heterotopia' or 'crisis heterotopia' – I have proposed to adopt W. Benjamin's analogy of 'constellation'. On the one hand, this concept helps to highlight how even the most apparently critical readings of the island's relationship with migration are in practice influenced by a series of dominant discursive formations. On the other hand, it still allows for some space in which different actors (including the migrant protagonists) can exercise forms of subjectivity and potentially affect hegemonic discourse.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the nuances offered by looking at Lampedusa through a transnational perspective. Considering the name Lampedusa as a signifier floating on a transnational level has helped in discussing the discursive formations composing the hegemonic symbol, and introduced a series of empirical examples in which this symbol has been deployed to frame the debate on migration in specific terms.

Three aspects stand out in this process: the flexibility of this symbol to adapt and absorb potential challenging discursive formations, the progressive institutionalisation of any cultural representation of Lampedusa, and the difficulty for migrants in finding a receptive context where their voices can be heard. The analysis of the actors involved in the 'interplay' underpinning the public debate on migration has highlighted that the phenomenon should not only be seen through the lenses of a 'national' paradigm. Furthermore, the discussion has shown that cultural actors and representations also play a relevant role in shaping the public discourse on migration.

The 'cultural offensive' launched by Italian government and its EU partners – in particular focused on the establishment of a series of commemorative initiatives dedicated to migrant deaths at sea (see, for instance, the establishment of the 'Giornata nazionale in memoria delle vittime dell'immigrazione') – attests to the relevance of culture in affecting the public perception on migration. The Italian and other European

governments – promoting civil solidarity, cultural events and initiatives in schools etc. – attempt to retain the hegemonic interpretation of the migratory phenomenon:

> La nostra è una sfida culturale […] per cominciare a costruire il 'welfare della fiducià si deve sempre partire dal riconoscimento delle identità comuni e molteplici di tutto il Mediterraneo.[130]

The marginalisation of migrants' voices, and of projects that could potentially challenge this regime of representation, could thus be interpreted as a consequence of the dominant position held by the various institutional actors. As such, Musarò et al. and Mazzara have suggested that the space for challenging hegemonic representations of migration is to be found in migrants' self-production and in the realm of aesthetic.[131] Recent films, documentaries and other artistic endeavours by people with a migratory background of film, which concentrate on more personal features of their relationship with Lampedusa, will be one of the focusses of the next chapters.

Nevertheless, these practices should not be seen as a flawless solution to the complex task of challenging the dominant Lampedusa symbol. Hegemonic readings of Lampedusa or migration in general still find ways to adapt to the new challenges or even absorb them. Furthermore, it is also important to reflect on the context and the reach of these practices. In the next pages, a specific focus will be dedicated to the way these cultural products are conceived.

In conclusion, the analysis of this chapter has highlighted that the meanings attached to Lampedusa already go beyond the Italian borders. Lampedusa is not only used to transmit a negative image of migration and migrants in Italy, but it has multiple transnational meanings. As discussed on a theoretical level in the previous chapter, there is not a clear cut distinction between a 'negative' representation or understanding of Lampedusa and a 'positive' and 'progressive' portrayal of the island. The signifier Lampedusa 'floats' on a transnational level. It can be appropriated in protest against the EU's border regime, but can still be shaped by dominant paradigms connecting it to a problematic representation of migrants' presence in Italy, Germany or Europe. This

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[130] 'Lampedusa, Mattarella Inaugura Il Museo Della Fiducia e Del Dialogo'.
[131] Musarò and Parmiggiani; Mazzara, 'Spaces of Visibility for the Migrants of Lampedusa'.

'entanglement' is difficult to break. Nevertheless, a certain amount of subjectivity, as we will see, can still be retained.

Chapter 3 – The 'Archivio Memorie Migranti'

Introduction

> Di me, di persona diciamo quando parlo o sento di Lampedusa, significa tutt'altro... è un posto speciale. […] Io ci vado e ci ritornerò ancora, per me Lampedusa non significa un confine […] è un posto dove ho iniziato, dove è anche iniziata la mia storia dell'Europa, se non fossi arrivato a Lampedusa oggi non sarei qua.[1]

In chapters one and two, the discussion of the transnational significance of Lampedusa has prompted a reflection on the practices and the subjectivities involved in the construction of this name as a hegemonic symbol for framing migration in terms of crisis or emergency. Despite acknowledging the fluidity of this ongoing process of re-signification, and its growing transnational relevance, the presence of an extensive number of productions associating the Sicilian island to this symbolism has also highlighted the limits and contradictions of this regime of representation.

Representations of Lampedusa seem to be necessarily shaped by a hegemonic image of crisis that recalls a series of recurrent tropes such as the welcoming nature of the locals, and the striking juxtaposition of tourism and the deadly shipwrecks taking place in the waters surrounding the island. Dominant practices of representations appear to undermine the migrants' subjectivity, and to marginalise their voices in the public debate surrounding this phenomenon. The previous pages have raised the question of whether there is an actual space for counter-representations potentially challenging the hegemony of the Lampedusa symbol, and explored the different ways in which migration could be voiced.

The words of 'Archivio delle Memorie Migranti' (AMM) member and journalist Zakaria Mohamed Ali, which open this chapter, seek to underline how migrant subjectivity plays a fundamental role in these processes. Therefore, this chapter will

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[1] Zakaria Mohamed Ali, Archivio delle Memorie Migranti, Rome, 2 June 2016.

focus on migrant-led practices of re-signification, and alternative representations of Lampedusa that see the migrant as an active agent. The analysis of the individual accounts of Lampedusa shared by the members of the AMM will help in discussing what role films and individual accounts voicing the migrant perspective play in the 'Lampedusa constellation'.[2]

The chapter will question how the production of these personal testimonies is mediated/shaped by the Italian members of the association. The analysis of the *Archivio* will consider not only the means of representation (video, audio, textual), the target audiences, the linguistic choices, and so on made by its members, but will also address theoretical questions related to the relationship between memory, identity, and subjectivity in an increasingly postcolonial and transnational Italy.

In the first section, after a brief history of the AMM, the activities of the association will be contextualised in the context of a wider theoretical discussion of the changing role of the archive and its role in shaping diasporic identities. Appadurai's reflection on the 'Archive and Aspiration' will function as the theoretical cornerstone for this analysis.[3] Secondly, this chapter will focus on the *Archivio*'s aims, methods and cultural initiatives. The discussion of the materials available online will be integrated with excerpts of interviews carried with the members in the summer of 2016.

Lastly, the third and final part of the chapter, by means the work of AMM's protagonists (Dagmawi Yimer, Zakaria Mohamed Ali and Mahamed Aman), will focus on the role of migrant self-representation in the construction of Lampedusa's symbolism. In this section, the video and audio testimonies of the three members will be used both to inquire whether the 'personalisation' of the migrant experience could be regarded as an effective tool to counter dominant media practices in representing migration, and to reflect on whether this practice could also lead to a sort of 'burden of representation' for the individuals narrating the story.

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[2] 'Archivio delle memorie migranti - home' <http://www.archiviomemoriemigranti.net/it> [accessed 27 January 2017].

[3] Arjun Appadurai, 'Archive and Aspiration', in *Information Is Alive*, ed. by Arjen Mulder and Joke Brouwer (Rotterdam: V2_Publishing/NAI Publishers, 2003), pp. 14–25.

3.1 AMM as a 'deliberate project'

3.1.1 From school to archive: A short history of the AMM

The *Archivio delle Memorie Migranti* was officially founded as an 'association for social advancement' in January 2012.[4] AMM is composed of researchers, social workers, journalists, artists, and other stakeholders, some with a migrant background.[5] According to its members, it aims to deconstruct the negative and often superficial practices of representation of migration in Italy by means of recording and producing 'other' memories to be included 'nel patrimonio collettivo della memoria nazionale e transnazionale'.[6] Although only officially established in 2012, the *Archivio* can be seen as the 'final' outcome of several years of activities and projects within 'Asinitas', an Italian language school for migrants.[7]

At first, the archive was initiated as a mean of preserving and saving migrants' memories and stories recorded during a series of activities undertaken within the school. These workshops were aimed at creating an equal and safe space where migrants could improve their Italian language skills, whilst simultaneously having the opportunity to share the potentially traumatic stories of their journey in participatory ways. This series of experimental activities gave birth to the so-called 'cerchi narrativi' which had a fundamental role in shaping the AMM's methodological choices. In these 'circles', students, but also teachers and other guests, would all share stories on the

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[4] 'Associazioni di promozione sociale' (APS) are non-profit associations, movements or groups which undertake social activities on specific issues. They differ from voluntary work associations in the fact that the APS's members are entitled to receive a salary or other forms of reimbursement.

[5] Five members interviewed for this research: photographer and project manager Mario Badagliacca, philologist Monica Bandella, anthropologist and project administrator Gianluca Gatta, journalist and social worker Zakaria Mohamed Ali, and historian and president Alessandro Triulzi. The interviews were conducted by myself in Rome between May and June 2016. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

[6] For more information see Alessandro Triulzi, 'Working with Migrants' Memories in Italy: The Lampedusa Dump', *Crossings: Journal of Migration & Culture*, 7.2 (2016), 149–63 <https://doi.org/10.1386/cjmc.7.2.149_1>; and 'L'associazione - Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti' <http://archiviomemoriemigranti.net/presentazione> [accessed 2 February 2017].

[7] Known for its experimental methods, the Rome-based school was established between 2003 and 2005. 'Asinitas Onlus' <http://www.asinitas.org/> [accessed 2 February 2017].

theme of travelling to undermine the 'inbuilt distance between those who listen and those who narrate'.[8]

In almost six years of activity, the strategies and the practices adopted by the *Archivio* have shown a remarkable level of self-reflection in exploring and developing new approaches to address the complex issues of memory and representation. As described by member Monica Bandella, the initial idea of a static 'repository' where these testimonies could be stored and preserved gradually gave way to a more multifaceted project:

> [C]i sono state varie fasi di AMM. Diciamo che forse la prima fase, quella direttamente proveniente da Asinitas, dalla scuola d'italiano, era una fase di desiderio di raccolta ci siamo anche chiamati archivio per questo […] Pur volendo usare la parola archivio, l'abbiamo sempre detto, non come archiviazione comunemente intesa, ma come raccolta eterogenea, eclettica di storie. […] In una seconda fase, ci siamo resi conto che noi ci capivamo […] Però bisognava far capire tante cose ad altre persone, ed abbiamo cominciato a lavorare soprattutto sulle memorie […] dalla storia singola, dalla storia individuale, e non dalla storia generale dei numeri ecc. sulla migrazione […] abbiamo cominciato a ragionare sulla memoria pensando: come costruiamo la memoria culturale dell'Italia adesso rispetto alla migrazione attraverso queste singole storie?[9]

The members of the group identify a distinction between a 'research group', which focuses on the collection and production of oral and written stories, and a group working on the creation of 'audiovisual' materials like films, photos, or interactive maps.[10] Nevertheless, as displayed by the involvement of every member in almost all the activities carried out by the association, the two parts seem to coexist and support one another.

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[8] Triulzi, 'Working with Migrants' Memories in Italy', p. 153.

[9] Monica Bandella, Mario Badagliacca, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali, Archivio delle Memorie Migranti, Rome, 26 May 2016.

[10] Alessandro Triulzi, 'Voci, Racconti e Testimonianze Dall'Italia Delle Migrazioni. L'Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti (AMM) | Storia e Futuro n. 34', 2014 <http://storiaefuturo.eu/voci-racconti-e-testimonianze-dellitalia-delle-migrazioni-larchivio-delle-memorie-migranti-amm/> [accessed 30 January 2017].

The production of short films and other visual materials has quickly become the most visible aspect of the AMM's activities. The public visibility of the *Archivio* is to be connected to the growing success of the work of Dagmawi Yimer, but also to the tireless efforts of the members in promoting their work at academic and non-academic events dedicated to the topic of migration.[11]

The focus on the 'training' of migrant subjects to achieve forms of self-representation and (co)production stands as one the principal features of the AMM's project. Thus, the *Archivio* has slowly moved away from the idea of a 'collection' of migrant memories to the desire of directly producing them. With this turn, the process of collaborative production of migrant testimonies has finally become more important than the collection of a number of 'finished' products.[12]

By February 2017, the AMM's production counts six major works: 'Asmat – Nomi',[13] 'Benvenuti in Italia',[14] 'Grooving Lampedusa',[15] 'Soltanto il mare',[16] 'To whom it may concern',[17] and 'Va' pensiero, storie ambulanti'.[18] These films aim to represent migrant stories through the tool of 'self-narration', not only addressing the 'trivial' or 'serious' everyday problems faced by people that have decided to move to Italy, but offering a new point of view on the ever-changing nature of the Italian social fabric.

While the oral and written testimonies collected during the first phase of the archive are still undergoing a process of scrutiny, the films already engage the wider public via the association's website. The website gives to these audio-visual products a degree of visibility that is not shared by other materials and activities. Excerpts of interviews, as well as written and oral testimonies, are available online. However, access to the entire

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[11] Among other is to remember the establishment of the award for migrant cinema 'premio AMM-Mutti', the participation to the 'RIMA festival' in Malta, and the collaborations with the Cineteca di Bologna, the 'Transnationalizing Modern Languages' project and the exhibition 'Ort_m migration memory' in Hamburg.

[12] See Triulzi's focus on the practice 'antropologia condivisa' Triulzi, 'Voci, Racconti e Testimonianze Dall'Italia Delle Migrazioni. L'Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti (AMM) | Storia e Futuro n. 34'.

[13] Dagmawi Yimer, *Asmat-Nomi*, 2015.

[14] Dagmawi Yimer and others, *Benvenuti in Italia*, 2012.

[15] Mario Badagliacca, *Grooving Lampedusa*, 2012.

[16] Dagmawi Yimer, Giulio Cederna, and Fabrizio Barraco, *Soltanto il Mare*, 2011.

[17] Zakaria Mohamed Ali, *To Whom It May Concern*, 2013.

[18] Dagmawi Yimer, *Va' Pensiero, Storie Ambulanti*, 2013.

collection is restricted in order to guarantee the privacy and the anonymity of the participants.[19] Thus, as it has become the main tool and vehicle of the AMM's work, the website can be considered as the association's 'true' archive. The website is not only a platform for advertising the AMM's initiatives, but offers a potential for accessibility and interaction that challenges the 'traditional' conception of the archive as a restricted place where documents or traces are 'accidentally' accumulated.

Furthermore, the sections of the website offer a list of the ongoing collaborations, projects, and various resources supplying educational tools for a deeper understanding of the topic of migration in Italy.[20] The 'pedagogical drive' of the *Archive* has recently found expression in various activities carried out in person by the AMM's members in different Italian schools.[21]

The multifaceted approach of the association can be summarised in three intertwined aspirations: the wish for the selection and preservation of migrant memories, the intention of actively producing these memories and, lastly, the pedagogical desire for the 'education' of 'active bearers of memory' capable of producing narratives potentially challenging the negative stereotypes associated with public discourse on migration in Italy.[22]

3.1.2 The *Archivio* as aspiration

The production of migrant memories, and its attention to finding innovative participatory methods for the construction of new archival forms, are two fundamental characteristics of the *Archivio*. To understand the theoretical premises underpinning such a project, it is essential to situate the path of the AMM within the debate revived

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[19] See the section 'Testimonianze - Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti' <http://www.archiviomemoriemigranti.net/testimonianze> [accessed 29 January 2017].

[20] For instance, an index of all the available films focusing on migration in Italy 'Film - Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti' <http://archiviomemoriemigranti.net/film> [accessed 8 February 2017].

[21] 'A Scuola Dell'altro - Percorsi Di Antirazzismo in Classe - Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti' <http://www.archiviomemoriemigranti.net/formazione> [accessed 29 January 2017].

[22] Alessandro Triulzi, 'Per Un Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti', *Zapruder StorieInMovimento.*, Made in Italy Storie in Movimento.n. 28 (2012), 120–25.

by Derrida's renowned work *Archive Fever* (*Mal d'archive*) in 1995.[23] The starting point of this debate is the assumption that archives are not neutral custodians of historical sources, but that they should be seen more as 'systems of collecting, categorizing and exploiting memories'.[24]

'The question of the archives' is a contested field that has attracted the attention of various major theorists such as Foucault, Agamben and Derrida. On the one hand, Foucault sees the archive as tightly bonded with issues of knowledge and power, therefore stressing the authority of official archives in selecting and recording 'what it has been said or what it has not been said'.[25] On the other hand, Agamben perceives the tension between the 'said and the unsaid' more as a tension between 'the sayable and the unsayable' or the 'possibility or impossibility of speech' of the witness.[26] Finally, Derrida highlights the psychological facets lying behind the desire to archive: the quest for 'beginnings' and the 'threat of finitude', but also its transition from the 'private' to the 'public'.[27]

In this debate, Appadurai, opposing March Bloch's understanding of the archive as a 'product of contingency, indeed of accident, and not of any sort of design' to Foucault's understanding of the archive as a site of power comprising intentional 'traces', maintains that the archive should be understood as a 'deliberate project'.[28] According to Appadurai, documents should be understood less as 'traces' and more as 'interventions', and the archive should be considered (as in the case of the AMM) as the product of a collective project.[29]

While Foucault has denounced the 'panoptical functions of the archive', stressing how it has been used for forms of 'policing, surveillance and governmentality', for Appadurai 'the creation of documents and their aggregation into archives' is not only

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[23] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[24] Eric Ketelaar, 'Tacit Narratives: The Meanings of Archives', *Archival Science*, 1.2 (2001), 131–41 (p. 131) <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02435644>.

[25] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2010).

[26] Giorgio Agamben, *Quel che resta di Auschwitz: l'archivio e il testimone: homo sacer 3* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1998).

[27] See Derrida.

[28] Appadurai, 'Archive and Aspiration', p. 16.

[29] Ibid.

the prerogative of the nation-states.[30] The work of the AMM reflects Appadurai's focus on the role played by personal diaries, photo albums, and the other forms of popular archives available in our globalised world. According to Appadurai, recent technological advancements have led to new forms of archiving that:

> [R]estore the deep link of the archive to popular memory and its practices, returning to the non-official actor the capability to choose the way in which traces and documents shall be formed into archives, whether at the level of the family, the neighbourhood, the community or other sorts of groupings outside the demography of the state.[31]

This process, in addition to fundamentally altering the relationship between memory and the archive, 'making the (interactive) archive the basis of collective memory, rather than leaving memory as the substrate which guarantees the ethical value of the archive', has increased the possibility for 'ordinary people' to access, enrich, or use archival forms.[32] For Appadurai, this 'capacity to aspire' opens to more 'democratic' ways of constructing archives that could be used to question the present, and by which migrants could 'craft the scripts of possible worlds and imagined selves'.[33]

Nevertheless, as we will see in the analysis of the AMM's activities, this does not mean that the projects that emerge from new forms of digital archiving and the active role of the subject of memory are 'always liberating or even pleasant'.[34] The AMM's choices and activities are the product of the anticipation of collective memory, but the creation of new collective or shared memories capable of making the presence of migrants a constitutive part of a new Italian consciousness or identity is not a simple task.

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Appadurai, 'Archive and Aspiration', p. 18.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Appadurai, 'Archive and Aspiration', p. 18; See also Arjun Appadurai, 'The Capacity to Aspire', in *Culture and Public Action, Eds. V. Rao and M. Walton.* (Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 58–84.

[34] Appadurai, 'Archive and Aspiration', p. 18.

This deliberate project poses various questions, and above all, as indicated by Chambers in his similar reflection on the idea of modern museum, requires 'an engagement with a constellation of key concepts such as memory, locality, belonging, identity, history and modernity'.[35] It is in this capability to encapsulate all these different concepts that the *Archivio*'s relevance lies. The AMM is not a direct product of a nation-state. Unlike institutional (or institutionalised) museums or archives, the *Archivio* seems to occupy a place in between the official and the private. While not actively supporting any sort of national rhetoric or identity, the *Archivio* not only attempts to transform an apparently fixed definition of 'Italianness', but also becomes a tool in the construction of what Appadurai calls the 'diasporic public sphere'.[36]

Operating outside the official spheres of both the home society and the new society, the migrant archive cannot afford the illusion that traces are accidents [...] Rather, the migrant archive is a continuous and conscious work of the imagination, seeking in collective memory an ethical basis for the sustainable reproduction of cultural identities in the new society. For migrants, more than for others, the archive is a map. It is a guide to the uncertainties of identity-building under adverse conditions. The archive is a search for the memories that count and not a home for memories with a pre-ordained significance.[37]

Following Appadurai's definition, then, the AMM should be seen as a space for creativity and imagination, where migrants can actively decide on which memory needs to be recovered and remembered. Above all, it should be a place where they can assert their subjectivity. According to Triulzi, the *Archivio's* main aim was:

[T]o mould together the researchers and the migrants' own experience in order to co-produce oral and written narratives with the migrants directly participating in the collection, archiving and

[35] Iain Chambers, 'The Museum of Migrating Modernities', in *Cultural Memory, Migrating Modernities and Museum Practices*, ed. by Beatrice Ferrara, Mela Books, 3 (Milano: Politecnico di Milano, 2012), pp. 13–32 (p. 14).
[36] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 4.
[37] Appadurai, 'Archive and Aspiration', p. 23.

diffusion of their own stories and testimonies. We wanted to empower migrating voices in all their creative agency and self-expression.[38]

The *Archivio*'s participatory methods to include migrants in the representation of the significance of their presence in Italy can be considered an example of the new forms of subjectivity in the building of imagined communities highlighted by Appadurai. For Triulzi and the AMM members, this process:

[B]y necessity had to involve Italian and non Italian actors in one single ethical and political project aimed at changing transnational migration from being something allegedly 'other' into a collective shared patrimony […].[39]

For Appadurai, these new forms are characterised by the 'presence of voice, agency, and debate' and a potential for interactivity that can be found in the technological development of new media.[40]

This potential for 'interactivity' seems only partially fulfilled by the AMM's website, where the possibility for new users to enter and edit the archive is still very limited. Therefore, the AMM finds itself caught between the need to choose and to produce the memories that would constitute the archive, and the aspiration to be an open space and a collective enterprise capable of voicing the multifaceted nature of migrants' presence in Italy.

The desire of 'representativeness' captured by the project's name has, in this way, become almost a burden; a constant reminder of the difficulty in finding new stories, and avoiding the risks of closure and 'finitude'. This theoretical conundrum is reflected in the AMM's practices and methods, where its members are continuously attempting to find new ways to highlight/facilitate migrant subjectivity, avoiding, at the same time, the risk of reproducing power relations.

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[38] Triulzi, 'Working with Migrants' Memories in Italy', p. 154.
[39] Triulzi, 'Working with Migrants' Memories in Italy', p. 154.
[40] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 22.

3.2 Selection, production, and 'finitude': The AMM's 'authority'

> If nothing else, postcoloniality has taught us that there are no impartial or disinterested venues available: all is worded in complex and often unforeseen ways. The books and articles we may choose to consult are located not merely in a particular physical environment and geographical place; they are also located in a specific historical formation and cultural constellation. Why do some writings, why do only certain authorities and perspectives, tend to prevail rather than others? The choice is not necessarily conscious nor malignant, but it is disciplined by social, cultural and historical criteria that constitute an ongoing critical problematic.[41]

The previous pages underlined how gathering and creating materials on migrants' lives in Italy is not the only scope of the *Archivio*. The AMM should be seen more as a device designed to question the present than an apparatus capable of 'preserving' history, memory, or 'dust'. This task is not exempt from problems and dilemmas.

As shown by the words of Iain Chambers cited above, the activities of the AMM are faced by a series of social, cultural and historical constraints that unavoidably affect the members' aspiration to create more inclusive national, or rather, transnational memories of migration. The following section, through the interviews recorded with AMM members, will highlight the theoretical debate and the difficult decisions underpinning this project.

Although there is a general sense of understanding between the members, the AMM's choice of selecting and producing certain stories, rather than others, does not follow a pre-set list of factors/aims agreed by its members in advance. The productions are affected by different variables: they are influenced by their producers, by the context in which the AMM operates and, lastly, they are fundamentally shaped by the means of memory that the members decide to adopt. For Chambers:

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[41] Iain Chambers, 'Cultural Memories, Museum Spaces and Archiving', in *Museums in an Age of Migrations*, ed. by Luca Basso Peressut and Clelia Pozzi, Mela Books, 1 (Milano: Politecnico di Milano, 2012), pp. 141–52 (p. 147).

> [T]o consider the means of memory is to consider the nature of the archive and the manner of archiving. What is legitimated and what is excluded becomes explicit in the forms, technologies and organisation of knowledge: this is the power and the authority of the archive and its institutional realisation in textbooks, museums, popular representations, and ultimately common sense.[42]

Thus, the *Archivio* can be considered not only as a receptive space where migrants' memories can be listened to and preserved. The AMM should also be seen as a source of authority capable of bestowing visibility and 'legitimisation' to certain stories, whilst at same time, albeit unintentionally, omitting or silencing others. In a highly charged terrain such as that of migration, where public discourse is almost 'saturated' by an endless and repetitive stream of images mostly produced by the mainstream media, it is vital to see any act of 're-telling' or representation as the outcome of a process involving relations of power: the result of a struggle for signification over what should be told, and what should be not told (or made less visible). Following Assmann's distinction between active and passive practices of cultural memory, the AMM's 'act of remembering' should be regarded as an active form of selection and collection.

Nevertheless, it is also important to consider its counterpart, the 'act of forgetting'. The act of forgetting should not only seen as something consisting of more passive acts like 'neglecting, disregarding or losing', but also as an active process of 'negating, destroying and censoring'.[43] While the *Archivio* does not perform forms of negation or censorship, it is still important to stress how the active remembering performed by its members may inadvertently omit or silence other perspectives. In this way, the AMM faces a paradoxical challenge: despite having been conceived in order to give visibility to the migrant point of view, it is also confronted with the inevitable omissions, silences, and limits entangled with the archival process.

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[42] Chambers, 'The Museum of Migrating Modernities', p. 17.
[43] See Aleida Assmann, '"Canon and Archive", in Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook, Ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nunning' (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2008), pp. 97–107.

This necessity of selecting and producing certain stories, and the impossibility of being a totalising institution capable of collecting enough memories to represent the innumerable nuances of migrant presence in Italy, according to AMM member Gianluca Gatta, has made of the name 'Archivio' almost a 'burden':

Se l'obiettivo è quello di creare un archivio dall'alto completo onnisciente della migrazione, la fotografia che diciamo riproduce a livello narrativo e soggettivo quello che però è il modello statistico: quanti sono, dove sono ecc., non abbiamo le forze. Sarebbe anche auspicabile, ma non è nella natura di una piccola associazione […] A volte io dico ironicamente che è un nome [Archivio delle Memorie Migranti] che è troppo ingombrante per noi.[44]

The awareness of the disadvantages of constructing an archive is accompanied by a constant reflection on potential strategies to widen the memories included in the *Archivio,* and on finding ways to involve new participants. It is in this process aimed at involving new members, participants, or 'carriers of memory' that one of the two challenges faced by the AMM lies.

First, it is necessary to raise the question of who can access the archive, becoming a member and consequently a producer of memory. As vividly stated by Hobuß:

Who has a claim that something be remembered or forgotten? […] Who are the 'we', the collective that might be obliged to remember or to forget? How is this 'we' established? Because memory is based upon performative social practices, no single individual or voluntarily acting subject can set the rules for what should or should not be remembered. Rather, memory and processes of remembering are always negotiated, implicitly, consensually or not, sometimes even violently […].[45]

Secondly, it is important to reflect on how AMM affects the birth of these memories by influencing the choice of the means of memory. What should the participant focus on? Would the memory be recorded in film form, in a photo project, in a diary etc.?

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[44] Gianluca Gatta, Archivio delle Memorie Migranti, Rome, 4 June 2016.
[45] Steffi Hobuß, 'Aspects of Memory Acts: Transnational Cultural Memory and Ethics', *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 3.1 (2011), 1–5 (p. 3).

Which language should be used for the productions? Both issues are shaped by an unavoidable distinction that is at the base of the AMM's work; a categorisation that cannot be avoided in the formulation of project's method: the distinction between 'Italian' members and the 'migrant' members.

The necessity of including the 'other' and its memory, whilst at the same time bearing in mind the aim of deconstructing and dismantling the difference between the Italian 'in-group' and the migrant 'outsiders', makes it almost impossible for the *Archivio*'s founders to avoid a certain amount of relations of power in the devising of their archival method. The consequences of these questions of identity and cultural identification will be addressed in the following pages.

3.2.1 The Archivio's method

Therefore, might it be said that the AMM, while seeking to undermine injustices and exclusions, contributes to the conceptualisation of migrants as the 'eternal others' of a racially and (largely) culturally-homogeneous 'in-group'? How are these potential underlying power dynamics addressed and eventually dismantled? Does the AMM retain authority over the ways the preserved and produced memories should be used? Responding to these questions is a complicated matter. Nevertheless, it is important to stress the commitment of the members to finding new ways to compromise between the two 'categories' characterising the AMM.

The method could thus be seen as the realisation of a long lasting (and still ongoing) reflection on the topic of co-production with migrants. The pursuit of new strategies of representation and self-representation is one of the most important topics addressed by the AMM's method:

> Il lavoro intorno all'Archivio e ai materiali che raccoglie mira a far sì che la condizione migrante possa essere delineata in tutta la sua umana e diversificata capacità di azione (*agency*) e di auto-rappresentazione. Di queste rappresentazioni […] l'Archivio vuole essere dunque garante, tutela, ma anche dimora, luogo di nascita e spazio d'ascolto. Esso non vuole farsi involucro di una

memoria preconfezionata, ma spazio (e "bene") comune in cui poter condividere – in modo partecipato e interattivo – […].[46]

The *Archivio*'s method addresses the potential rift between migrant and non-migrant members by adopting participatory and 'circular' methods of 'narration' focusing on the 'act of listening':

> L'ascolto deve essere dunque preceduto dalla individuazione di uno spazio comune, una condivisione di piani di discorso e di idealità, un lavorare non solo *tra* ma *con* i migranti *affinché loro stessi* – attraverso l'autonarrazione – *possano diventare protagonisti delle loro storie, in grado di padroneggiare gli strumenti per l'espressione di sé*. [emphasis added].[47]

At first sight, the manifesto (despite yearning for a collaborative and egalitarian approach) seems to indirectly emphasises a context in which the local cultural practitioners must train the migrants in the art of 'self-narration'. Nevertheless, if we look at the original text from which the summary of the method has been extrapolated and then adapted for the website, the words of the members highlight a different awareness of the challenges of constructing forms of collective memory:

> L'ascolto di voci di migranti […] è pertanto un ascolto filtrato, ostacolato, cifrato; c'è bisogno di una mediazione linguistica, affettiva, di attenzione e rispetto particolari. Esso deve essere preceduto dalla individuazione di uno spazio comune, una condivisione di piani di discorso e di idealità, un lavorare non solo tra ma con i migranti affinché loro stessi possano diventare protagonisti delle loro storie, in grado di padroneggiare gli strumenti per l'espressione di sé. Senza tutto questo, non è possibile che si stabilisca quella "forma di oblio condiviso" delle disuguaglianze esistenti tra intervistato e intervistatore che per Sayad è il necessario "prodotto della fiducia che è all'origine dell'indagine più proficua". Per permettere la riappropriazione di un'identità personale e di gruppo occorre pertanto contribuire alla costruzione di una memoria collettiva che non sia solo di colpa o di sofferenza, e recuperarne la dimensione positiva come strategia di vita attiva, e non di semplice sopravvivenza, come è pure per ogni popolo migrante.

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[46] Triulzi, 'Per Un Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti', p. 123.
[47] 'L'associazione - Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti'.

> Il problema è molto vasto e coinvolge una riappropriazione della memoria collettiva che non è esente da ambiguità e contraddizioni.[48]

The constant awareness of the underpinning, and not always evident, imbalance between the migrant and the non-migrant members is one of the fundamental aspects of the AMM's project. According to its members, the films of Dagmawi Yimer and Zakaria Mohamed not only wish to bridge the 'gap' between the two sides, but also wish to question pre-set 'Eurocentric' assumptions about which actor holds the necessary expertise or knowledge to represent migration more aptly. When questioned on why the migrant participants should tell their story through a camera, learning how to use it from one of the Italian AMM members, Gianluca Gatta answers:

> Però sull'insegniamo noi è relativo, nel senso che…io vorrei che si rompesse questa distinzione tra chi detiene le competenze tecniche e chi detiene la storia. In realtà, da un lato, le persone che detengono la storia partono comunque da una competenza, che può essere anche passiva nel senso, venire da un contesto dove i film si guardano in un certo modo, dove c'è una temporalità di un certo tipo. E dall'altro noi, che abbiamo minime competenze tecniche non necessariamente superiori, abbiamo [anche] delle storie da raccontare. Allora non vorrei che si creasse questo doppio […] Il rischio è che si separino sempre più o che sia percepita così. Perché quando uno, per esempio, dice faccio un laboratorio di video partecipativo, è chiaro che a primo acchito sembra che noi forniamo degli strumenti per chi ha una storia e non riesce appunto...insegniamo a camminare al bambino. Questo è il rischio.[49]

Although the method challenges, or at least takes into account, the potential reproduction of hierarchies or power dynamics between migrant and non-migrant members, the AMM's work still needs to be contested at the more grounded level of the selection of the migrant participants. If the inclusion of Yimer, Aman and Ali can be regarded as the consequence of the historical collaboration with *Asinitas*, at the moment, the *Archivio* struggles to find new participants. According to member Monica

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[48] Triulzi, 'Per Un Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti', p. 121.
[49] Gianluca Gatta.

Bandella, the end of the partnership with *Asinitas* is one of the principal causes of this issue:

> AMM non fa un lavoro sul campo come tante altre associazioni, come Asinitas ad esempio, che ha le scuole di italiano e lì hanno un bacino di raccolta di persone che si possono coinvolgere. Noi dobbiamo pensare progetti e poi cercare di capire come arrivare a coinvolgere le persone, e questo non è facile.[50]

Therefore, the *Archivio* seems not to actively look for new participants. According to Bandella, the AMM's priority is to create the necessary premises to produce casual or informal encounters with migrants. These should operate first as close relationships of trust (or friendship), and only after this relationship is formed turn these individuals into new producers/carriers of memory to involve in the project:

> MB: Ognuno di noi ha avuto delle relazioni. Tu con Lassad [referring to Mario], Sandro con Abu, Gianluca ha fatto delle cose con Zakaria che non hanno coinvolto noi, […] sono andati a Riace, hanno fatto delle interviste. Sono tante cose che nascono, io lo dico sempre, se c'è questa idea di raccontarsi a vicenda e non dire tu raccontami la tua storia di migrante e io la mia di non migrante. Diventa veramente una condivisione di storie di esperienze.[51]

The AMM does not deliberately choose new members to widen the representativeness of the stories made available by the project. To some extent, then, the AMM could be regarded as attempting to retain the 'innocence' of the traditional archive by leaving the choice of its members to a certain degree of chance. These encounters where relationships are based on friendship, research interests, and so on, can be considered as the space where active and passive forms of memory could take place.

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[50] Monica Bandella, Mario Badagliacca, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali.
[51] Monica Bandella, Mario Badagliacca, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali.

The members actively create the occasion to meet people that, afterwards, only if they decide so become producers and carriers of memories. For Gatta, this system requires a further structuring:

> Il nostro problema è riuscire a mettere un po' a regime...a sistematizzare un po' di più l'intreccio di queste diverse esperienze. Un limite che deriva anche dalla nostra scelta metodologica di non burocratizzarci oltre il minimo indispensabile. […] noi dobbiamo alimentare il motore interno di AMM che è quello di produrre autorappresentazioni con quello stile, con quel metodo. Rafforzare da un lato il metodo...ricreando le occasioni affinché questo desiderio di rappresentazione emerga. Quindi, piccoli seminari interni dieci quindici persone...coinvolgendo anche persone nuove.[52]

If the potential authority and responsibility of the AMM's founders in choosing future members or participants can be to some extent circumvented by the decision of prioritising the collaboration with people that have a longer relationship or friendship with the association, can this authority be avoided in the archival practice? The ways in which the members work, plan or decide on which story to tell seems not to follow a precise 'thematic' line. The testimonies collected on the website are the product of a process that does not follow a fixed set of parameters, and the means of memory are chosen according to the context. According to Bandella:

> Non è che pianificavamo una storia, facciamo una storia di me, e poi vediamo chi la vuole fare. Io e Mahamed ci siamo messi a fare questo lavoro, e poi è venuta fuori l'idea della mappa. Sono tutte cose estemporanee, se vuoi. Appunto, piano piano, raccogliendo i materiali, facendo altre cose, abbiamo pensato ok, dal nostro incontro al desiderio di vedere cosa succederà in futuro, e cosa c'è al di fuori di chi è sensibilizzato.[53]

This *impromptu* approach wishes to give the migrant participants the necessary space to choose which story to tell and the means to doing it. When questioned on whether the *Archivio* specifically aimed at telling only stories of migration, Bandella replies:

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[52] Gianluca Gatta, 'Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti, Rome, 4 June 2016'.
[53] Monica Bandella, Mario Badagliacca, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali.

Io penso che una cosa che siamo bene o male sempre riusciti a fare, passando per errori vari. Sia quella di non voler raccontare storie di migrazione, noi abbiamo sempre detto che noi facciamo autonarrazione. E autonarrazione vuole dire per noi raccontarsi, poi se tu, che ti racconti, hai una storia di migrazione ovviamente è parte fondamentale della tua identità, quella che si mette a confronto in quel momento che ti racconti e quindi emerge questo.[54]

For Bandella the focus on the journey of the migrant towards Italy was a prerogative of the first phase of the AMM within the school *Asinitas*:

[Ad] Asinitas. Partiamo dall'oggetto valigia, cosa metti nella tua valigia. E pur se si coinvolgevano persone migranti e non migranti, e ovvio che lì si direzionava la storia in un certo modo. Dopo parecchio però, lavorandoci e riflettendoci insieme siamo arrivati a voler fare altro. Cioè non chiedere, e quello lo dico sempre, tu migrante raccontami la tua storia di migrante, ma tu Zakaria e io Monica, tu Abu, tu Mario raccontiamoci. E vediamo quello che abbiamo in comune e quello che non abbiamo in comune. […] quindi dando un certo taglio diverso da quello consueto retorico che c'è in giro nei mass media eccetera […] vediamo quali sono comunque le storie di vita che comprendono una storia di migrazione e poi ognuno… cioè Zakaria, per esempio, ha scelto con to whom it may concern, la sua storia del ritorno, che è atipico se vuoi no? Non […] era il racconto del viaggio, il racconto della prigionia in Libia, l'arrivo, i problemi con l'Italia, con la richiesta d'asilo, la burocrazia, lo studiare l'italiano ecc.[55]

These answers show again an awareness of the potential 'risks' of the *Archivio*'s authority, as well as the members' ability to learn from previous experiences or 'mistakes' in order to find new strategies of avoiding exerting any sort of control over the migrant stories constituting the archive. The solution proposed by the members is, once again, to focus on the participants' freedom to follow their own individual interests and talents. Such an approach seems to be confirmed by Zakaria Mohamed Ali's testimony:

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[54] Monica Bandella, Mario Badagliacca, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali.
[55] Monica Bandella, Mario Badagliacca, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali.

Io penso che sia anche una scelta personale, perché quando Dag [Dagmawi Yimer] ci racconta […] Mohamed Ba. Si è innamorato di questo personaggio, si era interessato e alla fine ha scelto […] questo ti fa capire anche in qualche modo, il regista o chi deve trattare le storie, l'autore non della storia, ma di raccontare la sua opera attraverso delle persone che tu hai…che devi dare…semplicemente devi dare spazio. Per questa è una persona che ha un corpo, anima, vita e tu devi invece con la telecamera mostrare quello che è. Faccio un esempio quando ho realizzato con l'Archivio 'Benvenuti in Italia', durante la formazione, il tema l'attesa, si scriveva ognuno di noi i problemi…io ho una storia. Perché non era la storia che è stata raccontata forse migliore dell'altra, ma in qualche modo faceva vedere cose nuove che la gente non sa. Tipo vedere i ragazzi somali, o tanti altri ragazzi africani in piedi alla stazione Termini, come lo vediamo in strada, tutti pensiamo che spacciano le droghe… Invece aspettano delle chiamate per lavoro di volantinaggio. È stato per queste cose secondo me, raccontare, far vedere alle persone una cosa nuova, una cosa che può mettere in discussione anche il modo di vivere il modo di visione, come vediamo le cose.[56]

For AMM members, the process of archiving is not a process of 'selection' or 'classification' as discussed above:

MB: Per noi, archiviare non vuol dire come dici tu [referring to the author's question] selezionare e scegliere. Per me, archiviare vuol dire costruire. Nel senso che […] anche da poche storie, archiviare vuol dire costruire una trasmissibilità di queste storie, no? Adattarle come dicevi tu, forse ai vari discorsi e vari contesti, con diverse forme che sono diventate soprattutto multimediali […] ma già dai tempi dell'inizio mi ricordo io avevo scelto delle letture di Aleida Assmann, Derrida, sull' archivio come azione. […] Io più che selezione, direi quasi se vuoi tutela, cura. Cura nel senso che queste storie non vadano perse se ci sono e se nascono. [57]

Nevertheless, I argue that the choices made by the members appear to follow an 'organisational line' that is not always clearly uttered. According to member Alessandro Triulzi:

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[56] Zakaria Mohamed Ali.
[57] Monica Bandella, Mario Badagliacca, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali.

I target cambiano a seconda anche delle occasioni. Tu devi tenere conto che noi siamo partiti come una specie di repository di una scuola, il che era naturalmente più limitato da un certo punto di vista, però aveva una continua occasione di frequentazione, ascolto continuo. Allora noi siamo un po' un collettore anche di iniziative singole molto più che non un'azienda. […] abbiamo una vision, ma la vision è di non averla in modo, programmaticamente. [58]

The lack of a clear 'vision' or precise guidelines leads the members to act according to their background or position, and on the basis of their personal interpretation of the AMM's method. For member Mario Badagliacca, the AMM's 'vision' is constituted by the common desire to produce stories that counter hegemonic representations of migration by mainstream media, politicians, and other dominant public figures:

Ci sono anche dei punti di partenza abbastanza semplici che noi usiamo, nel senso che generalmente nella sfera pubblica siamo noi a raccontare i migranti, che siano i giornalisti, o che siano... Noi ci siamo sempre chiesti, cosa vuole raccontare o racconterebbe un migrante e poi questa semplice domanda insomma ti apre degli scenari. […] Partendo da questo, sviluppando i lavori delle singole persone arrivano altri punti di riflessione, no? Partendo dai film di Dag, di Zakaria o dagli scritti... c'è un processo sempre in divenire.[59]

Therefore, the next question is which stories is the AMM looking for. The search for stories in opposition to a hegemonic, negative, and stereotypical representation of migration by mainstream media, politicians etc., implies a reflection on what a 'positive' story of migration is. When questioned on the issue, Triulzi replies:

Noi questo tipo di riflessione l'abbiamo fatto e abbiamo deciso di puntare sulla positività piuttosto che sulla negatività. Proprio perché l'immagine speculare che uno riceve stando in Italia leggendo i giornali, guardando la televisione è quella della negatività in generale. Oppure quella della vittimizzazione anche che è un altro pendant della negatività secondo noi. Quindi, anzi questi ultimi laboratori che abbiamo fatto, e che faccio ora nelle scuole, sono laboratori proprio che tendono ad enfatizzare più la soggettività, la soggettivazione di questi, dei soggetti migranti. E quindi, il loro valore, non tanto perché sono vittime, diciamo un po' alla Primo Levi, ma perché

[58] Alessandro Triulzi, Archivio delle Memorie Migranti, Rome, 2 June 2016.
[59] Monica Bandella, Mario Badagliacca, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali.

sono persone, essere umani che sono passati attraverso un percorso che da un lato distrugge, ma dall' altro anche arricchisce. E l'esperienza...la comunicazione del dolore è sempre una comunicazione che può sfociare in uno sguardo o caritatevole oppure di distacco. Invece la comunicazione della 'ingenuity' che non è la ingenuità italiana e della creatività e della capacità di sbrigarsi e di trovare delle soluzioni a problemi sovraumani e al...insomma, l'essere un po' cittadino del mondo, prima che questo mondo, in grado di accettare tutti come cittadini si crei. Credo che lo dimostrino più loro che non i ragazzi nostri ecco.[60]

For the AMM's president, this 'positiveness' is not accounted for by the usual parameters of 'cultural integration' or economic success:

Per noi, il successo è quando una persona realizza sé stessa, è quando una persona si trova in una certa situazione e riesce a non soccombere. Questo è un successo. Cioè da un lato noi non vogliamo una vittoria, una storia di vincenti. Noi vogliamo una storia di gente che ha combattuto contro una serie di ostacoli e si è misurata e attraverso questa è cresciuta come persona. Il successo come successo non ci interessa. Io per carità, questi qui che chiamano i migranti eroi sono gente sciagurata. Così come non sono eroi quelli che muoiono nei naufragi. Questi non sono eroi, sono malcapitati. Per positività, secondo me, vuol dire cercare zone di luce in un panorama generale di zone d'ombra.[61]

In short, the recognition of the potential omissions and contradictions of the archival practice has directed the AMM towards a 'disempowerment' in uttering clear guidelines for the production and selection of the migrant memories. Although the words recorded in the interviews reveal the presence of a long-lasting internal debate on what these memories should represent, this process has never brought the members to the draft of a series of fixed parameters.

The reluctance in adopting any form of 'bureaucratisation' has made the members' unexpected encounters and personal relations with migrants almost the only source for the collection of the memories collected in the archive. Consequently, particularly

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[60] Alessandro Triulzi.
[61] Alessandro Triulzi.

following the end of the collaboration with *Asinitas*, the *Archivio* has shown an evident difficulty in developing new activities and initiatives.

The consequences of this 'hands-off', driven-by-individual-interest approach are various. The unwillingness to take a clear line on which stories should be included or not in the archive, and the difficulty in finding unproblematic ways of widening the 'representativeness' of the *Archivio*, seem to expose the association to the influence of hegemonic discourse on migration.

When translated into practice, the members' choices appear to lead to three major consequences: the materials accessible online seem to be characterised by the predilection for the use of Italian language, by the embodiment of the migrant figure mainly in the experiences of Dagmawi Yimer, Zakaria Mohamed Ali etc., and by the choice of Lampedusa as a principal theme and site of the AMM's production.[62] The following sections will discuss these three points.

3.2.2 Questioning 'Italianness' and embodying migration

Paraphrasing Hall, the work of the AMM answers to the need to find means to 'represent people and places which are significantly different from us' capable of challenging the negative images imbued in public discourse on migration in Italy.[63] The activities of the AMM have entered the 'compelling and contested' theme of 'otherness', opposing a regime of representation that very often manages to silence and undermine the migrant perspective by producing a series of co-produced stories focusing on migrant subjectivity.[64] In the words of Gatta:

> Noi proviamo a fare un passo in avanti. Non è solo, racconta la storia di Mohamed […] il classico giornalista che intervista Mohamed che vede la persona e ti parla anche di storie personali. La cosa che secondo noi può contribuire a fare un passo in avanti nel rompere certi meccanismi è includere

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[62] It is important to make a distinction between the available materials and the totality of the testimonies collected by the association, because only the productions accessible online can be considered as actively taking part to the ongoing public debate on migration in Italy.

[63] Hall, 'The Spectacle of the Other', p. 225.

[64] Ibid.

nel processo rappresentativo la modalità di scelta della rappresentazione. Non è Zakaria che racconta la sua storia. Ma è Zakaria che racconta la sua storia e decide anche come farlo. All'interno di un contesto di persone che in qualche modo si interfacciano a lui...[65]

In this section, the AMM's productions will be analysed to highlight how the members '[...] intervene in the field of representation, to contest 'negative' images and transform representational practices around 'race' in a more 'positive' direction'.[66] What image of migration can be constructed from these documents?

Language (linguistic choices)

The first aspect standing out from the materials accessible on the AMM's website is the decision to privilege the use of Italian in most of the *Archivio*'s audio, videos and written testimonies.[67] While the motivations behind such a choice could be attributed simply to the aims and context in which the *Archivio* operates, this decision offers, once more, causes for reflection on its potential authority. It raises questions about the AMM's understanding of concepts such as culture and 'Italianness', but also interrogates the autonomy of migrant participants in deciding the means of communicating their memories.

For instance, Zakaria Mohamed Ali's decision to narrate his return to Lampedusa or translate some excerpts of his travel diary into Italian raises questions about the cultural assimilation of the migrant subjects, and the potential promotion of a correspondence between language and an unchanging Italian national identity. According to the members, the choice of promoting an accurate use of the Italian language in the films and materials produced by the migrants collaborating with the *Archivio* is a fundamental resource for legitimising their voices:

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[65] Gianluca Gatta.
[66] Hall, 'The Spectacle of the Other', pp. 225–26.
[67] See for instance Mahamed Aman, 'Ritorno a Lampedusa', 2013 <http://archiviomemoriemigranti.net/ritorno_lampedusa/> [accessed 29 January 2017] and Ali's 'To Whom It May Concern'; but also the sections:; 'Testimonianze - Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti' and; 'Interviste - Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti' <http://www.archiviomemoriemigranti.net/interviste> [accessed 29 January 2017].

La scelta della lingua italiana è una scelta che affonda nel fatto che noi viviamo in Italia che l'italiano può e deve diventare una lingua di resistenza e di sopravvivenza per loro […] noi insistendo sulla conoscenza della lingua esprimiamo anche un bisogno di equipaggiare, o permettere che loro si equipaggino di strumento culturali e linguistici per affermare la loro voce.[68]

For Triulzi, to be 'heard' and to be taken seriously by a potential audience, the carrier of memory needs to speak and write in Italian. This choice should not be considered as a consequence of an 'assimilationist' stance contradicting the multicultural aims of the project, but as a necessary piece of 'equipment' or 'tool' to support migrants' resistance to social exclusion and discrimination.

Moreover, the AMM's preference for the use of Italian does not necessarily prioritise the speaker's grammatical accuracy, but leaves space for forms of linguistic creativity, invention and hybridisation which interact with the subject's mother tongue. According to Triulzi, the AMM has:

[S]empre cercato di mantenere questo contatto con la lingua originale. Più complessa è la questione di quale italiano usare, e su questo noi stiamo molto riflettendo anche in seguito a ultime esperienze che noi stiamo facendo […] noi siamo del tutto a favore di questa lingua sghemba che esce fuori dai racconti. Il broken Italian, ma è un broken soltanto se uno lo legge dal punto di vista dell'Italian, perché se uno te lo legge da un punto di vista, dall'altra parte, è invece un italiano spesso molto inventivo che si serve di strumenti anche linguistici interessanti, ma soprattutto riflette un immaginario diverso, una visione diversa della vita. Un modo di porsi diverso, un occhio, uno sguardo diverso che è quello che bisogna mantenere. E che un eccesso di omologazione di buon italiano invece rischia di far perdere.[69]

The linguistic choices made during the production of the AMM's materials offer a tangible testimony of these complex processes. First, they indicate the audience targeted by the AMM: the films and material produced by the *Archivio* appear to be

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[68] Alessandro Triulzi.
[69] Alessandro Triulzi.

planned and aimed at mainly an Italian audience, composed of monolingual spectators. Secondly, they suggest that the relationship of the AMM's migrant participants with the Italian language, as suggested by the the work of Jennifer Burns on 'migrant' literature in Italy, is not necessarily a form of cultural assimilation:

> [T]he evidence in migration narratives of a 'resistance' to Italian as a dominant language, in terms of disruptive or deliberately inaccurate use of it, it is almost entirely absent. Italian appears to be used simply as an instrument for creative expression, rather than as a tool for making dissent or estrangement visible and audible.[70]

In the case of the AMM, the Italian language can be regarded as a tool to reclaim and perform subjectivity, not in the 'traditional' postcolonial sense of manipulating the dominant language to challenge the colonial authority, but as a way 'to perform a coherent and autonomous subjecthood in Italian society'.[71] Language is the key to the migrant members' future in the host country, an aspect that is expressed clearly by Zakaria Mohamed Ali in the following conversation with Monica Bandella:

> ZMA: […] Per esempio, quando le persone vogliono fare un'intervista, o andare in commissione. Se anche io [non] ho imparato un po' diciamo a parlare l'italiano, ho veramente la necessità di trovare un mediatore. Che vuol dire, se io non parlo proprio come voglio esprimermi, a questo punto riesco anche ad esprimermi con la mia lingua. Quindi, a imparare l'italiano vuol dire anche arrivare ad un certo, non essere perfetto, proprio come un madre lingua, però di arrivare ad un modo per poter comunicare, capirsi. E che sarebbe la cosa fondamentale.

> MB: […] È più trovare la tua forma di lingua, che dica chi sei, che ti faccia veramente esprimere quello che vuoi.

> ZMA: Si, si. Assolutamente. Perché poi succede che magari tu non parli soltanto la tua lingua, e impari l'italiano, è possibile nel mio caso, per esempio, parlando il somalo, arabo e l'inglese, a

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[70] Burns, Jennifer, *Migrant Imaginaries: Figures in Italian Migration Literature* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), p. 189.

[71] Burns, Jennifer, p. 188.

questo punto ti trovi diciamo diverse lingue, ma allo stesso modo, c'è...dici la tua parte in una

lingua nuova, questo è, per dire eccomi qua, tu lo dici in italiano: eccomi qua. Però come lo stai

pronunciando, sembri che sei un'altra persona a questo punto, perché lo dici in somalo, o lo dici

in arabo o in inglese, cambia proprio il suono...come lo dici […].

MB: Per me imparare una lingua è un po' come fare teatro, no? Tu fai il ruolo di una persona che

ti assomiglia, ma è un po' diverso perché si esprime in modo diverso da quello tuo consueto. E

più lo fai questo ruolo, più diventa familiare. E se questo ruolo poi sostituisce quasi interamente

quello che avevi prima, di te che parlavi in somalo.

JC: Diventa una questione identitaria?

MB and ZMA: Si, sì.

MB: Sempre considerando che l'identità per fortuna è una cosa mutevole, fluida, fatta di pezzi

vari ecc. Però è così no? Ti metti in gioco [...]

ZMA: Poi c'era una frase che io avevo lasciato all'entrata, all'ufficio della mia maestra L., ho scritto

la lingua italiana è la chiave del mio futuro […].[72]

Furthermore, the third aspect that can be highlighted by the analysis of the linguistic

choices in the AMM's material is the role played by the process of translation. The

available videos, audio materials, texts etc. stand as a testimony of how co-production

works in practice, and how different forms of translation have become a cardinal aspect

of the *Archivio*'s method. This process of negotiation creates a context in which the

ownership of a potential story and the 'purity' of an original text become contested. For

Gatta:

Presupporre che esista il testo originario secondo me è un errore. Non è, c'è un testo puro e poi

l'intervento. C'è un'interazione. Magari c'è un lasso di tempo in cui si è lavorato ad un testo. In

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[72] Monica Bandella, Mario Badagliacca, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali.

questo lasso di tempo per esempio, che può essere anche molto lungo, l'italiano della persona è cambiato. […] Quindi la nostra idea è di considerare il testo non un punto ma un intervallo. Il testo può essere fatto da più testi che si sedimentano […] conservando traccia di questa lavorazione. […] comunicare non il prodotto soltanto, ma il processo. Il processo e il prodotto devono stare assieme.[73]

For the *Archivio*'s members, in the transition from orality to written memory, a certain amount of editing cannot be avoided. For instance, Mahamed Aman's recorded voice in the story map 'Ritorno a Lampedusa', should not be seen only as the product of the single re-telling of the protagonist's feelings during his visit of the island's most important locations, but should be regarded as an open-ended story, always susceptible to re-contextualisation and new additions.

The pedagogical and public role of the AMM necessitates a degree of 'communicability' that can be attained only by revising the Italian used in the migrants' testimonies. The members' answer to the potential issues related to such a practice is to make sure that the product is always matched with a careful negotiation that considers the translation as an integral part of the production process.

The translation of some excerpts of Zakaria Mohamed Ali's travel diary for the eBook 'Incontri di storie' is an excellent example of the different linguistic layers involved in the co-production of one of the memories that are included in the archive.[74] First, the text is translated from Somali to Italian by the author, then it is revised and commented by Italian member Monica Bandella. Finally, the two decide what needs to be amended or preserved. The final sentence of the published text shows this compromise between accuracy and 'linguistic creativity':

Un giorno ti svegli che il mare è tranquillo e ci sono tanti ragazzini, tante persone che nuotano e giocano fra di loro e si divertono, un altro giorno è tutta diversa: ti svegli che il mare è mosso e rischi di 'entrare', nel mare.[75]

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[73] Gianluca Gatta.
[74] *Incontri Di Storie - L'archivio Delle Memorie Migranti Si Racconta* (E-Book: Giunti Scuola, 2015).
[75] *Incontri Di Storie - L'archivio Delle Memorie Migranti Si Racconta*, p. 8.

Preserving the word 'entrare', instead of substituting it with the appropriate verb 'annegare', can be regarded as a tool for maintaining the communicative efficiency of Ali's Italian, whilst still retaining the additional meaning created by the ambiguity of this word.

From these materials, we can witness how apparently simple linguistic choices made by the AMM's members are charged with identity questions. These practices not only affect the construction of a more inclusive or open Italian cultural identity, but also play a fundamental role in the participants' personal cultural identity. As posed by Bandella:

> Io per la mia storia accademica, sono una filologa che ha fatto edizioni critiche ecc. E questo mi ha portato […] anche con Gianluca a farmi tante domande, cosa correggiamo, cosa non correggiamo? Perché venivamo anche da una scuola di italiano che era Asinitas, dove la correzione era fatta in un certo modo […] però lì è chiaro che se tu vuoi...queste storie nascono per essere lette, o ascoltate […] quindi è ovvio che bisogna far sì che siano capite... è ovvio che un italiano non deve dire no, tanto non ci capisco niente, è tutto sbagliato. Ci vuole però un lavoro molto lungo e dettagliato […] di mediazione linguistica [...] bisogna tenere tutte e due le cose. Perché loro, non vogliono. Se ci sono degli errori, dicono correggimi, no?[76]

In the first case, the necessity for the AMM of choosing Italian as its main output language reflects the tension between the *national* target of its initiatives and the intrinsic *transnational* nature of the memories narrated by its members. By means of making visible minor histories that connect Italian identity to the transnational Mediterranean context re-activated by recent migration, the AMM wishes to create a 'bridge' between two apparently opposing frameworks.

One the one hand, the use of Italian seeks to offer stories challenging the part of the Italian public opinion that considers migration as something not constitutive of Italian society, culture, and history. For the *Archivio*, the Italian language is a tool of

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[76] Monica Bandella, Mario Badagliacca, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali.

'integration', but, as explained by Triulzi, the members have a different understanding of this process:

> L'integrazione noi l'intendiamo come mantenere le persone integre. Che è diverso. L'unico modo, accezione, in cui noi accettiamo la parola integrazione e perché le persone restino integre loro, passando attraverso un percorso che è di adattamento culturale, linguistico ecc. ma che deve permettere di essere loro integre. E questo non succede quando i loro diritti anche di espressione, della loro cultura, o della loro lingua o religione non viene mantenuta.[77]

On the other hand, the migrants' decision to re-tell their stories in Italian expresses a wish to inspire understanding and acceptance from the potential Italian listener, which works – as argued by Stuart Hall – as a mean of re-tracing their 'roots', their personal history, and their identity not through an 'archaeological mere recovery' of their journey, but through creative practices of representation.[78] For Yimer, Aman and Ali, then, the decision of re-telling the story of their return to Lampedusa in Italian is an act of 'positioning': a means of locating their identity in Italian society; a way to create their cultural identity in Italy.

Only a few years after 'Come un uomo sulla terra' and 'Soltanto il Mare', Yimer has taken the decision to produce a short film in another language. 'Asmat – Nomi' is a video that commemorates the victims of the 3rd of October 2013.[79] In the short film, underwater images of actors covered by white sheets (symbolising the 'ghostly' figures 'haunting' the waters surrounding the 'Spiaggia dei Conigli' where the shipwreck took place) are juxtaposed with a series of drawings, accompanied by the voice of Eden Getachew Zerihun.

The language of the narrator is Tigrinya, the language of most of the victims. It could be assumed that Yimer, having achieved both personal stability and public recognition

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[77] Alessandro Triulzi.

[78] See Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 222–37.

[79] 'Asmat – Nomi. Un Documentario Di Dagmawi Yimer' <http://archiviomemoriemigranti.net/Asmat--Nomi> [accessed 16 March 2017].

by means of his work, can finally find space for a more distinct linguistic and visual approach to his filming. Italian is present only in the second part of the video to repeat and to emphasise, through the translation of the names' meanings, the shock of listening to the seemingly never-ending list of victims. The increase in the 'interference' of diverse types of multilingualism in the AMM's projects can be interpreted as further development challenging the 'naturalisation' of the link between language and nation.[80]

Embodying migration

Yimer's memorial video not only raises questions on the linguistic choices of the author, but the female narrating voice of the film also points to the second point of discussion with regards to the AMM's productions. At the end of 2017, the almost total absence of memories of migration from a female point of view is one of the critical aspects raised by the analysis of the *Archivio*'s production and collections. When asked about it, Triulzi bluntly replies:

> La storia al femminile, noi è inutile che cerchiamo di dire cose che non sono, non ce l'abbiamo. Non ce l'abbiamo perché abbiamo avuto pochi incontri efficaci con donne migranti.[81]

This aspect can be addressed from different angles. It does not only reflect the questions of 'selectivity' and the difficulties in finding new participants, or the AMM's understanding of 'positiveness' and 'success' discussed in the previous paragraph, but can also be used to prompt a wider reflection on the role of gender in the representation of migration.

Looking at the materials accessible on the website, apart from the narrating voice of 'Asmat-nomi', only two stories are about women or told by women: Hevi Dilara's short

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[80] For a discussion of forms of Translanguaging in the Italian context see Duncan, 'Translanguaging'.
[81] Alessandro Triulzi.

film 'Bilal',[82] and Desislava Stoichkova's video 'A lavoro',[83] both filmed as part of the video project 'Benvenuti in Italia'.[84] The underrepresentation of women is also maintained by the further absence of female stories in the 'interviews and written testimonies' section of the website.

At first sight, the AMM appears to reproduce the 'systematic lack of attention for issues of concern to migrant women' exhibited by the Italian media.[85] When interrogated on the issue, the members appear aware of this 'absence', and clarify that various strategies have been attempted to overcome this underrepresentation.[86] Bandella seems to connect the problem with an evident difficulty in meeting new people and establishing closer relationships with migrant women:

> Ovviamente me lo sono anche chiesto, ho detto, quando ho iniziato ad andare a scuola ad Asinitas, ovviamente avevo una relazione più facile con le donne, essendo io donna ecc. Però il fatto che non sia, anche da parte mia, che non siano poi venute collaborazioni e lavori fatti insieme a delle donne, è stato proprio una ragione molto semplice. Nel senso che io ho instaurato dei rapporti di amicizia, poi al di fuori di Asinitas, non con donne. E quindi […] è stato naturale che per questi lavori che abbiamo fatto insieme a Zaki e agli altri, sono venuti dal fatto che appunto abbiamo approfondito una conoscenza. Non sarei andata da donne, a dirgli raccontami la tua storia, senza aver prima costruito una relazione fata di incontri, fatta poi di autonarrazione di workshop ecc.[87]

Furthermore, the focus on the gender of the migrant memories included in the AMM can be used as a tool to address, once again, the members' unspoken agreement on representing only 'positive' stories of migration, and their different understanding of this concept. When questioned on which women's memories the *Archivio* would focus

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[82] Hevi Dilara, *Bilal - Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti*, 2012
<http://www.archiviomemoriemigranti.net/filmgallery/show/1432> [accessed 15 March 2017].
[83] Desislava Stoichkova, *A Lavoro - Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti*, 2012
<http://www.archiviomemoriemigranti.net/filmgallery/show/1435> [accessed 15 March 2017].
[84] Dagmawi Yimer and others, 2012.
[85] Alberta Giorgi, 'The Cultural Construction of Migrant Women in the Italian Press', *A Manipulação Xenófoba e Política Dos Direitos Das Mulheres*, e-cadernos CES, 12 (2012), p. 67
<https://doi.org/urn:doi:10.4000/eces.1026>.
[86] See for instance the recent collaboration with writer Djarah Akan and her blog on life in Castel Volturno.
[87] Monica Bandella, Mario Badagliacca, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali.

on (the members where challenged on whether a prostitution-related story would be included or not), they reply:

> La storia di prostituzione è una storia che l'archivio ascolterebbe, è sempre questo lo spostamento che provo a fare. Mi piace dire che noi non diamo la parola, perché io odio questa espressione. Ma proviamo a creare un contesto dove la parola possa emergere, quindi proviamo a dare ascolto.[88]

> Ma la positività nella storia di prostituzione è quando c'è consapevolezza dei meccanismi, e c'è il tentativo di uscirne fuori. Lì la positività deriva dal fatto, invece della contaminazione, che può nascere dall'incontro, al limite con un cliente un po' più consapevole dell'altro, e l'inizio di una storia più o meno che sottrae questa persona alla prostituzione, e l'altro è la capacità di incontrarsi con dei mediatori o con anche degli operatori della sicurezza attraverso i quali, attraverso un'opera di convincimento riescano diciamo sottrarre queste persone al traffico. Quindi, la positività secondo me non è tanto il fatto se o meno la storia è positiva, quanto dal continuo negoziato che ogni essere umano si trova a dover fare con la situazione esterna in cui lui si trova.[89]

The difficulty in finding a right answer to this question should not only be regarded as a limit applying solely to the *Archivio*'s members, who, nevertheless, have showed awareness and willingness to question their method and to overcome these limits. The analysis of the presence of women in the AMM's representations of migration should rather be placed, instead, in the wider theoretical discussion of the role of gender in memory studies of trauma and violence.

Marianne Hirsch's work on the writing and visual culture of the Holocaust offers various insights on the role of gender as a vehicle of representation, which could help in understanding the difficulties faced by the *Archivio*. Far from equating migration to Europe, and the countless deadly crossings of the Mediterranean Sea to the Shoah, Hirsch's work can be used to draw a parallel between the two fields, highlighting how in both contexts masculine and heteronormative stories have – for the most part – played a dominant role. In her work on 'post-memory', Hirsch argues that:

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[88] Gianluca Gatta.
[89] Alessandro Triulzi.

> [G]ender, as sexual difference, can fulfill a number of functions in the work of memory. It can serve as a figure that can mediate the ways in which certain images and certain narratives have been able to circulate in the culture of the postgeneration. In traumatic histories, gender can be invisible or hypervisible; it can make trauma unbearable or it can serve as a fetish that helps to siled us from its effects.[90]

Although we cannot yet speak of 'postmemory' or 'postgeneration' for such recent episodes as the shipwrecks that took place in the waters surrounding Lampedusa, Hirsch's analysis suggests two potential explanations for the general lack of women's voices re-telling the often-traumatic stories of migration.

On the one hand, the absence of women's voices in the AMM can be regarded as a consequence of the process of 'hypermasculinisation' of the migrant figure produced by the securitarian gaze of media and political coverage of the phenomenon. It could be argued that any attempt to produce a more positive representation of migrants' presence in Italy needs to privilege stories of migrant men, as it is they who carry the 'burden' of dismantling a long series of racial stereotypes that continue to shape practices of 'othering' in Italy (e.g. the migrant 'blackness', sexuality, criminalisation etc.). On the other hand, this 'silence' can be connected to the use of women's bodies as a vehicle of representation: the gender of the potential victim is used as an explanatory paradigm. In the aftermath of a tragic shipwreck, the testimony of a woman is not necessary. The presence of her body does not necessitate further explanations; it speaks for itself.

Women and children are seen seen as an 'archetypal victim'.[91] Within a 'humanitarian' understanding of migration, migrant women and children, contrary to migrant men, do not need to justify their presence in Italy or in Europe. These practices of representation do not only silence many subjective experiences of migration, but also

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[90] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 18.
[91] See for instance the media outcry around the case of Aylan Kurdi. Patrick Kingsley and Safak Timur, 'Stories of 2015: How Alan Kurdi's Death Changed the World', *The Guardian*, 31 December 2015, section World news <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/31/alan-kurdi-death-canada-refugee-policy-syria-boy-beach-turkey-photo> [accessed 7 August 2018].

decontextualise and the depoliticise the reasons underpinning the journeys of many women to Europe.

In the case of Lampedusa, some minor stories from a woman's perspective can be found, but their numbers are extremely limited compared to the countless memories recorded and produced by migrant men.[92] Arguably, Lampedusa can be seen as constructed as an 'only male-populated' place and imaginary.

Beyond the gender of the AMM migrant members, the work of Yimer, Ali and Aman and the testimonies of other men hailing from Ethiopia accessible on the website play a further role in framing the representation of migration in certain terms.[93] The stories of the three authors, and of the protagonists of Yimer's 'Va pensiero. Storie Ambulanti', can be considered as embodying the experience of migration in Italy in a quite specific paradigm: the figure of the migrant represented in the *Archivio* appears as a black male adult, often hailing from a former Italian colony.

Once again, the prominence of the stories of the three principal protagonists of the AMM's work could be limited to the research interests of some of the project's founders, and to the common experience of *Asinitas.* Nevertheless, these memories should be connected to a wider reflection on the cultural construction of postcolonial Italian identity.

According to Lombardi-Diop and Giuliani, the idea of contemporary Italian identity continues to be founded on an undisputed paradigm of 'whiteness' and 'Mediterranean-ness'.[94] This process is reactivated by new forms of racial discrimination that, for Romeo, should be connected to the visible 'blackness' of mainstream media representation of migrant presence in Italy.[95] In this context, the stories of the AMM's protagonists, as well

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[92] One example can be found among the survivors of 3 October 2013. '"Io Non so Nuotare". La Storia Di Fanus, Una Sopravvissuta Del 3 Ottobre 2013', *Comitato 3 Ottobre*, 2016 <http://www.comitatotreottobre.it/2016/02/io-non-so-nuotare-la-storia-di-fanus-una-sopravvissuta-del-3-ottobre-2013/> [accessed 3 February 2016].

[93] See Gabriel Tseggai, '"Il Sapore Della Libertà" - Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti' <http://www.archiviomemoriemigranti.net/Home/PostExtended/1f09d889-bb5b-4e61-862c-d2d02e50704d> [accessed 15 March 2017] and; 'AMM GT n. 3 - Archivio Delle Memorie Migranti' <http://www.archiviomemoriemigranti.net/Home/PostExtended/e31569ca-65c1-46a4-914a-f814e88d2806> [accessed 15 March 2017].

[94] Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop, pp. 12–13.

[95] Romeo, p. 209.

as postcolonial and migrant writers and artists more generally, should be seen as a means of challenging a conceptualisation of 'Italianness' that has been constructed on the normality of 'whiteness' or the 'absence' of colour. In this process, the challenge faced by the AMM is that of avoiding the risk of 'homogenizing all non-white cultures as other'. Hence, the members must find new ways to widen the spectrum of memories included in the archive.[96]

Before addressing the third, and final, aspect standing out from the AMM's materials, it can be argued that the work of the AMM reveals an increasing interest from civil society in forms of representation that show a different image of 'otherness' in the country. As we have just seen, these practices of representation are burdened by many challenges.

The relationships between the 'migrant' and the 'Italian' identity in the practices of the AMM is a complicated one. Shohat and Stam have highlighted how the 'constructionist' view has been instrumental in combatting practices of discrimination. They have also reiterated how, as a consequence, the question 'who can speak for whom?' has been rendered almost unanswerable.[97]

Shohat and Stam suggest that 'at least provisionally, identities can be formulated as situated in geographical space and "riding" historical momentum'.[98] In short, the authors suggest that 'rather than asking who can speak, then, we should ask about how to speak together'.[99] The AMM is a good example of the challenge to construct 'alliances' and 'coalitions' between different subjectivities, in order to share 'the critique of domination and the burden of representation'. The efforts of its members appear to make of 'representation less of a burden and more of a collective pleasure and responsibility'.[100]

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[96] Hall, 'The Spectacle of the Other', p. 274.
[97] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 342–44.
[98] Shohat and Stam, p. 346.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.

3.3 'Returning to Lampedusa'. Lampedusa according to the AMM

The third and final aspect that stands out from the analysis of the AMM's production is the prominence of materials dedicated to Lampedusa, particularly to the theme of a 'return' to the island. Between 2010 and 2011, the *Archivio* has significantly shifted the focus of its work to Lampedusa. The choice of privileging migrant memories concentrating on such a place raises a series of questions on how the hegemony of the Lampedusa symbol may have affected the work of the AMM, and on how the *Archivio* may in turn have affected the significance of the island.

In the final section of this chapter, I use the testimonies of Yimer, Ali and Aman to address whether the individual stories produced by AMM members offer a tool to restore migrant subjectivity and eventually challenge the hegemonic symbolism of Lampedusa.

3.3.1 The 'narrative of the self' and the 'burden of representation'

As we saw in the first part of this chapter, one of the major theoretical insights that can be drawn from the discussion of the AMM's activities through the lens of Appadurai's 'Archive as aspiration', is that the progressive globalisation and 'mediatisation' of memory have increased accessibility to archival forms for social groups that are usually underrepresented in national and institutional archives. The 'opening' of the 'monumental archive' into a series of thematic, often independent, archives has not only 'democratised' the archival practice, but has led to the 'blurring' of the boundaries between memory and history, the public and the private, and the individual and the collective.

The AMM works both as a family and as an institutional archive. The recording of the personal stories of migrant participants does not only preserve their experience of migration, but these individual stories become public statements as well. They are shared with the public to promote new forms of cultural and collective identities. Following Hirsh and Smith:

The individual story, whether told through oral narrative, fiction, film, testimony, or performance, also serves as a challenge and a countermemory to official hegemonic history.[101]

Thus, the AMM's stories could be regarded as acts of 'counter-memory', that, unlike traditional historical narrative, reconstruct the significance of almost twenty-five years of migration to (and via) Lampedusa, 'eschewing the generalizing and homogenizing tendencies of identity politics'.[102]

In relation to this process, Gatta recognises that the AMM's materials seem to be shaped by a sort of 'representational individualism':

C'è, c'è stato anche un po' di confronto interno su quello che potremmo definire una sorta di individualismo rappresentativo no? La singola persona che racconta l'evento, la situazione, ed esprime il proprio punto di vista, testimonia qualcosa ecc. Se vedi i film, ad esempio 'Soltanto il mare', che è il ritorno di una persona a Lampedusa. La struttura degli altri due lavori su Lampedusa richiama questa forma no? Una persona che ha un diario o che filma. […] la domanda potrebbe essere: è un processo necessariamente individuale? […] Quali sono le eventuali remore, le timidezze, le perplessità nell'immaginare anche forme di ritorno collettivo? […] Proviamo a sperimentare delle forme intrecciate di racconto, i singoli soggetti che dicono loro e prendono decisioni, però avendo come scopo la creazione di un film, una narrazione corale […] evidentemente, almeno per le persone che abbiamo incontrato, parto da quelle esperienze concrete, il desiderio di raccontare da un sé ben preciso, era preponderante rispetto all'idea di costruire un discorso corale. [103]

Therefore, Gatta does not exclude the possibility of exploring new forms of subjective but collective narration. Starting from individual stories, he hopes to find 'nodes', shared ground where the protagonists' autobiographical experiences could overlap, building a more 'choral' narrative. Nevertheless, Yimer, Ali and Aman's wish to narrate from a very personal point of view has prevailed.

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[101] Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, 'Feminism and Cultural Memory: An Introduction', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28.1 (2002), 1–19 (p. 7) <https://doi.org/10.1086/340890>.
[102] Hirsch and Smith, p. 7.
[103] Gianluca Gatta.

The focus on diaries, autobiographical narration or the 'narrative of the self', according to Steedman 'has become the dominant way of telling the story of how one got to be the way one is'.[104] Thus, for the AMM's protagonists, forms of autobiographical narration have become the main tool to reclaim their subjectivity.

However, this choice comes at a price. It bestows the three protagonists with a 'burden of representation'.[105] Using the example of black art and artists, Mercer highlights how:

> Artists positioned in the margins of the institutional spaces of cultural production are burdened
> with the impossible role of speaking as 'representatives' in the sense that they are expected to
> 'speak for' the black communities from which they come.[106]

For Gilroy, the issue of 'representativeness' is not limited to the 'practices of visual or textual production', but it encompasses 'representation' as a practice of 'delegation' and 'substitution'.[107] For instance, Zakaria Mohamed Ali's 'To whom it may concern' not only bears the weight of representing a paradigmatic experience of migration to Lampedusa or, more in general, to Italy. It is also charged with the political implications of the *Archivio*'s project: to what extent is the figure of Zakaria Mohamed Ali representative of the migrant communities in Italy? How much agency did he have in assuming this role?

According to Gilroy, the historical structural marginalisation of black artists in accessing the means of cultural production obliges these actors 'to speak on behalf of a heterogenous collectivity'.[108] For Mercer, this practice:

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[104] Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 76.
[105] Paul Gilroy, 'Cruciality and the Frog's Perspective', *Third Text*, 2.5 (1988), 33–44 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528828808576202>; Kobena Mercer, 'Black Art and the Burden of Representation', *Third Text*, 4.10 (1990), 61–78 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528829008576253>.
[106] Mercer, p. 62.
[107] Gilroy, 'Cruciality and the Frog's Perspective', p. 34.
[108] Gilroy, 'Cruciality and the Frog's Perspective', p. 34.

Immediately sets up a moral problematic that presupposes a contractual model of subjectivity in which black artists are assumed to have a fundamental 'freedom of choice' which has to be reconciled with their 'accountability' to the community.[109]

The complex relationship between Zakaria Mohamed Ali's role of witness and his professional identity as a journalist and AMM member is an example of the burden of representing not only your national community, but also the heterogenous migrant collectivity. When Ali is invited as guest speaker on a talk show on the 'migration crisis' on Rainews 24, he willingly fulfils his testimonial role by re-telling the story of his journey, arguing for the rights of migrants and refugees. Nevertheless, when invited to another newscast on the political crisis in Somalia, Ali notes with disappointment that his invitation is not due to his journalistic expertise in his homeland. Once again, he is asked to fulfil the role of the witness through the re-telling of his personal story. In this way, his talents, knowledge, and subjectivity appear to be trapped within the boundaries of an 'endless' testimonial role.

In Peter Schreiner's 'Lampedusa', a feature film in which Ali plays an autobiographical part, the testimonial role is deployed on three levels: as first-hand witness, actor, and television testimony.[110]

Figure 11 Zakaria shows his tv appearance in Peter Schreiner's Lampedusa

[109] Mercer, p. 65.
[110] Peter Schreiner, *Lampedusa*, 2016.

Moreover, bell hooks' reflection on Isaac Julien's statement on black cinema can be used to highlight another feature of the AMM's testimonies.

Julien reminded us then that "blackness as a sign is never enough. What does that black subject do, how does it act, how does it think politically? . . . being black isn't really good enough for me: I want to know what your cultural politics are".[111]

Adapting Julien's words to the practice of representing migration, we should not only question the 'blackness' of the AMM migrant participants, but we should also stress that self-representation – or, more specifically, films on migration made by migrant directors – are not necessarily the solution to the issue of agency in narratives of migration. These practices do not automatically challenge hegemonic discourse. Following hooks:

When black filmmakers are able to treat a range of subject matter, not just that which highlights blackness, then there is more freedom to resist the racial burden of representation. Certainly the critique of racial essentialism has intensified awareness that the simple fact of their skin color does not ensure that black filmmakers will create images that are radical or subversive.[112]

Zakaria Mohamed Ali's testimony is important not because it represents a first-hand memory of migration to Lampedusa, but because it has a political and critical value: the author is willing to assume this role and use his visual work to challenge the EU's border regime. In the film *Lampedusa*, he states:

'Sono tornato da uomo libero. Da noi, la libertà, ci nasci. Ma quando dico sono tornato da uomo libero intendo che sono arrivato a Lampedusa nel 2008 con un viaggio forzato. Tra virgolette clandestino, però adesso sono qui da cittadino del mondo. Questo mare qua è così grande, è gigante. E la responsabilità non può prendere il mare. Le istituzioni, i governi, la politica sono loro

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[111] bell hooks, *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 8.
[112] hooks, *Reel to Real*, p. 90.

che devono prendere la responsabilità, non devono aspettare che tutti i giorni la gente muore in questo mare. Noi siamo esseri umani'.[113]

Last but not least, the testimonial role of the AMM migrant members can be seen as that of the 'survivor'. Drawing on Primo Levi's use of autobiographical narration to produce collective forms of witnessing and commemoration, the migrants that have made it to Lampedusa, outliving the perilous crossing, bear the impossible task of testifying for those who did not make it. The potential 'shame' and sense of guilt for having outlived their travel companions is not the only burden faced by the survivors. For Harrowitz, 'the survivor must testify, and yet cannot fully testify'.[114]

Thus, Yimer, Ali, and Aman's stories of return to Lampedusa not only help them reclaim their subjectivity, but they also perform a commemorative action. Mahamed Aman's description of his visit to the main sights of Lampedusa as a 'free man' is imbued with acts of mourning and remembrance. Every location he visits sparks both a memory of his first experience on the island, and a thought for those who did not make it.

Mentre giravo sono tornato col ricordo a quattro anni fa quando non vedevo alcun posto o persone e Lampedusa mi sembrava un'isola abbandonata; invece oggi c'è movimento, persone, bar eccetera, come in una città normale. Guardavo il passaggio del mare da lontano e mi ha fatto pensare che durante il viaggio odiavo il mare e anche che mi sembrava un assassino e mi faceva paura, invece oggi il mare era talmente tranquillo e quando l'ho visto così piatto e calmo, chiedevo tra me e me: "Mare che carattere hai? Anche tu fai la discriminazione, cerchi i poveri clandestini?".[115]

Both Aman and Ali share a sense of duty towards their travel companions, and all the other people that did not make it. During their return to the island, the pair visit the cemetery to pay tribute to the nameless graves of migrants washed up on the island.

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[113] Zakaria Mohamed Ali in: Schreiner.
[114] Nancy Harrowitz, *Primo Levi and the Identity of a Survivor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), p. 7.
[115] Aman.

For Aman and Ali, as for Dagmawi Yimer with 'Asmat-nomi', the act of writing and reading at loud the names of the dead plays a fundamental role in processing the grief:

> Prima quando sentivo parlare della porta d'Europa immaginavo un ingresso molto grande, ma quando l'ho visto era più piccolo del previsto, l'ingresso del CIE era più grande. Siamo andati a mandare i fiori al mare, una commemorazione che è stata organizzata da boat 4 people. Ci hanno invitato a leggere la lista dei deceduti nel mare durante il viaggio e quando leggevo mi ricordavo di tutti i miei amici e familiari che sono rimasti nel mare. Siamo saliti su uno scoglio per leggere […] abbiamo pronunciato i nomi di persone che non ce l'hanno fatta, quando vedo oggi la porta d'Europa penso alla speranza di vita e al sogno di non morire.[116]

As explained by the words of Zakaria Mohamed Ali, the return to Lampedusa can be considered as a wish for 'closure'; the search for the last commemorative act that could end the process of mourning that the survivors need to undergo:

> [A]nche lì, di andare lì e vedere no? Quelle persone come sono stati sepolti, e vedere dove sto mentre io guardo lì, ricordarmi quando si è rotta la nostra barca o quando prendeva l'altra barca, di sentirsi in qualche modo non il più fortunato di quell'altro compagno di viaggio che è morto lì, ma in qualche modo ti senti anche no, di venire a visitarle queste persone. Di venire a testimoniare, anche per dire che guarda che ci sono migliaia e migliaia che non hanno potuto di essere qua, di parlarvi. Io oggi sono uno di loro, ce l'ho fatta ma non sono stato io il bravo.[117]

3.3.2 The narrative of return

In the AMM's materials, the return to Lampedusa has become a recurrent theme. This desire for 'closure' is not only reflected in the commemorative role played by the island's locations, but it also symbolises the authors' wish for 'completion'. It is a tool for reclaiming freedom, dignity, names, and identity:

> Ho avuto la fortuna di rivedere Lampedusa dopo quattro anni dal mio sbarco. Quando sono salito sull'aereo il mio cuore batteva forte perché ho iniziato a riflettere su di me e sulla differenza tra

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[116] Aman.
[117] Zakaria Mohamed Ali.

il primo sbarco e ora. Torno con un'identità, un pezzo di carta, la lingua italiana, con la libertà e con il mio nome. All'epoca del primo sbarco il mio nome era clandestino e pericoloso. […] "Per la prima volta nella mia vita sono salito sull'aereo come un uomo libero e come un turista, senza sorveglianza". […] però su di me non c'è differenza prima e oggi.[118]

[E]ravamo solo numeri io avevo il 29…ma se oggi vado al CIE di Lampedusa al poliziotto dico che sono Zakaria e vengo dalla Somalia.[119]

The need for 'completion' is not only symbolised by the visit to the places characterising their first day in Italy, but also by the authors' attention for the objects embodying fundamental parts of their identity. For Aman this 'new' self can be found in the present, in his knowledge of the Italian language, and the acquisition of an ID card. The reasons behind this need for written documentation and the insufficiency of oral memory are offered by bell hooks:

The burden of proof weighs heavily on the hearts of those who do not have written documentation, who rely on oral testimony passed from generation to generation. Within a white supremacist culture, to be without documentation is to be without a legitimate history. In the culture of forgetfulness, memory alone has no meaning.[120]

It is in this context that Zakaria Mohamed Ali's struggle to preserve the memories of the 'old' self in order to understand his 'present' self is rooted. His firmness in defending his diploma, photos, t-shirt etc. is a recurrent theme in all his video testimonies. Not only in 'To whom it may concern' and 'Grooving Lampedusa', but also in Schreiner's 'Lampedusa', where the director captures the importance of his diploma in one vivid close-up of Ali holding his documents.

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[118] Aman.
[119] Zakaria Mohamed Ali in: Badagliacca.
[120] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 193.

Figure 12 Still from Schreiner's Lampedusa (2016)

In the words of Ali, being deprived of his belongings:

È una violenza proprio di perdere una memoria come hanno fatto per me. Io ci ho messo ore e ore, giorni e giorni per strillare e dire no questo è mio diploma non voglio perdere perché ho rischiato nella vita per attraversare il mare e nel deserto, e non voglio perdere perché questo sono il mio riconoscimento nessuno mi conosce, sono arrivato adesso, però questi certificano cosa ho studiato e chi sono.[121]

His struggle to keep them is an act of resistance against the violent process of anonymisation imposed by the EU border regime, that it is also reiterated in his attempt to retrieve the lost pictures of a friend he met in Riace.

In short, I argue that the relationship between the AMM's protagonists and the island works in the same way as their personal connection to certain objects. Lampedusa can also be considered a 'lieu de mémoire' triggering and 'reconnecting' some latent memories.[122] For Hirsch:

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[121] Zakaria Mohamed Ali in: Badagliacca.
[122] See Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Volume 1: The Construction of the French Past*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

Return journey can have the effect of such a reconnection of severed parts, and, if this indeed happens, they can release latent, repressed, or dissociated memories – memories that, metaphorically speaking, remained behind, concealed within the object. And, in so doing, they can cause them to surface and become reembodied. Objects and places, therefore, Assmann argues, can function as triggers of remembrance that connect us, bodily and thus also emotionally with the object world we inhabit.[123]

In Stuart Hall's words, Dagmawi Yimer, Zakaria Mohamed Ali and Mahamed Aman, in recording and re-telling their return to the island, perform an act of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. Their cultural identity 'belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation'.[124]

For Zakaria Mohamed Ali, returning to Lampedusa:

[…] vuol dire riconoscersi, anche trovare sé stesso. […] In qualche modo sto generalizzando anche le cose. Però non posso definirle...perché lì è semplicemente anche il luogo dove mi hanno salvato, dove sono rinato. In qualche modo. Arrivare lì, sentirmi salvo, chiamare la famiglia per dire sono arrivato […] Come tantissimi dicono, magari ti faccio questa domanda scomoda: come è stato il tuo viaggio? Per me non è un problema raccontarlo o condividere, perché queste cose sono delle cose che devono sapere le persone. Per questo io ogni volta che vado lì, continuo comunque a rivedere gli stessi luoghi, sia il cimitero delle barche, il cimitero delle persone, sia il centro di accoglienza, sia anche le strade dove sono stato salutato dalle persone che non conoscevo, o che non ho avuto la possibilità di passeggiare o di camminare su quell'isola. Quindi per me dove sono rinato diciamo o dove magari mi manca il vero Zakaria che conoscevo che adesso voglio recuperare. Per questo io ci vado spesso.[125]

Therefore, these returns should be not only about 'endings' and completion; they should also be new 'beginnings':

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[123] Hirsch, pp. 211–12.
[124] Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', p. 225.
[125] Zakaria Mohamed Ali.

Di me, di persona diciamo quando parlo o sento di Lampedusa, significa tutt'altro... è un posto speciale. [...] Io ci vado e ci ritornerò ancora, per me Lampedusa non significa un confine [...] è un posto dove ho iniziato, dove è anche iniziata la mia storia dell'Europa, se non fossi arrivato a Lampedusa oggi non sarei qua. Quindi con Lampedusa... To whom it may concern non sarebbe arrivato in Europa o a Bruxelles...Perché? Perché proprio. E questa è Lampedusa, tutto può cominciare a Lampedusa, come è cominciata anche la mia storia [...] Peter se non vedeva Grooving se non vedeva To whom, se io non tornavo a Lampedusa io non avrei partecipato a recitare la mia storia nel film di Peter. Quindi anche tutto questo è merito di Lampedusa no?[126]

3.3.3 Beyond the Lampedusa Symbol

It is undeniable that Lampedusa is at the centre of the AMM's work. Having explained the relevance of this place for the AMM's migrant members, it is also important to remember how this island has shaped the careers of other members such as Gianluca Gatta, Mario Badagliacca, and Monica Bandella:

MB: le cose almeno che io ho fatto con l'Archivio, Lampedusa c'era perché, perché per Zakaria, per Mahamed, Lampedusa era un qualcosa di particolare. [...] perché Lampedusa simbolicamente...era un pezzo della storia di vita di Zakaria e anche mia, perché ci sono andata anch'io, anche di Mario, anche di Gianluca, che avevamo condiviso. Infatti, abbiamo parlato di Lampedusa nel ritorno che avevamo più o meno condiviso. [...] per l'Archivio, Lampedusa è diventata proprio il viaggio collettivo [...] È da lì che è partito più o meno tutto, l'attenzione [...] Tutte storie di vita vera, non simbologia imposta o cercata.[127]

Therefore, the 'cumbersome' presence of Lampedusa in the *Archivio*'s project is not seen by its members as a consequence of the hegemony of Lampedusa symbolism. Nevertheless, the migrant memories in the AMM are not inevitably unaffected hegemonic discourses. For instance, in considering Yimer's films it is not enough to speak of them as counter-representations of Lampedusa from a migrant point of view. Their images should also be questioned in the light of dominant tropes characterising Lampedusa's hegemonic symbolism.

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[126] Zakaria Mohamed Ali.
[127] Monica Bandella, Mario Badagliacca, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali.

Traces of the tropes constituting the hegemonic Lampedusa symbol discussed in the previous chapters can be found in all the four productions documenting the AMM members' return to Lampedusa. Mahamed Aman's map lists:

1)   The relationship with the locals and their more or less welcoming reactions to migrant presence on the island.[128]

2)   The striking comparison between the stories of death and sorrow and the cheerfulness and escapism of tourism on the island.[129]

3)   And the focus for symbolical places such as: the migrant reception/detention centre, the 'Porta d'Europa', the harbour, the local graveyard and the boat cemetery.[130]

Figure 13 Still from To whom it may concern (2013)

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[128] 'Oggi entriamo come tutte le persone dall'ingresso con il benvenuto all'aeroporto. Mi ricordo che l'autista che ci ha portato a casa prima di accendere il motore del furgone ci ha accolto con: "Benvenuti sull'isola più accogliente del mondo"'.Mahamed Aman.
[129] A Cala Palma ogni sera si parlava fino a tardi; il primo giorno non potevo né parlare né ballare, mentre la gente ballava sulla spiaggia io guardavo le stelle [...] Questo sentimento non era solo mio, ho chiesto a un amico sbarcato come me e ritornato a Lampedusa e mi ha detto: "Non posso, non mi va di ballare vicino alla spiaggia, davanti a questo mare, anzi, mi viene da piangere".Mahamed Aman.
[130] Il cimitero si trova sulla strada che porta al molo, una strada che divide le barche dei turisti e dei lampedusani e del cimitero delle barche. Qui mi sono fermato quando ho visto le barche dei turisti e cittadini; la maggior parte erano bianche, si rilassavano e galleggiavano sul mare, invece quelle clandestine erano cupe e inchinate. [...] Ho pensato chissà quante storie hanno portato con sé queste barche, storie di persone che hanno fatto un viaggio senza ritorno. [...] Mi piacerebbe se questo posto fosse conservato. Mahamed Aman.

The repetition of the images of these places in all the works narrating the AMM members' return to Lampedusa not only show how the island as a whole has become a symbol to discuss migration, but also clarify how this imagery is in turn constructed on a series of highly symbolic locations or events.

Drawing on Hirsch's reflection on the ubiquitous presence image of Auschwitz's infamous gate in many visual representation of the Holocaust, the images of the boat cemetery or of the reception/detention centre of 'Contrada Imbriacola' can be considered as functioning as tropes of migration memory.[131] Whether denotative or connotative, they are, by now, a tool of the visual repertoire of migration to Italy or to Europe. The repetition of such images is used to give the story further authenticity, and to supply a 'point of access for the postmemorial readers'.[132]

If in these aspects the stories of the three authors have shown common traits with dominant representations of the relationship between the island and migration, their testimonies also play a fundamental role in offering more nuanced perspectives on the significance of Lampedusa to discuss migration. For instance, Yimer's 'Soltanto il mare' is not only important because it turns around the gaze of the camera, showing the invasive presence of the media or the faces of the military actors.[133] It is also significant for offering a glimpse of the complex relationship of the locals with their past as fishermen, and their present as tourism entrepreneurs.

Yimer's film offers relevant insights on the break-up of the island's traditional links of solidarity and hospitality in the name of a deregulated and opportunistic shift to a tourism-based economy. His film offers a significant shift in the hegemonic emphasis on the potential negative impact of migration on local tourism, and from the heterotopic coexistence between tourism and death usually found in other representations of the island.

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[131] See Hirsch, p. 113.
[132] Hirsch, p. 117.
[133] See also Yimer's decision to meet and personally thank his rescuers.

Figure 14 Still from Soltanto il Mare (2011)

If in 'Soltanto il mare' Yimer achieves this nuanced representation of Lampedusa by means of a quite traditional documentary style, in 'Asmat-nomi' the Ethiopian director manages to offer a representation of the island fully emancipated from the dominant tropes of the Lampedusa symbol. 'Asmat-nomi' shows how self-produced representations from a migrant's point of view can reach artistic and political value, without drawing on the visual landscape set by the discursive formations constituting the hegemonic Lampedusa symbol.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed some of limits and some of the encouraging aspects of the AMM. In the first part, I highlighted the difficulties for the project in avoiding issues of accessibility, participation, and representativeness when putting into practice an archival project in a globalised and mediatised context. The analysis hints at the necessity for the *Archivio* to find new forms of accessibility, not only regarding its contents, but also the archival practice itself. For instance, the addition of a section for comments, or new open source experiments could avoid the static nature of the website and, perhaps, create chances for encounters with new potential participants.

In the second and third part, by focusing on the accessible materials, I discussed what sort of image of migration can be drawn by the *Archivio*'s stories. Furthermore, I have

addressed how participation in the project has shaped the identities of Mahamed Aman, Dagmawi Yimer, and Zakaria Mohamed Ali.

Paraphrasing Bhabha: the process of becoming subject while also being subjected, but also the burdens connected to the role of witness.[134] The *Archivio*'s members have shown a fundamental awareness of these risks, and they have expressed a willingness to avoid the 'trapping' of the AMM's migrants members and participants in an 'endless' testimonial role. For Gatta, the AMM is:

Uno spazio semi-aperto, in cui tu entri, se c'è consonanza di visioni e di pratiche, si fa un tratto insieme...poi magari se ne esce e poi si ritorna. L'idea non è tanto appunto consacrare l'associazione, ma fare cose. [...] Significa... e farlo mettendo al centro il nostro metodo quindi comunicando una certa pratica di narrazione. Secondo me è l'obiettivo di AMM. Cioè non è fare cronaca, raccontare o raccogliere testimonianze soltanto...per ricostruire dei processi. [...] Per me è fondamentale il passaggio dal testimone al soggetto che esprime opinioni… Io ho uno sguardo, ho delle opinioni su quella situazione, non voglio solo raccontarti...questo secondo me è un passaggio chiave.[135]

Dagmawi Yimer's individual path from 'Come un uomo sulla terra' and 'Soltanto il mare', to 'Asmat-nomi' and 'Va' pensiero' can then be seen as one of the most important achievements of the project.

To conclude, the works of three main migrant member of the *Archivio* should be seen as both offering new critical perspectives on the representations of Lampedusa, and, at the same time, as constitutive of the island's hegemonic symbolism. Once again, Benjamin's metaphor of constellation functions as the most appropriate framework to collocate these works. What it is still open to discussion is the real focus of the *Archivio*, discussing how this project can continue its work of affecting the public perception of migration in Italy, moving beyond such a symbolic place as Lampedusa. The next chapter will discuss the symbolism of this name beyond the borders of the Italian context.

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[134] Bhabha.
[135] Gianluca Gatta.

Chapter 4 – 'Lampedusa in Hamburg. Representing Lampedusa in a Transnational Context'

Introduction

> Who I am – the 'real' me – was formed in relation to a whole set of other narratives. […] identity is an invention from the very beginning […] Identity is formed at the unstable point where the "unspeakable" stories of subjectivity meet the narrative of history, of a culture.[1]

> Yeah, the only progress that we have was: we have already made history. That is the only thing that I can tell you. We made a name and we made history. We let the world know the situation of refugees before these refugee bubbles in Europe. We have been banging every day on the streets...There was a time when we were doing demonstration every week, you know [...] And nothing happened, you know! And up until now, even when the law was changed about the issue of refugees Dublin 2 or whatever [...] the so-called human rights lawyers, nobody came up to represent us, we don't really know why. Even when we set it up, nobody showed interest. So, the only thing that, I said that we have achieved here is just that we just created history. So, that is it, that is what I can say, you know. [2]

In 2016, when questioned on the progress and achievements of its group, *Lampedusa in Hamburg* member Sammy Ojo answered that 'nothing happened', the 'only progress' that the group accomplished was that of 'making history'. These words should not only be interpreted as a remark on the difficulties faced by the group in, by now, five years of struggle. His focus on the historical significance of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*'s presence in the city vividly resonates with the words chosen by Stuart Hall to describe the migrant experience and the question of 'identity'.

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[1] Stuart Hall, 'Minimal Selves.', in *Identity: The Real Me*, ed. by Lisa Appagnesi and Homi K. Bhabha, ICA Document 6 (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987), pp. 43–46 (p. 44).
[2] Recorded during the 'Here to stay!' city-tour, the tours are promoted by Lampedusa in Hamburg and Perkspektive Stadterkundung Hamburg. 'Arbeitskreis HAMBURG POSTKOLONIAL Stadtrundgänge 2016' <http://www.hamburg-postkolonial.de/rundgaenge.html> [accessed 20 August 2017].

The stories constituting the identity of Sammy Ojo and the other members of the group are the 'never-settled' product of the meeting of their subjectivities with the narrative of history. Although facing the political rejection of their demands, the members of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, by 'making history', assert their willingness to be inserted into 'history', not 'backwards and upside down' or 'by negation', to use Hall's words, but by actively writing it.[3]

Hall's reflection on 'identities, in the plural' as 'means of becoming' stresses how these are historically and culturally situated, but, at the same time, also how an individual retains the power/independence of narrating his or her role in this history.

> We need to consider how we are inserted into the social processes of history and simultaneously think about the mental means we, as subjects, employ to explain to ourselves where, in history, we find ourselves.[4]

This chapter, through the case of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, looks at the signifier Lampedusa as a sort of transnational identity capable of reasserting the centrality of migrant subjectivity in the representation of the migration. Furthermore, the chapter will question whether the name Lampedusa can be seen as a means to highlight the complex, often downplayed, connections between the stories of people like the members of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, and the never-settled aftermath of colonialism and the history of racialised black suffering.

In the previous chapters, the discussion of the transnational relevance of Lampedusa has emphasised the presence of an extensive amount of cultural productions associating the name to an imaginary of crisis and emergency, founded on a series of recurrent tropes that has be defined as the 'Lampedusa transnational constellation'. Two of the major aspects standing out from the analysis of Lampedusa's symbolism to discuss migration were: first, the necessity of having been or being on the island to be entitled to talk about it or represent it, an aspect that I called the rhetoric of 'presence'. Secondly, the increasing co-production and collection of films, documentaries, and

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[3] Stuart Hall, *Familiar Stranger: A Life between Two Islands.* (Milton Keynes: Penguin, 2018), p. 61.
[4] Hall, *Familiar Stranger*, p. 63.

testimonies from migrants and refugees' point of view, produced in the hope of challenging hegemonic interpretations of Lampedusa's symbolism.

These two aspects underpin the questions that characterise this chapter. If having been (at least once) on the island appears to be an important (if not mandatory) requirement for producing any sort of representation of it, what *does* happen when the name Lampedusa is used in a different geographical and political context? What are the consequences of adopting alternative representational practices, turning from AMM's co-production to self-organisation? What happens when individual memories are shared and transformed into a collective transnational identity? This chapter will focus on these questions by mean of the examples of the group *Lampedusa in Hamburg* (LiH) and other related initiatives such as *FC Lampedusa Hamburg*.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first will offer a historical description of the context in which the group came into being, from its establishment in 2013 to its most recent developments. Secondly, the chapter will discuss, through the analysis of the initiatives carried out by LiH and other related groups or initiatives between June 2015 and August 2017, the question of migrants and refugees' subjectivity in practices of visibility and self-representation.

Finally, drawing from in-depth interviews recorded between February and March 2016 with the group's members and other activists involved in their political struggle, the chapter will consider the name Lampedusa not only as a tool of resistance and visibility, but will also discuss the impact that appropriation of this name has had and continues to have on the identities and lives of LiH members.

Living 'in the wake of Lampedusa' will not only be considered as a way to retell stories of 'black suffering' and 'un-severed' colonial bonds, but also as a mean to highlight the resilience and transformative power ingrained in experiences of refugee empowerment and self-organisation.[5] The reliance on cultural theorists like Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, and Christina Sharpe will be alternated with the testimonies and reflections shared by

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[5] In this chapter, the shift from the term 'migrant' to the term 'refugee' is not based on a juridical distinction on the status of the individuals composing the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* group. The term 'refugee' is mobilised according to the definition and appropriation of the word (beyond its limited legal meaning) offered by the members.

the group's members, attempting to give to their perspective, if not equal, at least adequate theoretical importance.

4.1 'We are here to stay'. Lampedusa arrives in Hamburg

This section seeks to introduce the group *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, how it has come into being, how it has developed, and what their activities have meant (and still mean) for the 'struggle' of refugees and migrants in the city of Hamburg. While the following sections will focus on practices of visibility and subjectivity, this section will offer a historical description of the emergence of this peculiar coalition of refugees hailing from various Sub-Saharan African countries such as Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Sudan and Togo. Writing a history of such a recent and still ongoing experience is a not an easy task, but is of fundamental help in unfolding the political and social relevance of this initiative.

The case of LiH can be considered as a paradigmatic example in discussing various aspects of EU migration policies or, more generally, contemporary societal attitudes towards migrants and refugees' presence in Europe. Along with others, it can be used as an example to reflect on the contradictory consequences of the EU's so-called Dublin regulations. i.e. on migrants and refugees' freedom of movements within the Schengen area, and on asylum procedures in Italy and Germany.[6] Furthermore, *Lampedusa in Hamburg* offers insights on new geographies of migration in Europe, and facilitates the analysis of solidarity, self-organisation, and 'misplaced alliances' within the refugee movements.[7]

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[6] See for instance the work of Borri and Fontanari on the similar case of Lampedusa in Berlin. Giulia Borri and Elena Fontanari, 'Lampedusa in Berlin: (Im)Mobilität innerhalb des europäischen Grenzregimes', *PERIPHERIE – Politik • Ökonomie • Kultur*, 35.138–139 (2016).

[7] See the four main publications on LiH: Martina Tazzioli, 'Which Europe?. Migrants' Uneven Geographies and Counter-Mapping at the Limits of Representation', *Movements. Journal Für Kritische Migrations- Und Grenzregimeforschung*, 1.2 (2015) <http://movements-journal.org/issues/02.kaempfe/04.tazzioli--europe-migrants-geographies-counter-mapping-representation.html> [accessed 30 January 2017]; Susi Meret and Elisabetta Della Corte, 'Spaces of Resistance and Re-Actualities of Gramsci in Refugees' Struggles for Rights: The "Lampedusa in Hamburg" between Exit and Voice', in *Solidarity Without Borders: Gramscian Perspectives on Migration and Civil Society Alliances*, ed. by Martin Bak Jørgensen and Óscar García Agustín (London: Pluto Press, 2016), pp. 203–22; Simone Beate Borgstede, '"We Are Here to Stay". Reflections on the Struggle of the Refugee Group "Lampedusa in Hamburg" and the Solidarity Campaign, 2013-2015', in *In Pierpaolo Mudu and Sutapa Chattopadhyay (Eds.) Migration, Squatting and Radical Autonomy: Resistance and*

The sources collected for this chapter encompass a period that goes from 2013 to 2017. The core of the original material, particularly the interviews with the LiH members[8] and other local activists,[9] was recorded between January and March 2016, during the days preceding and following the *International Conference of Migrants and Refugees* in Kampnagel (Hamburg).[10]

This chapter divides the history of the group in three principal phases:

1.   'From war to self-organisation, protest and solidarity'. The journey from Libya to Hamburg, through Lampedusa and the Italian asylum system (end of 2011 – early 2013).

2.   'Consolidation, support and crisis'. After the first alliances, the group gains widespread backing from a large part of Hamburg's civil society, most notably the St. Pauli Kirche, which offered shelter and support for circa 80 members. The consequent peak of visibility, and the mediation of the local church with the local authorities, instead of leading to a solution, produced a rift within the group (spring 2013 – summer 2015).

3.   'Survival, reorganisation and new strategies'. After the crisis over the 'Duldung' issue, LiH loses the spotlight and attempts to adapt to the new context

Destabilization of Racist Regulatory Policies and B/Ordering Mechanisms (Routledge, 2016), pp. 162–80; Abimbola Odugbesan and Helge Schwiertz, '"We Are Here to Stay" – Refugee Struggles in Germany Between Unity and Division', in *Protest Movements in Asylum and Deportation*, IMISCOE Research Series (Cham: Springer, 2018), pp. 185–203 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74696-8_9>.

[8] Five members were officially interviewed for this research: four men and one woman, between January and March 2016. From May 2017 onwards, after moving permanently to Hamburg, I established close, sometimes daily, interactions with the members. This meant not only having the chance to participate in the group's weekly open meetings and having a privileged access, but building a series of personal friendships with some of the members. The nationalities and age of the interviewees is various and deemed not relevant for the purposes of this research.

At the time of my fieldwork, all the four male interviewees had prominent roles in the informal structure of the group. They all defined themselves as LiH 'speakers'. The fifth interviewee was the only woman still active in an almost all-male structure. It is important to highlight that, in 2016, the group size and hierarchies had already undergone a reorganisation. For various reasons, most of the founding members have progressively left the forefront to new 'self-nominated' speakers.

[9] Marily Stroux, HM Jokkinen, Larry Macaulay, Hagar Gröteke and Nicole Appel.

[10] This chapter was written in Hamburg in July 2017 and revised for submission in July 2018, while I actively took part in the group's latest initiatives. Among others: the organisation of the 'We are here' refugees and migrants' demonstration against the G20 summit (26/6/2017), and the co-production, print, and dissemination of a 'memorial-touristic map' highlighting the principal locations, episodes, and demands of the five-year history of LiH (30/6/2018).

of the 'long summer of migration' (summer 2015 – end 2016), promoting new initiatives to regain visibility for the group's demands. [11]

It is important to repeat that any attempt to order chronologically the development of the group cannot give credit to the complexity of this experience. Remembering all the names and episodes of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*'s epopee is not the aim of my research. These pages are more interested in how the members (but also the 'supporting' groups, the local media and politicians) have used this name to give an official portrait of themselves; a portrait that has changed and assumed different meanings over time.

In the words of Paul Gilroy, the initiatives of the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* should not only 'be interpreted as a simple journey from invisibility to visibility', but as 'a series of bitter negotiations over the terms and conditions of visibility'.[12] The images of Lampedusa offered by this experience do not offer a straightforward, more 'positive' representation of migration to Europe, automatically re-instating political subjectivity in the refugees' migratory project. They are ambiguous and contested. As for the images of 'Black Britain' which Gilroy comments on:

> It is sometimes impossible to separate their power and moral currency from the struggle to control their meaning. That cultural battle was conducted alongside economic campaigns against exploitation and political activity aimed at justice, equality and winning recognition.[13]

This ongoing struggle, even if it has not helped the 'Lampedusans' to obtain their work permits yet, has had a profound effect in reshaping the meaning of concepts such as home, citizenship, culture, and belonging, not only for the members of the group, but

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[11] The *Duldung*, in English 'toleration' or 'tolerance', is a specific status of German residence law given to foreigners facing deportation in order to give them time to apply for legal residence. More details on its characteristics and relevance for the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* case will be given in the following paragraphs.

[12] Paul Gilroy, *Black Britain: A Photographic History* (London: Saqi, 2007), p. 21.

[13] Gilroy, *Black Britain*, p. 21.

also for all those people that have worked with, supported, or just met them during these years.

4.1.1 'From war to self-organisation, protest and solidarity' (end of 2011 – early 2013)

Despite the fact that there is no official date for the establishment of the group, the appearance of the name *Lampedusa in Hamburg* can be dated between February and May 2013, when Asuqo Udo, Affo Tchassei, Anane Kofi Mark, and a few others among the circa three hundred refugees facing homelessness after the ending of the so-called 'Winternotprogramm' (an emergency accommodation programme promoted by the city of Hamburg) decided to act and mobilise under this name.[14]

We are the Refugees coming from Italy with international protection but no rights. We survived the NATO bombings and the civil war in Libya, to be homeless in Italy. Thousands of us are now in Germany in the same conditions: no housing, no access to social help, no access to the job market. We demand a political solution: "We are here and we don't go back!". […] We demand our rights as recognised refugees […] We don't want to live in the streets […] We unite, call for solidarity and demand our rights! [2 May 2013].[15]

Finding traces of the emergence of the group is not a difficult task. In addition to extensive media attention, since the very beginning most of the protests and activities of the group have been diligently recorded and shared through social media, blogs, short documentaries, and interviews accessible on platforms such as Youtube and Vimeo.[16] The group has also produced numerous info-flyers and booklets listing the members'

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[14] Although for different reasons they have renounced any prominent role within the group, Asuqo Udo, Affo Tchassei, Anane Kofi Mark, and a few others are still widely recognised as the founding members of the group. In addition to acting as official representatives or speakers of the group during the numerous demonstration or interactions with the media between 2013 and 2015, the founding members played a fundamental role in mobilising the rest of the 'Libyan war' refugees in joining the group.

[15] 'Lampedusa in Hamburg: Refugee Protest on Church Summit (Kirchentag) | The Caravan' <http://thecaravan.org/node/3751> [accessed 13 July 2017].

[16] *Life Was Good In Lybia - Film - Crowdfunding* <https://vimeo.com/99569844> [accessed 14 January 2016]; *Lampedusa in Hamburg - Interview with Affo Tchassei* <https://vimeo.com/66114512> [accessed 8 January 2016]; Rasmus Gerlach, *'Lampedusa Auf St. Pauli' Dokumentarfilm von Rasmus Gerlach Trailer*, 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLVXqWlr-mE> [accessed 17 January 2016].

political demands. Moreover, a chronology marking the main events involving the group is also available on Wikipedia.[17]

Therefore, the most interesting aspect to note of the first months of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*'s history is the immediate construction, by its members, of a coherent and clear narrative around the reasons of their arrival in Hamburg that has lasted until today. This distinctive narrative, matched with a precise list of political demands, can be considered among the fundamental factors in the long-lasting visibility and resilience of the group.

However, the protest during the church summit in May 2013, the meeting with local antiracist movements, and the first public statements should be considered as only the last step of this first phase. As declared in the above-mentioned statement, the refugees that established the group defined themselves as 'victims of the NATO war in Libya 2011' and of the contradictions of the EU's asylum policies.

This account necessarily takes the 'roots' of the group back to the period 2011-2012. Before the 'Arab Spring' uprising and the subsequent civil war, most of the group's members lived and worked in Libya.[18] According to the group, NATO's intervention in the conflict was the turning point in their decision to cross the Mediterranean; without Gaddafi's deposition, and the consequent escalation of the conflict, they would have never planned to come to Italy or Europe.

> Today, we are living on the street in those countries that are fighting wars in the name of human rights. It was not our intention to come to Europe. We were forced to do it. All of us have been working in Libya, on the African continent, and have been taking care of our families and communities with our income. The NATO- war destroyed everything.[19]

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[17] 'Lampedusa in Hamburg', *Wikipedia*, 2017
<https://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lampedusa_in_Hamburg&oldid=165199551> [accessed 18 July 2017].

[18] For a detailed account of the members' previous occupations see the photo project 'Lampedusa in Hamburg – Professions' edited by Marily Stroux and Simone Borgstede. 'LAMPEDUSA IN HAMBURG - Professions' <http://lampedusa-in-hamburg-professions.blogspot.de/> [accessed 8 January 2016].

[19] '2nd Declaration and Call for Serious Conversations "Lampedusa in Hamburg" | The Caravan'
<http://thecaravan.org/node/3773> [accessed 18 July 2017].

Figure 15 Flyer of Lampedusa in Hamburg (2013)

For those looking for safety and a new beginning in Europe during that period, Lampedusa was an almost inescapable destination. In 2011 is, the year of the so-called 'emergenza Nord Africa', the faith of the future-members of LiH became inextricably bonded to this place and name. The 'roots' of LiH's political struggle should be connected to their journey to Lampedusa, and their experience in the Italian reception centres, an experience that, as we will see in the second section of this chapter, had a profound impact on the members' subjectivity.

In December 2012, in the wake of a series of allegations over mismanagement of funds and controversies over the asylum process and the political downfall of Berlusconi's coalition, the new Italian prime minister Mario Monti decided to stop the public funding of the programme 'emergenza Nord Africa'. The end of the programme led to the closure of various reception structures in which many of the future members

of LiH found shelter. To most of the people hosted in these structures, the government granted travelling papers and offered some money to start a new life in Italy or somewhere else. It is around the validity and type of papers released by the Italian authorities that Lampedusa in Hamburg's struggle began.[20]

The validity and type of papers released in Italy varied from case to case, but most of the LiH members received various forms of 'humanitarian protection'. This status is granted to asylum seekers that fulfil neither the requirements necessary for refugee status under the Geneva Convention, nor have the requirements for subsidiary protection, but find themselves unable to be expelled or returned to the country of origin for proven humanitarian reasons.

Compared to refugee status, this permit grants fewer rights: it grants the right to work, and the right to access the national health system, but does not allow for 'family reunions' or to leave the country for more than three months.[21] Furthermore, and here lies the key to understanding LiH's demands and struggle, the permit needs to comply with the so-called Dublin regulations, which allows the holder to work and live only in the European country in which the registration took place.[22] This aspect, according to LiH's testimonies, was intentionally (and controversially) omitted by the Italian authorities:

> So, we came to Germany hoping that we would find a job with our documents, because as we were told in the camp, in the camp before we left Italy, that there are jobs. I mean that there are jobs here in Germany. That if we come here we can work with our documents, so we came down here, but it was so unfortunate that when we came, it wasn't how we thought the all situation would have been, it was very tough for us to survive.[23]

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[20] Marco Benedettelli, 'Fine Emergenza Nord Africa, Il 28 Febbraio Chiusi i Centri. Il Governo Ha Speso Più Di Un Miliardo', *Il Sole 24 ORE*, 2013 <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2013-03-03/fine-emergenza-nord-africa-162248.shtml?uuid=Abd2yCaH> [accessed 12 July 2017].

[21] 'Il Permesso per Motivi Umanitari' <http://www.meltingpot.org/Il-permesso-per-motivi-umanitari.html> [accessed 18 July 2017].

[22] 'EUR-Lex - 32013R0603 - EN - EUR-Lex' <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?toc=OJ%3AL%3A2013%3A180%3ATOC&uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2013.180.01.0001.01.ENG> [accessed 19 July 2017].

[23] Sammy Ojo, Lampedusa in Hamburg, Hamburg, 2 March 2016.

Therefore, the choice of Monti's government to give documents and money to most people fleeing Libya inviting them to leave Italy, is not to be seen as a novel act of 'humanitarian generosity', but it should be considered as a consequence of the long-lasting tension between the EU's Mediterranean countries and their Northern European counterparts over border patrolling responsibilities and refugee-quota sharing.

The plot is a recurrent one. Examples can be found from 2011 to the present day: Italy calls an emergency, appealing to the EU for financial support and a redistribution of the new-comers in other countries. Other EU members answer by temporarily reintroducing border control, accusing Italy of not complying to EU regulations, and of using migrants and refugees as a tool for 'blackmailing'.[24]

In the case of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, German politicians openly denounced this strategy, and the total closure towards the refugees coming from Italy should be interpreted as a precise political choice to not create a legal precedent that could be exploited in the future by other member states.[25]

Whilst knowing the political context clarifies the reasons pushing many of members to reach Italy and leave it after few months, it is still not enough to understand why many of them ended up living in Hamburg. It is difficult to single out one major reason or list all the factors behind the individuals' choices of moving to Hamburg. It is also important to remember that, almost concurrently to *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, other groups of refugees coming from Italy started to organise under this name in other major German cities: most notably *Lampedusa in Berlin* and *Lampedusa in Hanau*.[26] Therefore, the choice of the LiH members to come to Hamburg could appear almost fortuitous: a cheaper train ticket, a contact, the possibility of reuniting with friends or relatives, the language, or the city's closeness to the Danish border could have made the difference.

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[24] See for instance the case of Ventimiglia: 'Ventimiglia, Francia Blocca Il Confine La Protesta Dei Migranti Bloccati Caos Al Varco - Foto|proteste - Video', *Corriere Della Sera*, 2015 <http://www.corriere.it/cronache/15_giugno_13/ventimiglia-camionette-polizia-francese-varco-migranti-bloccati-c81622de-11c8-11e5-8b3a-62b7e966c494.shtml> [accessed 14 June 2015].

[25] 'Amburgo: "Migranti Pagati per Venire Da Noi, l'Italia Viola Gli Accordi Europei" Il Viminale: "Rispettate Tutte Le Norme"', *LaStampa.It* <http://www.lastampa.it/2013/05/28/esteri/laccusa-di-amburgo-allitalia-migranti-pagati-per-venire-qui-violati-gli-accordi-europei-R9POe1fnDZ3bPqc4T9VOVP/pagina.html> [accessed 12 July 2017].

[26] 'Lampedusa in Berlin' <https://www.facebook.com/lampedusainberlin/> [accessed 18 July 2017]; 'Lampedusa in Hanau | We Are Here to Stay' <http://lampedusa-in-hanau.antira.info/> [accessed 18 July 2017].

SO: My name is Sammy, I am a member of Lampedusa in Hamburg, I came to Hamburg since 2013 […] Before I came to Hamburg I was in Italy for 2 years I came through the Libya war, so I stayed in Italy for two years, and after I was given long year documents I was asked to leave the camp. I was given 200€ in my own camp […] so I left, and I came down to Germany.

JC: How did you know about Germany?

SO: Yeah, I was thinking of ways to go to find a job, because there was no job in Italy for us […] I was thinking what to do next, and how to find a new life. So, I decided to come to Germany, because I learnt that Germans speak English. Ok, so should be easier for some of us that speak English from Anglophone countries, then some of others speak French from francophone countries they went to France, most people I know went to France. So, and we know that our documents do not permit us to go London, most of us will have go to London because we don't have to start learning language or find things difficult much there, so most of us came down to Germany. So, that was the reason.[27]

Nevertheless, the choice shows awareness of the European context. Having spent almost a year in Italy, and, possibly, having experienced or witnessed housing and working conditions for migrants and refugees in Italy, the decision to travel north should be seen as indicative of the agency characterising the migratory project of the 'Lampedusans'.

Moreover, after few months the political reputation swiftly gained by the group became one of the major reasons pushing future members to choose Hamburg. As witnessed by one of the members:

When I was in Italy. I didn't know where we have to stay. I stayed out the camp. I have document, I don't know anybody, so someone told me that there is Lampedusa in Hamburg. Why can't I go to Hamburg? Please come to join more of our refugees there. […] I don't know anybody, that is why I came to, how I came to Hamburg. […] I talked to them […] So, they say, if I get to

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[27] Sammy Ojo.

Hauptbahnhof I have to ask for Lampedusa tent. So, when I came here they took me there, so that is how I became one of them.[28]

Until the winter 2012-2013, the city of Hamburg never faced the need to provide for such a number of refugees. Hence, the majority of the people arriving from Italy were sheltered in structures for the homeless. Nevertheless, in April 2013 the local government announced that persons who had arrived in the city by means of 'unlawful papers issued by the Italian government in breach of the Schengen agreement' should return to Italy.[29]

So, when I came then Lampedusa in Hamburg was not formed. I was living in the Pik As were homeless people stay. I stayed there for some months, so during the winter period, it was the programme called Winternotprogramm […] in April, middle of April, they asked everybody to leave. […] We think that is not going to be possible, because they know that we don't have any other place to stay […] On that very day they came with all their security guards […] So, they chased us outside […] we started staying outside in Hamburg and people started seeing us in the Hauptbahnhof everywhere, with luggage. People were starting to wonder where this people [came] from? [30]

After more than one year within the twists and turns of the asylum system, having been moved from camp to camp in Italy and Germany, the three hundred refugees coming from Libya seemed to have born the brunt of the political clash between the Italian and German authorities. According to the testimony of member Shaban Ibrahim, it is in the wake of this controversial political decision that *Lampedusa in Hamburg* was formed:

My involvement in Lampedusa in Hamburg is from the day one. From the start, I was part of the group, and I was part of the organizing of the group. Since we left Italy in December 2012 […] in

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[28] C., Lampedusa in Hamburg, Hamburg, 24 February 2016.
[29] 'Hamburger Flüchtlinge: Italien Zahlt Ausreiseprämie':, *DIE WELT,* 28 May 2013 <https://www.welt.de/print/die_welt/hamburg/article116575124/Hamburger-Fluechtlinge-Italien-zahlt-Ausreisepraemie.html> [accessed 14 July 2017].
[30] Sammy Ojo.

April we are asked out the house [...] So, we have no place to go, no place to sleep, no place to eat, no chance to work, nothing compare to a human being life like, we don't have anything. So, we were sleeping outside, sleeping in the snow [...] One day, one of the African people from Togo [...] I met Affo. On the road, he stopped me saying: can I talk with you? And I said why not? [...] I told him: what is your plan? He said ok, the plan is: we saw some people doing demonstration, last time, then when he asked they say because of the Dublin registry and he feel like wow! This is the time for us to stand and do something [...] So he asked me, what can we do? I said, I only know one of them, I say is called Udo [...] Asuqo Udo and he is with him, and now he finds me and we found one Ghanaian called Anane, Kofi Anane, that I met in Italy because of document picture. So, then I said ok, I try to talk to people and the languages I can speak, and I can speak Niger language too. So, I can speak with Niger people, and some of the Nigerians too speak Hausa [...] So, I talk to them and those whoever was speaking English and Arab if I can. So, this how we started. We separated all about three or five [...] Try to connect people to just look out from their sleep. So, when we gather one day, we started talking to each other [...] and we are discussing what is the plan we have to do.[31]

The decision of Shaban Ibrahim, Asuqo Udo, Affo Tchassei, et al. to self-organise and form the group was an exceptional act of political agency and resistance that highlights their awareness and capability to mobilise against the contradictions and injustices of the EU's border regime. In the word of Meret and Della Corte, 'forming the group represented a political and civil refusal to comply with unjust laws and rules dictated by a system expecting subordination and passivity'.[32]

Someone asks: ok, how do you want us to start? [...] and I asked him my question back: is this the life you lived in Libya before you came here? He said no. How do you live in Libya? He said I have work, I take care of my parents [...] have my own house and living my own way. So, this is not the life I ever imaged that I'll face in Europe, because most of Africans respect Europe [...] if you are in Africa you heard different, but when you come here you see totally different. [...] So, we decided, this is not life we are living, and because of they were there that is why we are here. So, the only solution is: we have to do something. [...] they have to find a solution for us, because of, as far as we are concerned, even though Italia has asked us out of the camp, but we know that in Italy there is no work to do,

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[31] Shaban Ibrahim, Lampedusa in Hamburg, Hamburg, 29 February 2016.
[32] Meret and Della Corte, p. 211.

Germany is part of the war, so Germans have to respect us and find a way for us. So, that is the beginning of our demonstration.[33]

The words of Shaban Ibrahim not only highlight, since the very beginning, the translingual and transnational character of the group, but also stand as a political reminder to the European institutions: 'they were there that is why we are here', a phrase that vividly resonates with the slogan 'we are here because you were there', dear to postcolonial and antiracist activism in the 1970s Britain. These words not only call for Germany to take on its own responsibilities in the NATO intervention in Libya and find a solution for the group, but also unearth the inherently postcolonial character of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*'s struggle.

4.1.2 'Consolidation, support and crisis' (spring 2013 – summer 2015)

The period between May 2013 and the summer of 2015 should be considered as the most important phase of the five-year long presence of the group in Hamburg. Most of the alliances and key initiatives that left a lasting mark on the city took place in these years.

The rise of the newly born group was remarkable. In less than a year, LiH could count more than twenty protest initiatives promoting their demands and mobilising new supporters among Hamburg's population. Highlights included: the temporary occupation of Hamburg City Hall (*Rathaus*) to demand direct negotiations with mayor Olaf Scholz, two sit-in actions in the square facing Hamburg's Senate, the attempted building of a protest camp in front of SPD's headquarters, and numerous marches, get-togethers, and 'soli-parties'.[34]

This tireless striving for visibility was answered by local authorities with repression and a total refusal to open any sort of negotiations with the group's representatives. A unique concession to and first act of recognition of the existence of LiH by the local

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[33] Shaban Ibrahim.

[34] For a brief chronology and links to the initiatives carried out between 2013 and 2015 see 'Call for Demonstration: Recognition of the Group ‚Lampedusa in Hamburg' – Now! | Lampedusa in Hamburg' <http://lampedusa-hamburg.info/call-for-demonstration-recognition-of-the-group-lampedusa-in-hamburg-now/> [accessed 15 June 2017] and the Youtube channel 'Lampedusa 5 Years in Hamburg'.

government was the authorisation, in June 2013, of the construction of the group's information point near Hamburg's central station: the so-called 'Lampedusa Info-Tent' at the Steindamm. Since then, the *Lampedusa Tent,* in spite of several racist attacks, constant police control, and two calls for eviction or 're-location', has become one of the most symbolic sites of LiH's struggle.[35]

Figure 16 Press conference at the Lampedusa-Tent (Feb. 2016)

The success of the mobilisation campaign and the consolidation of the group is to be linked, in the words of member Ali Ahmed to a rapid and solid structuring of the group, and to the initial support from the local activists of the 'Karawane'.[36]

Specifically, the idea for this group or for this fighting, it started from 5 people. It started from Udo Asuquo, Shaban, Affo, Kofi Annane, and Friday Emitola. And also, there is also another one

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[35] 'Press Release 05.09.2016 – Lampedusa in Hamburg: Another Vicious Attack on the Lampedusa Info Point Tent in Hamburg | The VOICE Refugee Forum Germany – Flüchtlinge Und Asyl in Deutschland' <http://www.thevoiceforum.org/node/4232> [accessed 8 August 2018].

[36] 'The Caravan for the rights of refugees and migrants' is a German-based initiative promoting migrants and refugees' rights, which was very active in supporting the new born LiH during the first months. 'Hamburg | The Caravan' <http://thecaravan.org/hamburg> [accessed 18 July 2017].

person, he's called Iscoba, Mohamed Idris, and other Malians people. Those people started doing the programme. They told us, we have to gather ourselves, […] Those people they were in the front. They do the activities, from talk to different groups to get support and really, they get more support to us. They contacted one group here, they call them Caravan […] After that, Caravan get more places, more support […] more Germans, more groups that come to us […] After that […] we were starting doing the struggle, the demonstrations, actions, activities, workshops with the students, you know. […] Basically, you have four people, Udo Asuquo, Affo, Friday and Kofi Annane, this is basically the four speakers. After that, down, we have group leaders, me Ali Ahmed, Samuel D, Shaban, Mohamed, Iscoba, and Jeano. […] Andreas in St. Pauli church, me in B5, Shaban in Billstedt, Samuel in Dammtor, […] different places of the city, anyone is responsible for the place and the people. […] The place I stayed, the B5, that become famous place because it's political group.[37]

According to Ali Ahmed, the meeting with the 'Karawane' was fundamental in putting the group in contact with various political groups active in Hamburg's anti-racist movements. By means of meeting new people, who shared their experiences of political activism in the city, the group rapidly gained an awareness of the political and social context in which they were operating. A small part of the three hundred people constituting the group found themselves directly or indirectly distributed in different neighbourhoods. The geography of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*'s presence in the city, revolved around the organisations, political groups or individual citizens willing to host and support the members.

From this testimony, it could be argued that not only have places like the *Internationales Zentrum B5* (which is a historical location for the left-wing scene in Hamburg) influenced and reflected the political positions of the members, but the variegated background of these locations allowed the members to create partnerships and alliances with different sectors of Hamburg's civil society.

The members who stayed at the *Café Knallhart* (a historical squat at Hamburg University) created a long-lasting relationship with some of the students' associations. The ones that found food and clothing at the so-called *Zongo*, experienced the solidarity of part of Hamburg's African diaspora. Finally, those that stayed in the St. Pauli Kirche,

[37] Ali Ahmed, Lampedusa in Hamburg, Hamburg, 2 March 2016.

in the mosques, and in other charitable institutions of the city, created a point of connection with people beyond the historical antiracist and left-scene.

In his personal retelling of the group's first year, member Abimbola Odugbesan also reiterates the key role played by groups like the 'Karawane':

> [I]n the beginning I think that the relationships between the supporters, all supporters of our movement, are very open and more interactive, because, you know, we are new people, you know, most of the time when you meet new people everyone want to be kind, want to be polite. It was very good in the beginning, especially with the Caravan in Hamburg. Like they are, really, very, you know, straightforward in their political fight and in their demands for the refugees […] Then, we have been working together as a colleague, as a partner, as a comrade and it was very effective, and our demand were brought to the public and we've got a lot of attention from the media from the public.[38]

These words describe the climate of openness and wholehearted support characterising the establishment of multifaceted relationships with local activists and private citizens. Nevertheless, it is also a reminder of how the different nature of the 'support' received by the group, and the members' personal perceptions of it, have shaped their later judgment on these partnerships. Perhaps, as prompted by Odugbesan, for its capability to threaten the Lampedusa's refugees as independent political actors, or because of its more 'straightforward' and militant initiatives, the relationship with the 'Karawane' still stands as one of the most politically fruitful in the members' memory.

As we will see more in detail in the second section of this chapter, questions of positionality, identity, and 'white domination' remain open, and are still a potential source of conflict within the transversal alliances constructed around the group.[39] Since the very beginning, the sometimes conflicting use of categories such as 'refugee', 'activist' or 'supporter', and the member's distinctions between political collaboration and humanitarian support, has had a strong influence on the group's development. As

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[38] Abimbola Odugbesan, Lampedusa in Hamburg, Hamburg, 25 February 2016.
[39] The definition of 'white domination' has been used by LiH members to criticise some of the decision-making during the 'group-supporters' weekly meetings which I have attended attending since May 2017.

a consequence, the necessity to affirm the group's independence and its self-organised nature is still one of the most important narratives for its members.

During the first year, the initiatives carried out by the group very effectively managed to draw the support of other groups, and the attention of the rest of the city. Through slogans and symbols that left a visible mark on the urban landscape, the group gained the centre stage in the local and national news. The symbol of *Lampedusa in Hamburg* (a clenched fist rising from an anchor) and their motto 'we are here to stay!', appeared on flyers, stickers, and graffiti in various part of the city, as a reminder of the refugees' presence and refusal to fulfil the authorities' request to leave the city.

Yeah, I think, also 'we are here to stay' is a very strong symbol that was really formed by the group, because when we arrived in Hamburg, we were so determined in such a way, that we think that our mission is like we are here to stay, that no more places we are going. That enough is enough. And that is it. You know it was really amazing, because when arrived in Hamburg in 2013, we are the [only] one of the refugee groups that marched into the Rathaus in Hamburg, you know, it was really a very amazing movement, because the passion was burning and [we were] all like this is our bus stop [...] we find ourselves from one place to another, it is not something we really created for ourselves. It is the system that chose to bring us from one place to another and we cannot continue to just be walking like a wanderer you know, for the rest of our life. So, I think that this is how the idea, you understand, of the name 'we are here to stay' and I think it has really been a really strong and powerful slogan that people in Hamburg... They really loved the slogan, we have been using it for the past years.[40]

From June 2013, *St. Pauli*, one of the historical quartier of Hamburg, became a focal point for the group's resistance: *Park Fiction*, the house-projects of the Hafenstraße and the St. Pauli Kirche became the key locations for a series of initiatives aimed at providing temporary beds, food, clothing, language courses, legal and medical care to the refugees evicted from the 'Winternotprogramme'. These places should be considered very symbolic, not only for the primary support provided to counter the 'starving' policy

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[40] Abimbola Odugbesan.

promoted by local authorities, but also because they are a reminder of the politically-charged context in which LiH's experiences took place.[41]

The facades of some of the historical 'squatted' buildings of the Hafenstraße still bear traces of the solidarity found by the group in the city.

Figure 17 Lampedusa murals and St. Pauli Kirche (June 2015)

To complete the widespread support from Hamburg's civil society, some members of the Lampedusa group were invited to join the 'Ver.di' and 'GEW' unions between July and August 2013.[42] According to Ali Ahmed, the unions provided a further structuring of the group:

[…] After that we came at Ver.di, who structured all the group. Who put communication, mobilisation, finance, politically speaker, who co-ordinate with media […] I am working in finance in Lampedusa, since we started this group.[43]

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[41] For a critical analysis of the Solidarity campaign see: Simone Beate Borgstede.

[42] The German United Services Trade Union (*Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft*) and the Education and Science Workers' Union (*Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft*).

[43] Ali Ahmed.

While, according to Meret and Della Corte, the union membership was merely symbolic and contributed to 'internal divisions and unfortunate hierarchisation', the group benefitted by gaining access to the offices of the *DGB Haus*, a fundamental meeting point, especially during the rigid winters.[44]

During the summer of 2013, the group introduced for the first time their proposal for a collective solution to the public. Since then, the group's demands have always been the same: the right to stay and to work in Germany.[45] To achieve this objective, LiH (with the endorsement of numerous human and civil rights lawyers) proposed to be recognised in paragraph twenty-three of the German Residence Act.[46] This solution, used in the past to grant collective residence permits to 'identifiable' groups or minorities already present in Germany, was rejected by the local institutions, which announced that the heterogeneity of LiH members would not allow the individuation of precise parameters identifying the group's members.

In short, Hamburg Senate asked: who are the members of Lampedusa in Hamburg? How can they be recognised? Given the transnational connotation of the group – therefore not having the possibility and the political willingness to ascribe themselves one nationality or ethnicity – the group answered by reiterating the definition of 'refugees of the Libyan war in possession of Italian humanitarian permits'. The classification, challenging the foundations of the Dublin asylum regulation, brought the group to an obvious impasse.

> The point that I want to make is like this. Our interest is not only to get work or to succeed in our private life. No, this is not a collective solution. We are refugees also we can make something here in Europe, we can get independent, we can get our work.[47]

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[44] Meret and Della Corte, p. 212.

[45] 'We Demand the Recognition of Our Italian Residence and Working Permit! | Lampedusa in Hamburg' <http://lampedusa-hamburg.info/recognition-of-the-italian-residence-and-working-permit/> [accessed 19 July 2017].

[46] 'Kampagne §23 | Lampedusa in Hamburg' <http://lampedusa-hamburg.info/unterstuzen/kampagne-%c2%a723/> [accessed 26 July 2017].

[47] Ali Ahmed.

Ali Ahmed's use of 'we' is not unusual among the group's members. It is a reminder not only of the fundamental role played by the name Lampedusa in shaping the members' subjectivity during these years, but also of the intrinsic collective nature of this experience. Without the 'we' and the 'us', *Lampedusa in Hamburg* would not have succeeded in gathering so much support and visibility, nor resisted for so long. In the very moment in which this 'we' was put into question by individual aspirations or fears, the apparently strong structure seemed to fall apart.

The 'Duldung crisis'

Although the 'Lampedusa-refugees' were also hosted in other locations, such as the Hamburg Central Mosque and numerous private houses, the St. Pauli Kirche ended up being the most visible and emblematic place of this period. In the first week of June 2013, the church started to shelter around seventy to eighty people, and soon was referred to as 'the Embassy of Hope'.[48]

Despite the backing of St. Pauli Kirch led to the highest peak of visibility and support for Lampedusa in Hamburg in the city, this relationship is considered by some members of the group and, by part of the literature, as playing a fundamental role in the weakening and the successive crisis of LiH's protest.[49]

During the winter of 2013-2014, following the Lampedusa group's public presentation of the §23 proposal, the protest escalated. On the one hand, *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, its confidence boosted by a concrete political objective and the support from a growing number of organisations and associations, also joined by the students' movement and by a list of academics, artists and stars from the film industry.[50] On the

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[48] Rainer Leurs and Hendrik Ternieden, 'Lampedusa-Flüchtlinge in Hamburg: "Wir Leben von Den Täglichen Wundern"', *Spiegel Online*, 22 August 2013, section Panorama <http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/gesellschaft/hamburg-lampedusa-fluechtlinge-leben-in-st-pauli-kirche-a-917767.html> [accessed 18 July 2017].

[49] See Meret and Della Corte.

[50] 'Von Jan Delay Bis Fatih Akin - Solidarität Für Flüchtlinge', *Stern.De*, 2013 <http://www.stern.de/kultur/musik/plakataktion-wir-sind-lampedusa-von-jan-delay-bis-fatih-akin-solidaritaet-fuer-fluechtlinge-2073005.html> [accessed 29 July 2017]; Nobel prize winner Elfriede Jelinek staged her 'Die Schutzbefohlenen' with the refugees hosted in the St. Pauli church. 'Jelineks "Die Schutzbefohlenen" in Der St.-Pauli-Kirche - WELT'

other hand, the Hamburg Senate and the German federal government, staunchly avoided any sort of collective concession that would potentially undermine the Dublin system, and chose to adopt repressive measures against the protesters.

Hamburg's police implemented a series of controls, based on racial profiling, that led to the arrest and forced fingerprinting of many of the Lampedusa refugees. The repressive measures roused further insecurity and fear among the LiH members. Nevertheless, instead of weakening the movement, it increased the sympathy for the non-violent resistance and civil disobedience promoted by the group.[51]

In this context, in November 2013, around ten thousand people rallied to support the demands of the Lampedusa group.[52] Such a widespread demonstration of public support, and the risk of losing further political credibility, finally pushed the Hamburg Senate to open up to a potential compromise. While still refusing to meet any of the speakers of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, the authorities began official talks with some representatives of the St. Pauli church. The negotiations led to the offer of the *Duldung* for all the refugees accommodated in the church, or living in similar conditions in other parts of the city.

Duldung, literally 'toleration', is a status which German residence law defines as a temporary suspension of deportation for foreigners who are formally obliged to leave the country but need a period to apply for legal residence. This status does not offer any guarantee of the future issue of a residence permit, does not give the right to work, and entails the limitation of permit-holders' freedom of movement.

The duration and the stages of an application for a residence permit under the *Duldung* are various. In some cases, the applicant is bound to live in designated structures and might receive time-limited documents that sometimes need to be renewed on a weekly basis. Applicants can remain in this legal 'limbo' for years, always

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<https://www.welt.de/newsticker/dpa_nt/infoline_nt/boulevard_nt/article120260254/Jelineks-Die-Schutzbefohlenen-in-der-St-Pauli-Kirche.html> [accessed 29 July 2017].

[51] See also Borgstede, p. 164.

[52] 'Tausende Demonstrieren Für Flüchtlinge | NDR.de - Regional - Hamburg', 2013 <https://web.archive.org/web/20131105021712/http://www.ndr.de/regional/hamburg/fluechtlinge583.html> [accessed 9 August 2017].

under the threat of a rejection and of a deportation procedure.[53] In the specific case of the LiH members, the *Duldung* would have meant renouncing the valid travelling and residence documents issued by the Italian government, and starting a new asylum application in Germany.

Ok, we seek for asylum for three years in Italy, I stayed in the camp for two years. I have my documents. I have my documents, I don't need *Duldung* […] I have family in Africa, I cannot go from Hamburg to Berlin if I take the *Duldung.* […] If I take *Duldung* and I seek another asylum it means I don't have documents again.[54]

Seeing it as the only feasible compromise between the two parties, the St. Pauli Kirche's representatives decided to support this offer by inviting the seventy to eighty refugees hosted in the church to accept it. The decision had serious consequences for the integrity of the group. The *Duldung,* only an individual solution, led to an irreconcilable split between the majority of the group and the people staying in the church, *de facto* taking off the table any future collective solution.

Thank you very much for the great support from the Christian communities in Hamburg, in particular for the housing and supply in St. Pauli but also in many other parts of the city […] But it's about all of us, it is about a group recognition. We all have an equal traumatic history at the same time, which was led from Libya to Lampedusa and Italy. There, in Italy, this has already been recognized […] For almost 3 years, not only we, but also our families are in great need. We are fighting for our right to rebuild our lives. This is what our group of the Libyan war refugees "Lampedusa in Hamburg" stands for […] We have not instructed someone to negotiate on our behalf. We have always demanded direct talks […] Why should the solidarity between us, which stems from our shared traumatic history be broken? [13 November 2013].[55]

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[53] See also Huub van Baar, 'Boundary Practices of Citizenship: Europe's Roma at the Nexus of Securitization and Citizenship', in *Within and Beyond Membership and Belonging.*, ed. by Roberto G. Gonzales and Nando Sigona (London ; New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 143–59.
[54] C.
[55] 'Open Letter by "Lampedusa in Hamburg" to the Nordkirche and the Christian Communities | The Caravan' <http://thecaravan.org/node/3969> [accessed 29 July 2017].

The wounds created by this period left various scars on the group. Although the year 2014 was peppered by new relevant initiatives that kept *Lampedusa in Hamburg* in the spotlight – such as the 'Lampedusa Emancipation Days',[56] the creation of *Refugee Radio Network*,[57] and the debut of *FC Lampedusa Hamburg* in the local amateur football leagues[58] – the year was characterised by a progressive disenchantment towards the groups' needs and demands. In the summer of 2015, the beginning of the so-called Syrian refugee 'crisis' appeared to have taken away the group's remaining media visibility.

The *Duldung* created shame and suspicion among the group. After almost two years of campaigning, some of the members seemed to have lost faith and energy, and returned to Italy or found different ways of remaining in Germany. As recounted by one of the members:

> They just close his eyes like a blind man and push the *Duldung* forward and you know, like I said, most of the people like, have fear in their heart. They feel like that is the easier way, so then some people go to collect the *Duldung* and the group started like shaking. Now, the problems start between the group […] it's not easy, because even until today some of them, now that we have any more problems with each other's, but some of them, still, you know, some of them regrets having that paper, that *Duldung* […] they are even hiding what is happening with them. They cannot tell us the real truth […] They feel ashamed. So, I've heard one was deported straight to his country of origin.[59]

In their Gramscian interpretation of the church's involvement with LiH, Meret and Della Corte raise the question of whether the partnership with the church revealed itself as a 'misplaced alliance', which, after an initial positive period, directly or indirectly

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[56] The 'Emancipation Days' are a series of self-organised cultural activities encompassing music, theatre, photo exhibitions, and public lectures. Henriette Bunde, 'Emazipation Vom Stereotyp Des Flüchtlings | Mittendrin · Das Nachrichtenmagazin Für Hamburg-Mitte' <http://hh-mittendrin.de/2014/10/emanzipation-vom-stereotyp-des-fluechtlings/> [accessed 8 January 2016].

[57] 'RRN - Refugee Radio Network', *RRN* <http://www.refugeeradionetwork.net/> [accessed 9 August 2017].

[58] 'FC Lampedusa in Hamburg' <http://fclampedusa-hh.de/> [accessed 25 June 2015].

[59] Shaban Ibrahim.

ended up contributing to the position of the German authorities.[60] While the church's endorsement for the *Duldung* solution is undeniable, the above-mentioned testimonies highlight another fundamental aspect.

The members that have decided to give up the Italian papers and begin a new asylum procedure in Germany, in hope or shame, have consciously chosen this path. Therefore, I argue that focusing too much on the potential reactionary role played by the church in the *Duldung* issue, as well as on the role of supporting groups like 'Karawane', risks undermining the political awareness and subjectivity of the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* members.

In the summer of 2014, partially as a consequence of the *Duldung* issue, many of LiH's original members and speakers decided to abandon the group either temporarily or indefinitely, leading to a reorganisation of the internal structure. This disenchantment did not encompass only the members, but also many of the supporting groups. According to the interpretation of Ali Ahmed in February 2015, the decision to collaborate with the Green Party, in a last attempt to promote the paragraph 23 solution, started a domino effect that deprived LiH of other valuable supporters:[61]

> Caravan wanted us to fight hardly politically, to make actions, to go against the state, against the government directly [...] you have to know they are very radical [...] but at the time, you have to know, we are refugees [...] they didn't know what the Green party is like [...] the Green party, deceived us, the SPD deceived us [...] Caravan, now is outside and some groups they come to support us, but the struggle is not like before [...] Now we started doing other projects, for example before we have two conferences in Hamburg. [...] But this doesn't show the political fight. [...] When Caravan went outside, more groups they left with the Caravan. They stopped supporting us [...] for example: Rote Szene Hamburg, antifascists, Rote Flora. FC St. Pauli, Left party [...] PKK...and more groups [...] they leave us like that. At the moment now, we have like Ver.di, we have like other people supporting like 'Never Mind The Papers, the called 'The right to the city'. Ok, they support us, but no kind of political support.[62]

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[60] Meret and Della Corte, p. 216.
[61] According to the group, the Green Party before the local election supported the paragraph §23 solution, but after they entered the coalition with the SPD, they did not keep the promise. 'Open Letter to the Green Party in Hamburg | Lampedusa in Hamburg' <http://lampedusa-hamburg.info/open-letter-to-the-green-party-in-hamburg/> [accessed 9 August 2017].
[62] Ali Ahmed.

4.1.3 'Survival, reorganisation and new strategies' (summer 2015 – end 2016).

Ali Ahmed's personal reading of the events, although full of regrets for having chosen a path that has alienated many of the group's historical 'supporters', not only offers a summary of the crisis undergone by the group between 2014 and 2015, but also highlights the group's resilience in the new context of the 'long summer of migration'. If the internal divisions could be overcome through the hard work of tireless new speakers, the members started critically questioning their political strategies and alliances.

Would the group be able to gather again such widespread support and visibility? What sort of political support was the most beneficial in almost two years of struggle? Should the group be closed to new-comers in order to preserve its identity? These are some of the very serious questions that the members addressed during months of, sometimes bitter, discussions in the midst of the 'welcoming' attitude of German authorities towards the refugees arriving from Syria.

The members' attitudes towards the 'newcomers' were diverse. As a consequence of the distinctions made by the German institutions between the 'good' and the 'bad' refugees, some reacted with disappointment:

> I don't like to criticise any persons, any refugees or any migrant, but if you see when we started the movement here in Hamburg three years before […] We made the movement in Hamburg, it's never happened in Hamburg and I told them that now we are here in Hamburg, we are part of the Hamburg history. If you like or you don't like it, but, what we don't like it, other refugees of the camp, they benefit from us. From our struggle, they collect what we have farmed. Do you understand? They took whatever you can say, they benefit from us, and, at the same time, we as a group, the Lampedusa, the *black people* we never get any [emphasis of the author].[63]

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[63] Ali Ahmed.

Others saw the opportunity to build new alliances with other refugee and migrant groups that faced institutional repression, such as Hamburg's Roma and Afghan communities:

> I think, even presently if you go to Lampedusa Info-Tent in Hauptbahnhof, you can see that. You will see always new people. It has become like a meeting point where people meet and get information. It was really open for new people, but probably not all the people are really interested in political fight and political struggle, but it's quite open. We always need new people.[64]

Despite the fears and the doubts of some its members, the group retained its sense of openness, becoming a symbol not only for the African refugees arriving in the city, but also a political hub around which new alliances were forged and groups were born, most notably the 'Bündnis Recht auf Stadt – *Never mind the papers*!'.[65]

Although traditional forms of resistance and civil disobedience like demonstrations and sit-ins were not abandoned, the group shifted towards new strategies, recognising the political value of cultural practices such as art exhibitions, theatre, public lectures, and other forms of public engagement:

> I think all these initiatives, some really come from the idea of how to really make ourselves visible and to prove to the public that we have some special potential not to really see us as refugees, so like the 'Emancipation Days', that we had probably one and half year ago […] The idea was to really bring cultural and arts into our activities. […] We also think that, when we have tried a lot of resistance through demonstrations, through civil disobedience and we saw that nothing was really happening, and we had to think about some another area that we can try to intensify our demands and really show more visibility […] it was really one of the best and great event that we organized like really ourselves.[66]

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[64] Abimbola Odugbesan.
[65] 'Recht Auf Stadt – Never Mind the Papers' <https://nevermindthepapers.noblogs.org/> [accessed 9 August 2017].
[66] Abimbola Odugbesan.

After the positive feedback and experience of 'Emancipation Days', the group decided to start a collaboration with the 'Ort_m migration memory' project, and to continue with the blog and photo-project 'Lampedusa in Hamburg – Professions'.[67]

[T]he Lampedusa Profession was another strategy that we tried to use for our demands to be answered. So, it was developed by Marily and I think Simone. Yeah, I think these two supporters, they developed this idea and truly most of our members are professionally and skilled gifted people, you understand […] So, when Marily came […] I told her my story to become a scientist, because I'm a medical laboratory assistant. And she said, oh, that's good, so, from there we took some pictures from the Apotheke [pharmacy] […] from there she put everything on a blog, you know, started sending emails to different things and organizations. […] Then we started having response from different things. So, there was this man from Frankfurt came and asked me if I can do a practicum [internship] with them.[68]

A symbol of this renewed energy and the return to campaigning was the *International Conference of Refugees and Migrants*, that took place in Hamburg's performing art centre of Kampnagel, at the end of February 2016. The conference, of which *Lampedusa in Hamburg* declared itself the main creator and promoter, was realised in collaboration with various self-organised refugee groups hailing from various German and European cities, and supported by numerous activists.[69]

With the conference, the members of LiH decided that the best way to push forward with their demands was to create an alliance among all the refugee groups present in Germany and beyond, bringing together people from different backgrounds, facing different challenges. The conference was a success, gathering more than a thousand participants and bringing to the attention of the public new issues such as refugees'

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[67] The Ort_m exhibition has a symbolical importance for this project, because, in January-February 2016, has managed to gather in one single location all the three objects of my research: AMM, Lampedusa in Hamburg and the Colletivo Askavusa. 'Ort_m [Migration Memory] Ausstellungsprogramm · Exhibition Program'.

[68] Sammy Ojo.

[69] For a list of the organising groups see 'International Conference of Refugees and Migrants 2016 » Contact'.

access to education, the risk of deportation, and the living conditions in the reception camps. *Lampedusa in Hamburg* played the part of the host in a space where different minorities promoted their cause or shared their stories. Problems with sexism and discrimination within the very same refugee movement were also addressed through the peaceful occupation of the conference stage by many of the attending women.[70] It is in this moment that LiH seems to have found new energy and enthusiasm to continue its struggle.

4.2. 'We are Lampedusa'. Constructing forms of transnational subjectivity through practices

As discussed in the previous section, the presence of *Lampedusa in Hamburg* had a fundamental impact on policies and societal attitudes towards migrants and refugees in the German city. In recent years, the group has become a cluster for solidarity initiatives, but also a 'testing ground' for policies of reception, integration, and, above all, repression against refugees living in Hamburg without legal status. Through *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, local authorities, refugee groups and activists for migrants and refugees' rights have learnt valuable lessons on what a self-organised, politically-active refugee movement can achieve.

It could be argued that, since the formation of the LiH, the city's relationship with migrants and refugees has inescapably changed. Whether the situation has improved or not is difficult to say; a similar judgement could also be shared on Berlin and the Oranienplatz's movement.[71] However, the LiH activists not only changed the city of Hamburg, but also played a fundamental role in the transnational symbolism of the name Lampedusa. Moreover, the adoption of this name has definitely affected the lives of the individuals composing the group.

The following pages, recalling some of the questions that have characterised the previous chapters, will focus on how the appropriation and re-signification of this name

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[70] Katharina Schipkowski, 'Eklat Bei Flüchtlingskonferenz Hamburg: Frauen Ergreifen Das Wort', *Die Tageszeitung*, Summer 2016, section Hamburg <https://www.taz.de/!5282015/> [accessed 28 February 2016].

[71] 'OPlatz — Berlin Refugee Movement', *OPlatz — Berlin Refugee Movement* <http://oplatz.net/> [accessed 14 August 2017].

has played a key role in shaping the identity of these people. Furthermore, thanks to its adoption as a tool of identity and resistance, I argue that this name has inescapably changed and assumed new, unexpected meanings that have created a space for subjectivity, and alternative understandings of migration within the hegemonic symbolism of Lampedusa.

The words of a local activist seem to confirm this impression:

Well, before I met the group Lampedusa in Hamburg, when I heard Lampedusa it was European borders, detention, small island and things like this. I find it totally great that with Lampedusa in Hamburg this changed. Not only changed in my mind but it changed also, I think, for many people. […] So, people move, and the name moves with them. It's people. Lampedusa people in an island and you have Lampedusa people where else? In Berlin, in Paris and all over, even in Greece. I find it very nice the idea that the people called themselves Lampedusa in Hamburg, because, it puts the point to this, Lampedusa was the point for them where the situation changed, when they arrived in Lampedusa they were refugees. And I find it very interesting that the name gets new meanings through the people who use it. I find it very nice actually.[72]

4.2.1 Why Lampedusa? Re-claiming agency through the construction of a collective identity

At the beginning of 2013, around three hundred refugees found themselves in the city of Hamburg with no permission to work, no place to stay, and under the threat of deportation. Some of them decided that something needed to be done, and that this could be achieved only by acting together as a group. These individuals decided to unite under the name *Lampedusa in Hamburg*. Why did they choose this name? How was this collective identity constructed? The interviewed members answered as follows:

Yeah, I think, at the moment that I arrived, I think that the connection to our name Lampedusa in Hamburg really had a direct and a concise link to how we came from on Libya to Lampedusa, and we arrived eventually in Hamburg. I think that is how eventually we initiated the name.[73]

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[72] Marily Stroux, Editor of Lampedusa in Hamburg Professions, Hamburg, 1 March 2016.
[73] Abimbola Odugbesan.

Yes, because that is really [where] the connection came from […] because Lampedusa have a border, a sea border with Africa, you understand, so when we came to Europe, Lampedusa happened to be the first place where we step our foot on […] So, when most of the people come to say: what is the meaning of Lampedusa? We explain that, that is where we came from. You know, from Africa to Lampedusa, from Lampedusa to Hamburg […] The symbol of how we came to Europe.[74]

Yeah, because when we arrived, many people arrived in Lampedusa. Lampedusa is an island in Italy, many people arrived in Lampedusa, before arriving in Sicily. So, that's why they say it, and Lampedusa is very popular. That is why they named it Lampedusa in Hamburg. […] If you are Lampedusa in Hamburg they know that those people come from Lampedusa, from Libya to Lampedusa.[75]

Although some of the members and/or founders of the group have a very precise explanation of what the name Lampedusa should symbolise, I now wish to highlight that the meaning of this name cannot be attributed to one reason alone. From the moment in which these people signed their first statement with the name *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, the group's initiatives, and the testimonies of its members, are there to show that the meaning of this name cannot be related only to the Sicilian island anymore.

At first sight, for the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* members – as for Zakaria Mohamed Ali, Mahamed Aman and Dagmawi Yimer in the case of the *Archivio Memorie Migranti* – having been physically present on the Sicilian island appears to be a fundamental facet of their identity. Having experienced the island in first person is the starting point of their new identity as refugees in Europe, almost a mark of authenticity. As in the case of the AMM's members, for some of the LiH members the intimate connection with the island is also marked by the need to return to it as a visitor.[76] However, this interpretation is not shared by all the members interviewed for this project:

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[74] Sammy Ojo.
[75] C.
[76] A delegation of members of the Lampedusa in Hamburg visited the island at the beginning of 2014. Hamburger Abendblatt- Hamburg, 'Flüchtlinge: St. Pauli Schickt Delegation Nach Lampedusa', 2014

Sorry, Lampedusa, Lampedusa is not me in Italy, is not me in Hamburg, is not me in Germany, is not me in Europe. Lampedusa, it means to me the victims of NATO of 2011.[77]

This statement is a reminder of how a collective identity can be perceived and processed in multiple ways by different individuals, but also raises questions on the nature of such an identity. Instead of seeing *Lampedusa in Hamburg* as an essentialist identity recalling the common background of these refugees, this identity should rather be seen, in the words of Hall, as 'strategic' and 'positional':

That is to say […] identity does not signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change […] It accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation.[78]

It could be said that, initially, the name *Lampedusa in Hamburg* was consciously chosen by founders Asuqo Udo, Affo Tchassei et al., not only to remember the common journey shared by many of its members, but for its well-known symbolism. In fact, although referring to the country on many occasions and in many slogans, the group did not choose, for instance, the name 'Libya in Hamburg'.

The refugees showed awareness of the capability of this name to trigger the tropes of the dominant Lampedusa symbolism, which becomes a mean for evoking very precise emotions and images to the public opinion. In 2013, to say that Lampedusa was also in Hamburg was a clear statement that whatever was happening on the island was not only an Italian problem. It was a reminder that the interference of European countries in Libya had consequences, especially in the migratory project of these individuals.

<https://www.abendblatt.de/hamburg/kommunales/article123489264/Fluechtlinge-St-Pauli-schickt-Delegation-nach-Lampedusa.html> [accessed 14 August 2017].
[77] Ali Ahmed.
[78] Hall, 'Who Needs "Identity"?', pp. 3–4.

With this choice, the members also seemed to move within the paradigm of Lampedusa's hegemonic symbolism. This straight-forward association between the name and the images of 'crisis' or 'emergency' is also shared by some of the activists connected the group. When asked about the origin of the name of *FC Lampedusa*, one of the coaches answered:

> Today, let me say that for us it doesn't matter, if they come and say, we are the 'FC Lesbos', FC Lesbos it is. 'FC Samos', 'FC Melilla', whatever. Just a symbol for 'fortress Europe' and the European migration.[79]

Therefore, in reflecting on the case of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, various issues should be taken into account: the group's members' need for public support and visibility, the necessity of finding a collective identity (or symbol) capable of holding together persons hailing from different countries and cultures, but also the desire to preserve the self-organised nature of the group.

> I think visibility is one of the important factors we cannot undermine in the political. Especially, in this refugee struggle, because the policy, I mean the European policies have already tried to silence refugees not to speak, but also tried to represent the position of refugees in ways it cannot work, you know, they cannot represent our positions, they cannot represent our situation. So, I think what Lampedusa in Hamburg did was […] creating the city because we came to the city and we represent ourselves, we spoke ourselves and we are still speaking right away, and this really drew the attention, the interest of the population. Wow! Oh, there are some refugees, that they are really oppressed![80]

Homi Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity' can be used to understand and highlight the complexity and significance of this experience. The impossibility of drawing from singularities such as 'class', 'gender' or other 'narratives of originary and initial subjectivities based on nationality, has placed the LiH members in what Bhabha defines

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[79] Hagar Gröteke and Nicole Appel, Coaches of FC Lampedusa Hamburg, Hamburg, 15 February 2016.
[80] Abimbola Odugbesan.

as an 'in-between' space.[81] It is in this 'interstice' that the transnational and hybrid identities of the group are formed, through dialogue, collaboration, but also juxtaposition and conflicts.[82] Drawing on Bhabha, the members' common 'past-present' in Libya and on Lampedusa can be seen as a 'necessity not the nostalgia of living'; a starting point from which collective or individual identities are constantly re-signified according to the space and time in which they need to be deployed.[83]

Following Fanon's example ('in the world in which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate my cycle of freedom),[84] *Lampedusa in Hamburg* members have initiated a 'cycle' by re-claiming their subjectivity in a system that dictates passivity, and by uniting under an identity that has put aside and challenged their national and cultural differences.

For Bhabha, the iteration and re-creation of the self is a fundamental feature for people caught in this 'in-between' space. The members, opting to put aside their personal ethnic or cultural background, avoid the 'calcification of colonial cultures' in their national roots, creating an 'unhomeliness' that is eventually filled, as we will see in the following pages, by the meaning that the name Lampedusa has assumed during the years of struggle.[85] In this time, the meaning of this name has changed, becoming something more intimate. Some of the members may feel incomplete without it; others may see the name almost as a burden.[86]

Furthermore, *Lampedusa in Hamburg*'s identity is a reminder of the limits of restrictive notions of cultural identity 'in which we burden our vision of political change'.[87] The refusal of the Hamburg Senate to accept the transnational soul of the group is a clear example of the political disorientation arising from the group's hybrid identity. The national and (cultural) identity paradigms used by the authorities appear incapable of recognising the many commonalities shared by the people composing the

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[81] Bhabha, p. 6.
[82] Bhabha, p. 7.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, New edition (London: Pluto Press, 2008), p. 178.
[85] Bhabha, p. 9.
[86] It is important to highlight that some of the members have left the group and do not want to be identified with the name Lampedusa anymore.
[87] Bhabha, p. 55.

group. Struggles like that of LiH challenge the nationalist tradition; its members are 'now free to negotiate and translate their cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference'.[88]

The members' struggle might be rooted in the city of Hamburg, but its significance goes beyond any spatial boundary. For one of the group's speakers, Lampedusa is not only Italy or Hamburg, but can symbolise the migrants and refugees' resistance anywhere:

> Yeah, I think Lampedusa in Hamburg from my own I think is everywhere, you understand […] we are just a very small symbol of resistance to European policy towards the refugees and immigrants. So, that is about. I think we are everywhere, because, you know, there are a lot of refugees' resistances everywhere and you know this policy that is always trying to push us back is also everywhere…[89]

The production of such a borderless and empowering space is to be found in the transnational, transcultural, and translingual character of this experience. The different nationalities and the obstacles faced by its members (homelessness, the threat of deportation, but also the difficulty in accessing state-subsidised German language courses) seems to have made of English the group's 'lingua franca'. However, the languages used by the members are various: Arabic, French, German, Hausa, Italian, Yoruba, and many more. This creates what Wei and Garcia consider as a 'translanguaging' space.[90]

In such a space, the continuous meetings between different people and languages produce a transformative power capable of enhancing new identities, values, and practices. According to Wei and Garcia: 'contacts between people of diverse backgrounds and traditions provide new opportunities for innovation and creativity', and speakers 'consciously construct and constantly modify their sociocultural identities and values through social practices such as translanguaging'.[91] Therefore, the possibility

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[88] Bhabha, p. 9.
[89] Abimbola Odugbesan.
[90] Ofelia Garcia and Li Wei, *Translanguaging* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[91] Garcia and Wei, p. 24.

of switching to the most appropriate language according to the interlocutor is not only a sign of creativity and of critical response to the context, but is also a means of enhancing the group's political message.

When Ali Niger, one of the group's speakers, introduces the group's demands and history in Italian for a broadcast on *Rai 3*, the political message goes beyond the German context.[92] He enacts the transnational symbolism of Lampedusa, not to trigger the usual images of crisis, but to affirm the European dimension of their struggle. As one guest on the talk-show phrased it: 'Forse dovrebbe andare lui al Consiglio Europeo, è di una potenza incredibile'. With his powerful words, Ali Niger enacts the European approach to migration that politicians often struggle to articulate. Furthermore, LiH members, either by travelling to Italy to renew their papers, by marching to Brussels with other refugee groups, or by attending conferences in other German cities actively uphold their connections to people and places created during their journeys across Europe, creating transnational solidarity between different refugee struggles. These practices are a further sign of the transnational identity the group is invested in.

However, drawing on Bhabha, identification can never be a matter of affirming a pre-given identity. Saying 'we are Lampedusa' is not a self-fulfilling prophecy: 'it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image'.[93] In the case of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, being identified by this name also entails willingly or unwillingly assuming the 'mask' of the refugee, with all the consequences that this label implicates. In the following section, I will explore how this 'otherness' is represented and negotiated by the group, which symbols and means of representation are chosen, and what challenges the practice of self-representation raises.

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[92] 'Da Chios a Amburgo - Gazebo Del 19/06/2015', *Rai*
<http://www.rai.tv/dl/RaiTV/programmi/media/ContentItem-a75f2307-0a81-45e2-aa9e-1064a3d3164f.html> [accessed 8 August 2018].
[93] Bhabha, p. 45.

The refugee label and the question of the self-representation

> Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation.[94]

The words of Stuart Hall are a reminder of the fundamental role played by representation in the construction of any identity. Though LiH's identity appears to invoke a shared common past with which the members can fully identify, the meaning of 'who they are' is still in a state of becoming, and should be read through the images offered by their initiatives during these years. In this section, the issue of representation will be explored, firstly by looking at how members reflect on their activities and effectively manage to carry their voices, and, secondly by looking at how they mobilise the 'refugee' identity. Finally, I will address the limits of the refugee/supporter distinction.

Beyond its symbols and slogans, the group's principal and favourite means of spreading its demands and gathering visibility are demonstrations and public actions. As one member explains:

> I think that the demonstration is the best way […] for people who are struggling, because if you are demonstrating, Hamburg will know, you see? […] It is the best, because for you, as a group, is very important that the people see you, remember we are still here![95]

Nevertheless, in its five-year history, LiH has experimented with and undertaken several forms of campaigning. These initiatives require further attention, because they raise two fundamental questions: the question of self-representation, and the question of the group's relationship with its so-called 'supporters' (the activists involved in their

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[94] Hall, 'Who Needs "Identity"?', p. 4.
[95] C.

struggle). These two issues are intertwined, and they both offer significant insights into the conflicting role played by the 'refugee' label in the lives of the individuals composing the group.

The analysis of these initiatives does not only offer a testimony of the group's unsatisfactory relationship with the media ('they cannot speak for us'), but also highlights the members' subjective role in constructing the official portrait of themselves beyond the racialised roles imposed by society. The form and the actual extent of this subjectivity should also be considered.

> Because you know there have been a lot of propaganda in the media that refugees will take your…blah blah…but when we came out by ourselves, the people see us ourselves, we spoke by ourselves, you know we demonstrated ourselves. Then, it really drew the attention of the people. Like something it's really happened […] We got a lot of support, a lot of solidarity and this visibility really it was a lot of attention from the public, that is also the importance of refugee movements to be visible in their struggle.[96]

As Abimbola Odugbesan notes, initiatives such as the *International Conference of Refugees and Migrants*, the 'Emancipation Days', *Lampedusa in Hamburg, Professions,* and the *Refugee Radio Network* addressed the political necessity of dismantling and 'emancipating' the LiH members from the stereotypes perpetrated by the media. However, these practices all entailed the construction of new partnerships or forms of co-production which challenged the group's understandings of self-representation.

The idea of creating the *Refugee Radio Network* (RRN) illustrates the members' self-reflexivity on their initiatives. As described by the radio co-founder, after years of public demonstrations on the streets, some of the 'Lampedusans' decided to try a different strategy, aiming in particular at side-stepping the media's monopoly on the portrayal of their struggle to the wider public:

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[96] Abimbola Odugbesan.

Well, Sammy and Asuqo are members of Lampedusa in Hamburg and then I met them, they invited me to come to Hamburg to help them on a campaign to push the struggle [...] we tried to re-organize the struggle, used other mediums of campaign, we used theatre and we brought the initiative of the first Lampedusa Emancipation Days. [...] when we started the radio [...] what we were doing was basically going on the street, once on the month, protest and that's it...and the media will grab that and portray it in their own way.[97]

Figure 18 Flyer promoting Radio Refugee Network and poster of the Lampedusa Professions campaign (credits Marily Stroux)

 Although the members' involvement in the radio project was brief, their attempt is a reminder of the fundamental need for self-representation underpinning the LiH experience. This matter has posed and still poses to LiH members the most difficult questions regarding the group's identity and who is entitled to speak on its behalf. These questions do not only point to situations like the *Duldung* crisis (in which the St. Pauli Kirche's representatives were accused of patronising the members in their negotiations with the local authorities), and to initiatives carried out by individual refugees (like RRN) 'empowering' or speaking for other refugees, but also problematise the figure of the LiH 'speakers' as well.

When asked how he became an 'official' speaker of the group, Abimbola Odugbesan explains that his political involvement answered both to the willingness to carry forward the group's demands (and more in general those of the refugees), but also to the desire to pursue his individual objectives. The way in which he invested himself with the role of 'speaker' acknowledges the need for a 'democratisation' of the group hierarchies, his

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[97] Larry Macaulay, Founder and editor in chief of Refugee Radio Network, Hamburg, 9 February 2016.

intention to actively affect his condition, but also his sense of responsibility/duty in choosing to represent the 'voice of his people':

> There was a time [when] we have some little problems about who speak and […] the situation of choosing who speaks for the group should be more autonomous …you know like, everybody should have this kind of democracy system […] if you have the ability to speak for the group […] so you think you can speak then […] that is how the all idea came up. Nobody really choose me, but when I have the responsibility that I have, the ability to speak for the group, to speak for myself and to speak on the behalf...that is how it started. From then, people recognized me as a speaker and I also don't do it or really recognize myself as a speaker, but I just do it because I think that is also part of my responsibility you know to speak for myself and also to speak and to represent the voice of my people.[98]

When Abimbola Odugbesan, Ali Ahmed or Ali Niger represent the group, or are invited to public demonstrations to speak in the name of 'all' the refugees, they actively exert their political subjectivity but, at same time, are 'burdened' or invested with the obligation (and the expectations of mainly white antiracist movements) to speak on behalf of a heterogenous collectivity. They need to perform their 'role' as 'refugee', willingly or unwillingly reproducing the societal divisions that their struggle aims at dismantling:

> Yeah, I think you know, the general opinion or view about the refugee [term] is not really giving a good representation about our real identity […] what we really try to do, and what I really try to do is to really portray the real identity of who I am, through my activities. And this also can prove to the public and the impression they already have about the name refugees. So, personally I think is a kind of a name that is not easy to just take away or to eradicate, but I think that we can prove that this name is an invented name to really undermine our identity and to really separate us and to give a kind […] of division or classification in the society...[99]

In doing this they are aware of the dilemma: they mobilise the term in order to be widely understood, to render their stories legible as instances of forced migration. At

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[98] Abimbola Odugbesan.
[99] Abimbola Odugbesan.

the same time, they are conscious of the divisions this creates, and of its reification not only of the distinction between 'citizens' and 'others', but also between 'deserving refugees' and 'undeserving migrants'.

As a consequence, some reject the term 'refugee' as a marker of identity whilst still employing it strategically, as Abimbola Odugbesan explains:

I think to me, I don't see myself as a refugee. I see myself as a normal human being because a lot of things I am doing some Europeans they cannot do it and some Germans they cannot do it and so I think that the name is just trying to undermine all we have, our real identity and our ability to really integrate into the society […] even if there are some occasions I call myself a refugee […] I think inside me, I also believe that it was invented name, you know, our real identity is not a refugee, because we have our qualities, our integrity, our potential that really make us a real human being not a refugee.[100]

Here, the juxtaposition between Abimbola Odugbesan's 'real identity' as a human being and his strategic positioning as a refugee is noteworthy: not only does it show an acute awareness of the dehumanising effect of the label 'refugee', but it also makes clear that group members use representations strategically and ambivalently, rather than adopting specific labels and identity markers in their entirety.

In addition to highlighting the ambivalent and highly self-reflective use of the refugee label by the group, the aforementioned initiatives also allow an analysis the complex relationships between the LiH members and the people defined by the group's members as 'supporters'. It is in these practices that the limits of the strategic use of the refugee/supporter labels have emerged most clearly.

A minor episode, such as the printing of an alternative flyer promoting the *International Conference of Refugees and Migrants*, works as an example of the tensions arising from these categories.

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[100] Abimbola Odugbesan.

Figure 19 Flyers promoting the International Conference of Refugees and Migrants

The issue could be dismissed as a matter of visibility, i.e. having the name of LiH at the centre of the flyer, but it also encompasses deeper dynamics of power, privilege, race, gender, class, and so on.[101]

> Yeah, I think about this International Conference, I think is really like our idea, because we think it's really important for us to really have a platform where we meet like, maybe nationally, even if it is once in a while.[102]

The words of Abimbola Odugbesan highlight that claiming or reclaiming authorship of initiatives co-produced with other groups like the conference is fundamental to maintaining the group's political independence. In this process, the name *Lampedusa in*

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[101] For a critical analysis of such dynamics in the case of Berlin antiracist movement see Nadiye Ünsal, 'Challenging "Refugees" and "Supporters". Intersectional Power Structures in the Refugee Movement in Berlin', *movements. Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies*, 1.2 (2015) <http://movements-journal.org/issues/02.kaempfe/09.ünsal--refugees-supporters-oplatz-intersectionality.html> [accessed 8 August 2018].
[102] Abimbola Odugbesan.

Hamburg must stand out. Nevertheless, the LiH member is also aware that these initiatives are irrevocably tied to the role played by the so-called 'supporters':

> About the impact of the supporters, you know, most of the time, you know, we still have a lot of limited ability and capacity to organize, to really organize a lot of things […] you know, even the supporters also they cannot do much if we also don't really give our voice or if we are also not motivated to get involved in any activities, you understand? Like this International Conference. So, the involvement of the supporters is also very important, and even though we still have a lot of differences, *because they are still white, we are from Africa, we are still raised in a very different way* [emphasis added], that it does not make our interests and our demands to get the same response… but we are still working together because we cannot also do a lot of things on our own without trying to involve them. Even the privileges we also have in the city, it is because the voices of the majority of the supporters are really in support of our demand of our stay in Europe.[103]

These words describe a complex relationship: the privileged position of the 'supporters', their 'whiteness' and potential dominance within the movement, but also the benefits given by their backing and the reciprocal necessity of working together.

Seeing when the refugee or LiH identities are triggered or set aside is not only a matter of strategic essentialism; it is also a matter of hierarchies and categories that cannot be addressed without looking at a 'wide spectrum of complex relationalities of domination, subordination, and collaboration'.[104]

When, during one of the *Lampedusa* meetings, one of the LiH members urges the bystanders to say that 'now we are not only refugees but activists,' he highlights, on the one hand, the challenge of being at once the 'subject' of support and the 'actor' of change, 'almost the same but not quite'.[105] On the other hand, he appeals to his fellow 'refugees' for a way of working together in the movement without seeing in the figure of the 'supporter' the coloniser's presence or gaze. In the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* experience, the challenges of identity politics and the risks of 'ethnic insiderism' should

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[103] Abimbola Odugbesan.
[104] Shohat and Stam, p. 343.
[105] Bhabha, p. 12.

not be minimised or ignored. Indeed, '[…] it would be an act of bad faith to expect "minorities" to be color-blind toward the ethnically privileged.'[106]

As highlighted by these examples, although the refugee label plays a relevant role in describing the LiH members' experiences, this term creates a context in which their individual aspirations and choices are undermined by the dominant narrative of 'forced migration' connected to it. Although the *Lampedusa in Hamburg* identity also perpetrates some of these assumptions, such as the victimisation of the members ('we are the victims of the NATO war in Libya'), the choice of adopting this name underlines a more active and politically aware dimension of migration.

The LiH identity creates space for subjectivity within the hegemonic symbolism of the name Lampedusa. This identity is articulated within the constraints of hegemonic discursive formations on migration ('Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us'),[107] and by a process of 'othering' that sometimes re-enacts the rift between the 'refugees' and the European citizens engaged in the struggle.

However, the LiH movement has tied to the name Lampedusa renewed images of independent and politically-active refugees and migrants, bringing into the spotlight the EU governments' responsibility for creating illegality and constructing the various 'crisis/emergencies'. Instead of focusing on the dominant narratives of human trafficking, border control etc., LiH has associated this name with a critique of EU asylum regulations, issues of access to the labour market, and solidarity beyond the national divisions inherited from colonial powers. The 'Lampedusans' have professions, political awareness, they engage with wider political topics, and they want to be an independent and contributing part of society.

Lampedusa in Hamburg's relationship with the refugee label summarises what Hall so poignantly describes as 'the necessity and the "impossibility" of identities'.[108] In answer to the limits of this category, the members have appropriated and re-signified the name Lampedusa to offer a more nuanced image of their daily struggle, and as an

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[106] Shohat and Stam, pp. 344–45.
[107] Hall, 'Who Needs "Identity"?', p. 6.
[108] Hall, 'Who Needs "Identity"?', p. 16.

attempt to bridge or dismantle the divide between their lives and that of the majority of the citizens of the 'host' country. What remains to be asked is whether this term is also capable of making visible the 'un-severed' colonial roots underpinning contemporary stories of migration, offering an identity that highlights the shared experience of 'black suffering', but also the members' resilience and transformative power.

4.3 'In the wake of' Lampedusa: Lampedusa as an imagined 'homeland'

The previous pages have discussed the reasons that have inspired LiH to adopt this name as a tool of resistance. The activities and personal stories of the members have showed multi-layered significations and connections to the name Lampedusa. In this concluding section, the analysis will be directed at the role played by this name in the members' personal lives. In short, whether the name Lampedusa could be considered, drawing on Gilroy's reflection on the *Black Atlantic*, as a kind of transnational diasporic 'homeland'.[109]

By seeing Lampedusa as a source of diasporic identity, I want to emphasise two final aspects and premises of this experience. Firstly, the role played by the members' 'blackness' and how this marker binds their struggle to the long history of 'skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death' affecting people of colour.[110] Secondly, whether the name Lampedusa has helped the LiH members to assert an identity imbued with political agency and resistance, beyond hegemonic representations of migration focusing on images of 'black suffering'.

The previous pages have illustrated how this identity played and still plays a fundamental role in the social lives of these individuals, but also how the construction of such a collective identity is bound to what Gilroy defines as the 'formation of that perilous pronoun "we"' and the unavoidable creation of 'patterns of inclusion and

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[109] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.

[110] Gregory John Ashworth and Rudi Hartmann, *Horror and Human Tragedy Revisited: The Management of Sites of Atrocities for Tourism* (New York: Cognizant Communication Corporation, 2005).

exclusion'.[111] The risk that LiH's identity might turn into a fixed 'emblem of supposedly essential or immutable difference,' becoming a shortcut for determining someone's subjectivity, is very real.[112]

For instance, while new people (often West-African refugees travelling to Hamburg with Italian papers, like the LiH members) are welcomed and supported at the 'Lampedusa Tent', they are reminded that they cannot be part of the group. The name *Lampedusa in Hamburg* belongs only to the three hundred 'original-members'. Nevertheless, as we will see with the example of the new *FC Lampedusa Hamburg* players, the name is still 'in becoming' and year after year assumes different meanings for the persons that feel emotionally attached to it.

According to Gilroy, 'considering identity requires a confrontation with the specific ideas of ethnic, racialized, and national identity and their civic counterparts'.[113] In the case of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, this process demands a confrontation with the members' 'blackness' and their 'double consciousness' as Africans and refugees.[114] It is a 'state of being and not belonging' that inscribes this experience in the history of the global African diaspora, and makes of the Pan African transnational 'wish to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity' a fundamental factor characterising LiH's identity.[115]

While Gilroy has focused on how black music reproduces a distinctive counterculture of modernity that brings together the 'conspicuous differences of language, culture, and identity which divide the blacks of the diaspora from one another,'[116] Christina Sharpe has highlighted how the disparate peoples of the black diaspora are bonded by stories of suffering in different times and places.[117]

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[111] Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Culture and the Allure of Race* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), p. 99.

[112] Gilroy, *Between Camps*, p. 101.

[113] Gilroy, *Between Camps*, p. 110.

[114] William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Dover Publications, 1994).

[115] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 19.

[116] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 34.

[117] Christina Elizabeth Sharpe, *In the Wake. On Blackness and Being.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 33.

Through her multi-layered metaphor of 'wake work', Sharpe stresses how the stories of migrant shipwrecks in the 'Black Mediterranean', or of police violence against young black men on American streets, are connected by 'the persistence of Black death and persistence of Black life' that takes place in the 'afterlife of slavery'. Despite everything, she argues, 'black people' make space for joy.[118]

The ability of these two authors to trace connections between apparently distant phenomena and people reflects closely the role played by Benjamin's analogy of the constellation discussed in the previous chapters. Their work is seen as a further tool for discussing how 'black connections' surface in the words and activities of *Lampedusa in Hamburg.*

> They took whatever you can say, they benefit from us, and, at the same time, we as a group, the Lampedusa, *the black people* [emphasis added] we never get any.[119]

The words of member Ali Ahmed make clear that being black and being a member of LiH are two sides of the same coin. The fact that the members' physical appearance can be represented as a repository of LiH's identity has charged this name with further difficulties and stigmas. The members of *Lampedusa in Hamburg* find themselves 'in the wake' of the racialised structural constraints faced by people of colour around the world; it is not a coincidence that members have been targeted by racist attacks, racial profiling, and gratuitous violence on the part of the police.[120]

The deaths, among others, of members Samuel Mensah and Francis Kwame can also be interpreted as a consequence the Hamburg Senate's adamant opposition to the group's demands.

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[118] Ibid.

[119] Ali Ahmed.

[120] NDR, 'Polizei-Schüsse: Linke Fordert Aufklärung' </nachrichten/hamburg/Polizei-Schuesse-Linke-fordert-Aufklaerung,schuesse162.html> [accessed 15 June 2017].

Figure 20 Banner at the Lampedusa Tent (Summer 2017) and flyer in memory of member Francis Kwame (March 2014)

Hence, following Sharpe, the challenge for LiH members is to think of practices and representations of blackness capable of overcoming the consequences of 'Black being in the wake', and recognising the 'insistent Black visualsonic resistance to that imposition of non/being'.[121] The 'disruption and the refashioning of images of blackness and Black people', through different forms of what Sharpe defines as 'wake work' are a way to resist the normative state violence and practices of racialisation affecting Black life. 'Being in the wake of Lampedusa' means operating within the limits of the episteme of the hegemonic symbol, but still finding ways to challenge it, to contest it and to change it.

When, between March and June 2018, together with the members of the group, I proposed to co-produce a map of the city of Hamburg critically commemorating and marking the main locations of the LiH struggle, the tension between the willingness of some members to highlight the many positive achievements of the group, and the need of others to reiterate their common experience of suffering, produced a practical example of what Sharpe defines as 'wake work'.[122]

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[121] Sharpe, p. 21.
[122] See '5 years of struggle. Lampedusa in Hamburg – Here to Stay'. City map, scale 1:18000, June 2018.

Figure 21 Draft of the 'Lampedusa in Hamburg city map' and alternative flyer celebrating the '5 years anniversary'

On the one hand, the production of an additional flyer featuring generic pictures of crowded migrant boats in distress highlights how dominant connotative codes have influenced some of the members' visual repertoire in representing the LiH struggle. On the other hand, other members' decision to add a reminder of "Five years – of rejection of our demand (paragraph 23), psychological problems, trauma and uncertainty of our future" to the otherwise positive text featuring on the map, shows how the group refuses to narrate its own history only as one of success.

With the map, the flyer, and these words, the members keep track of 'the ship'; they keep watch for dead members, and remind the readers that, despite the suffering, they persevere without forgetting their past. The 'wake work' of 'black annotation and redaction'[123] carried out by the group's members on the map or, more in general, on the name Lampedusa, challenges the reductionist stereotypes produced by mainstream media and politicians. It creates, in Hall's words, a 'defensive collective identity against the practices of racist society'.[124]

As described by LiH member Shaban Ibrahim, the 'changing' of the name Lampedusa makes him proud, and defines him against potential racist 'enemies':

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[123] Sharpe, p. 33.

[124] Stuart Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', in *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, ed. by Anthony D. King (U of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 41–68 (p. 52).

Yeah, I feel, you know, there were not a lot of group having the name of Lampedusa before, so the changing of the name is like, even though I didn't get, we didn't get the results, I still feel proud, that the name Lampedusa is higher than we thought. […] I don't really know where I am coming and how I was born but now, I am in Hamburg and did something different […] now with Italy and Lampedusa, so is like a very nice thing to change the name and if we look every time at the news everywhere Lampedusa. Even though we have a lot of enemy, enemies, but we still…I don't care. Like yesterday, I was on the train, and I have a racist black man when I was wearing the shirt, the red shirt Lampedusa in... He is looking at me, and I realize because of the shirt is angry and I just faced him and said him: I am who I am! and I love who I want to be, and I would never drop down my life to change who I am.[125]

Ibrahim's words encapsulate the importance assumed by this name for people that have been excluded or refused an identity within the European context. Drawing on Hall, the identification with the name Lampedusa could then be seen as the necessity for these people of 'having to find some other roots on which to stand,' and as 'the crucial moment of the rediscovery or the search for roots.[126] The Lampedusa group shows that other forms of belonging, not related to a territory or a nation-state, do exist. Not having the chance to access either the Italian or the German national space, the 'Lampedusans' have acted to construct an 'imagined homeland'.

Italy is the 'roots'. So, I tell someone of my friend, he came from Italy, […] he travelled to Italy to renew the document. When I saw him today, I said: are you back? He said I'm back. You are back from the roots, and he laughed. He said why did I say that. I said because Germany is just a stem, […] a branch and a stem, but Italy is the roots, because even though you know, Italy made mistakes with us, but I still respect Lampedusa, and how we were received. I respect that. To me, my point of view, I respect that. I put the racism and all these things aside, but to talking about giving a chance, the documents really helped us. […] Anytime I wish to go back to Italy and living, to go and have my holiday […] so we decided the root. We were in Italy; the beginning of the root is Lampedusa. So, that is how we decided, the name Lampedusa in Hamburg.[127]

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[125] Shaban Ibrahim.
[126] Hall, 'Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities', p. 52.
[127] Shaban Ibrahim.

This statement illustrates the role of 'translocal solidarities' that, according to Gilroy, are capable of opposing traditional 'appeals to the power of sovereign territory and the bonds of rooted, exclusive national cultures'.[128] In this way, Lampedusa could be seen as a transnational diasporic identity able to mirror the 'rootless cosmopolitanism of the Black Atlantic,' the imagined homeland for which these people, who have suffered countless displacements, can long for.

For the LiH members, Lampedusa is chosen from among the numerous spaces associated with their journeys. The name offers an 'alternative to the metaphysic of "race," nation, and bounded culture coded into the[ir] bod[ies]'.[129] Although maintaining a bond or connection with the cultural memory of Middle Passage and the history of black resistance to racialised violence, this identity offers an alternative to race as 'the only structural determinant of positionality or the sole imaginary around which claims of belonging can be made'.[130]

By constructing and embracing Lampedusa as a diasporic identity, the members not only find a way to contest nationalist parameters of citizenship, as well as cultural and political belonging, but they create a flexible and open-ended identity that can be deployed as a strategy of resistance to the negative stereotypes attached to some of their multiple identities. For member Sammy Ojo, the name Lampedusa has become a symbol and a means for a hopeful new beginning:

If the name changed anything? For me, I believe the name Lampedusa in Hamburg had a specific change on us, as the name distinguished us from every other refugee that came to Europe here, yeah, because of our story. […] Let me tell you something: there was this German course I went to, like for one year, and it was very expensive […] I don't know anything, I don't know how to pay, because we are not allowed to work […] so I went to a church like a caritas and I met the reverend father there. I tried to tell him my situation, I am a refugee and I want to learn German, I want to go to this school, and I need somebody to pay. He was like: mmmh, the school is very expensive […] then, he asked me where I come from, and I told him I am from Nigeria, Lampedusa in Hamburg. And he said: Ah!! Lampedusa in Hamburg? I said yes. Ok, ok, ok! From there he told me: 'go to the school, get me the invoice and I will pay'. Do you know that the man paid for me

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[128] Gilroy, *Between Camps*, p. 8.
[129] Gilroy, *Between Camps*, p. 123.
[130] Gilroy, *Between Camps*, p. 253.

for one year and also when my woman was ready to go the school he paid too and the man always say: if you need anything just tell I will pay. […] When I go to the reverend for that, because he's an old man, he can't really recall my name, but immediately I mention Lampedusa. Ha ha!! And he will remember...Do you understand? So, for me the name Lampedusa, really, you know, means a lot to us. It really changed many things, that is my own personal story.[131]

In Sammy Ojo's story, the name Lampedusa is not only a tool for accessing economic support, but becomes a 'positive' mark, a distinction that for the people that come into contact with the LiH struggle is more important than his refugee status or national identity.

The history of the players of *FC Lampedusa Hamburg* (today *FC Lampedusa St. Pauli*) stands as a further example of the ever-changing signification undergone by this name. Established in the spring of 2014 under the motto 'Here to Play', with the aim of supporting LiH members wishing to play football in spite of their lack of the documents required by German sporting authorities, the club has become one of the most popular and visible legacies of the LiH struggle.[132] In the last three years, the team has moved from being constituted solely by LiH members to other refugees (many of them unaccompanied minors) that have no direct physical association with Lampedusa. For the young players, Lampedusa is not an island, nor the symbol of a political struggle: Lampedusa means their football team in Hamburg.

HG: My favourite moment was […] when we was in Cologne […] we was invited for a tournament of refugees teams […] and then of course, there was a lady from a newspaper who wanted to make interviews with some players, who asked to take pictures, and I said to S. […] do you want to give an interview? 'Ok, I do it' […] she was like: 'where do you coming from?' and he was like looking to me, looking to her: 'I come from Hamburg, you can read it on my back FC Lampedusa!' and she was like: ehm...and he was: 'I am from Hamburg, you can read it, FC Lampedusa' and she was like: 'emh I mean your country of origin'. He was like: 'oh excuse me, I am from Afghanistan, I forget for a

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[131] Sammy Ojo.
[132] Among others, the club has been featured on an award-winning report on Sky Sport Germany, a series of documentaries on Brazilian TV Rete Globo, and reported on in the British newspaper *The Independent.*

moment'. And that was one of the best moment: 'I forget for a moment' [...] I am from Hamburg, and you can read it! FC Lampedusa! [...] For him it was clear that this lady from Cologne has to know that...that Lampedusa is Hamburg, because I don't think that he has an idea of where it is.[133]

The stories shared by their coaches highlight how new bonds are constructed around this name. The name Lampedusa has been passed on and appropriated by young refugees coming from countries as varied as Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Eritrea, who carry on the memory of the original team, but also tie the name to new, unexpected stories of joy and light-heartedness in Hamburg. As described vividly by coaches Nicole Appel and Hagar Gröteke, Lampedusa:

HG: has something sweet and warm and the word is fantastic. To be honest, the word, is a beautiful word...it's for us, of course, it could be the FC Lesbos, FC Samos, but Lampedusa is such a fantastic word, and for me what it makes it so warm, like if a little guy, a little boy from Serbia says: I am Lammmpeduuusa! With all these 'U' and 'A'. I am Lam-pe-dusa! Yeah, it's so global, because it has so much vocals that everybody can pronounce it. Doesn't matter where you are coming from, it's not a complicated word like: Spielfeld or Schnackenburgallee.

HG and NA: Lam-pe-du-sa!

NA: Lampedusa, Lampedusa!

HG: And what...for me a very warm feeling is when all these different boys and guys say: 'I am Lampedusa!', and they have no idea that is an island.

NA: And you see like today, at the end of the training, Lampedusa in the snow.

JC: They wrote Lampedusa in the snow, yeah.[134]

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[133] Hagar Gröteke and Nicole Appel.
[134] Hagar Gröteke and Nicole Appel.

Conclusion 2017 – Today

In this chapter, the case of *Lampedusa in Hamburg* has highlighted how the transnational significance of the Lampedusa symbol can be uprooted from its geographical boundaries, and re-signified within and beyond the limits of the 'Lampedusa constellation'. The stories of the members, of *FC Lampedusa* players, and of some of the activists involved in the LiH struggle offer a 'polyphonic narrative' that reasserts the centrality of migrant/refugee subjectivity in the public representation of migration. The name Lampedusa has become a symbol for political resistance, a means to address the limits of the 'refugee label', and a collective identity that transcends cultural and political borders without forgetting the struggle of living 'in the wake'.

Going back to the opening quote of this chapter, the lack of resolution with regards to the group's principal demand should not be seen or considered as a defeat. On the contrary, these groups' initiatives and accomplishments can be considered as a paradigmatic example of how a strong alliance between different sectors of civil society and refugees can lead to representations of migration that can potentially have an impact on hegemonic political discourse on migration.

The visibility, recognition, and widespread support gained by LiH can be considered as a 'dress rehearsal' before the solidarity of the 'long summer of migration' of 2015. Today, those that continue to fight and campaign under this name, which has passed from hand to hand like a baton in this metaphorical relay of political struggle and activism, have become significant actors in Hamburg's political scene.

To conclude, the members' practices of subjectivity in appropriating and deconstructing the Lampedusa symbol have not only challenged negative stereotypes of migration connected to this symbol, but have also showed that 'the idea of movement can provide an alternative to the sedentary poetics of either soil or blood,' capable of articulating 'placeless imaginings of identity as well as new bases for solidarity'.[135]

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[135] Gilroy, *Between Camps*, pp. 111–12.

Chapter 5 – Representing the 'local' Lampedusa: The role of the 'Collettivo Askavusa'

Introduction

> A Lampedusa il 3 ottobre assisteremo all'ennesima farsa. Vedremo ancora una volta figure di ogni parte del mondo, da Roma a Bruxelles, affrettarsi per calcare una passerella rosso sangue. Una giornata che doveva essere di silenzio e riflessione verrà utilizzata per propaganda politica e per attuare le strategie di militarizzazione e spettacolarizzazione dell'isola di Lampedusa […] I lampedusani da decenni vengono calpestati nella loro dignità […] Lampedusa non è solo una vetrina per politici di varie estrazioni, ma anche per associazioni umanitarie e ONG che ricevono finanziamenti pubblici per la gestione delle migrazioni. Si dice che in questi giorni verrà riaperto il centro di "accoglienza". Noi diciamo che tutto questo sistema non ha nulla di accogliente.[1]

With these words, the *Collettivo Askavusa* welcomed the guests arriving in Lampedusa for the first anniversary of the deadly shipwreck of 3rd of October 2013, and the commemorative initiatives organised for the occasion. These words do not only symbolise the tireless and fundamental role played by this small association in following and offering a critical analysis of the migration-related events that took place on the island during the last decade, but highlight the complex role played by the locals in the spectacularisation of Lampedusa.

The *Collettivo*, founded in 2009 under the name *Arci Askavusa*, aimed to create an independent critical space to discuss the increasing importance of Lampedusa within the EU's border regime. It has also promoted a series of cultural initiatives such as a film festival, short publications, and a small 'spazio esibitivo' known as *Porto M*. With these initiatives, it has progressively become a fundamental interlocutor in the critical debate on Lampedusa's symbolism. The members of this association have met, discussed, and

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[1] Askavusa, 'Comunicati e Video Sul 3 Ottobre' <http://www.askavusa.com/comunicati-e-video-sul-3-ottobre/> [accessed 27 September 2017].

very often clashed with most of the institutional and academic actors that, at different stages, have taken interests in Lampedusa's case.

Brambilla, Gatta, Mazzara, and Vecchi amongst others have used the example of the *Collettivo Askavusa* to discuss the role played by cultural initiatives and practices in affecting public discourse on migration.[2] In this chapter, the case of the *Collettivo Askavusa* will be used to discuss and highlight the active and more nuanced role played by the locals in producing and influencing representations of this phenomenon.

The analysis of *Askavusa*'s initiatives will not only offer more details on the complex and sometimes ambiguous attitudes of the 'Lampedusani' towards migration, but it will also address locals' agency in creating spaces where the hegemony of institutional representations of the island may be affected. The work of *Askavusa* will help in unveiling the 'Lampedusani' not only as 'inherently welcoming' but as people that have reacted to and dealt with the discursive and material construction of the island within the transnational paradigm of the migration 'crisis' in different ways.

Lampedusa is a place where the micro and macro or 'local' and 'global' of political discourse on migration conflate. This, in turn, produces a short circuit where, on the one hand, the locals appear to lose the ability to represent a phenomenon which they are experiencing in the first person. On the other hand, it is a place where associations like *Askavusa*, born with very local aims such as providing humanitarian relief to the people landing on the island and to create a space where the Lampedusans could share their perspective on these events, have changed their priorities in favour of a transnational critique of the structural factors underpinning the construction of the Lampedusa 'crisis' paradigm. The ability of the 'Lampedusani' to affect hegemonic discourses will be

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[2] Federica Mazzara, 'Lampedusa: Cultural and Artistic Spaces for Migrant Voices', *Crossings: Journal of Migration & Culture*, 7.2 (2016), 129–33 <https://doi.org/10.1386/cjmc.7.2.129_2>; Federica Mazzara, 'Subverting the Narrative of the Lampedusa Borderscape', *Crossings: Journal of Migration & Culture*, 7.2 (2016), 135–47 <https://doi.org/10.1386/cjmc.7.2.135_1>; Mazzara, 'Spaces of Visibility for the Migrants of Lampedusa'; Chiara Brambilla, 'Navigating the Euro/African Border and Migration Nexus through the Borderscapes Lens: Insights Fromthe LampedusaInFestival', in *Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2015), pp. 111–21; Gianluca Gatta, 'Stranded Traces: Migrants' Objects, Self-Narration and Ideology in a Failed Museum Project', *Crossings: Journal of Migration & Culture*, 7.2 (2016), 181–91 <https://doi.org/10.1386/cjmc.7.2.181_1>; Ilaria Vecchi, 'The Experience of the Askavusa Association: Migrant Struggle with Cultural Activities', *Crossings: Journal of Migration & Culture*, 7.2 (2016), 165–79 <https://doi.org/10.1386/cjmc.7.2.165_1>.

discussed through the analysis of *Askavusa*'s practices and statements in the three sections constituting this chapter.

Drawing on Appadurai, and on the reflection on the 'Lampedusa transnational constellation' explored in the previous chapters, the first section will offer a theoretical grounding in order to highlight the relationship between Lampedusa's locality and the global relevance of the events taking place on the island.[3] The second part of this chapter will then offer a brief critical history of *Askavusa*'s initiatives, members, and political positions. The core of *Askavusa*'s interpretation of the entanglement of Lampedusa in the so-called migration 'emergenza immigrazione' will be retraced through the countless statements shared in the group's many online outputs, and through the analysis of the members' often complicated relationships with their fellow 'Lampedusani'.

The third and final section of this chapter will use the concept of 'dark tourism' to address the manner in which Lampedusa's relationship with migration is memorialised. This section will address the role of Italian institutions in the progressive transformation of the island into a symbolic place of remembrance, identity-formation, and othering, through a comparison between *Askavusa*'s *Porto M* and the state-funded *Museo della fiducia e del dialogo del Mediterraneo*.

The analysis of *Askavusa*'s sometimes contradictory place within the 'Lampedusa constellation' will offer a critical perspective on the controversial role played by cultural activities promoted on the island by the Italian and international institutions in offering a 'sanitised' representation of political responsibilities in the death toll in the Mediterranean.

5.1 Producing Lampedusa's locality in a globalised context

In discussing the transnational relevance of the name Lampedusa, the previous chapters have highlighted how the positive representation of the 'Lampedusani' plays a fundamental role in the symbolic relevance of this island. Benjamin's reflections on the role of the critic and the concept of 'critical constellation' were used to unfold the

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[3] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

complex processes characterising the Lampedusa symbol, highlighting its local and transnational connotations. While the perspective of the locals has appeared through the mediation of film makers, journalists, and other cultural producers, the case of *Askavusa* will offer a very peculiar and critical framework for understanding the locals' relationship with the migration apparatus.

Before moving on to the details of *Askavusa*'s history and initiatives, this section will highlight how the production of the 'local' Lampedusa cannot be understood without a framework that considers the transnational and global processes in which the island is entangled. Appadurai's reflection on the 'global production of locality' helps understanding how the Lampedusans' sense of locality has also become a product of the island's dialectical relationship with the border regime.[4]

The meaning of being a local is understood by Appadurai as something 'simultaneously practical, valued, and taken-for-granted' that 'depends on the seamless interaction of localised spaces and times with local subjects possessed of the knowledge to reproduce locality'.[5] It can be argued that the 'borderisation' of the island, particularly at the beginning of this process, seems to have put this 'seamlessness' under threat. At various stages, the inhabitants have expressed the threat posed by the migrant presence and by the increasing control exerted by Italian authorities on the island.

The *Lampedusani*'s re-assertions of their identity and sense of locality have been various. *Askavusa* not only has kept a record of them, but its members have in turn produced a very peculiar sense of what it means to be a 'lampedusano'.

Appadurai sees locality 'as primarily relational and contextual rather than scalar or spatial', 'as a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts'.[6] Therefore, the presence of the border regime, with all its actors and international visibility, has posed new challenges to this construction. Appadurai's

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[4] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 188.
[5] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 181.
[6] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 178.

work has shown how locality is an 'inherently fragile social achievement,' that needs 'special ritual maintenance':[7]

> The production of locality in the societies and time are themselves socialized and localized through complex and deliberate practices of performance, representation, and action.[8]

Ceremonies like the celebration of the *Madonna di Porto Salvo* and the commemoration of the 3rd of October play a fundamental role in the production of the 'natives'. When 'locality-producing capabilities of larger-scale social formations'[9] like the Italian government interfere with this process, new challenges emerge:

> The way in which neighborhoods are produced and reproduced requires the continuous construction, both practical and discursive, of an ethnoscape (necessarily nonlocal) against which local practices and projects are imagined to take place.[10]

In the moment that institutional actors become involved in the social activities and cultural production or representation of the local Lampedusa, they create a context that 'exceed[s] the existing material and conceptual boundaries of the neighbourhood': the local identity is no longer only bounded to the events taking place on the island.[11] The meaning of being a 'lampedusano' therefore also depends on other factors such as institutional attitudes towards migration. If the government privileges a securitarian approach towards migration, local anxieties about the negative effects of migrant presence on a tourism-based economy come to the fore. Conversely, if the government's approach to the question is shaped by a humanitarian undertone, the local identity ends up taking on a 'welcoming' attitude.

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 180.
[9] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 187.
[10] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 184.
[11] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 185.

Appadurai sees the production of locality 'as a structure of feeling, a property of social life, […] an ideology of situated community,' and as a struggle.[12] He recognises the increasing interference of the modern-state, the 'growing disjuncture between territory, subjectivity and collective social movement,' and 'the erosion of the relationship between spatial and virtual neighbourhoods' as the main aspects of this process.[13] All these factors are at stake in Lampedusa. The Italian and European authorities' obsession with the symbolic value of Lampedusa and its inhabitants has led to a 'cultural offensive', in which the trope of the 'welcoming Lampedusa' has increasingly become the only available tool for representing the locals' identity.

Nevertheless, local actors like *Askavusa* highlight the limits and the negative consequences of such an essentialist view through a series of national and transnational practices of self-representation that, thanks to the role of new media and social networks, manage to bypass the 'intermediate surveillance of the nation-state'.[14] As we will see in the following pages, the struggle of these practices is symbolised by the oscillation between Lampedusa's allegedly tolerant and open attitude towards the new-comers as a starting point of their sense of locality, and the unspoken desire to break up the connection between the island and the theme of migration.

The work of *Askavusa* is a clear example of how 'the power relations that affect the production of locality are fundamentally translocal'.[15] The collective's detailed statements describing and interpreting the events taking place on the island are directed to a global audience. *Porto M* and the *LampedusaInFestival* are not planned only for local spectators, they reflect a 'more complicated, disjunct, hybrid sense of local subjectivity'.[16] Nevertheless, these activities are inescapably driven by the need to reclaim a notion of subjectivity in the reassertion of an 'authentic' sense of locality.

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[12] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 189.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 194.
[15] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 188.
[16] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, p. 197.

5.2 The *Collettivo Askavusa* from 2009 to 2017

> L'associazione culturale Askavusa nasce a Lampedusa nel 2009. A seguito delle proteste contro la realizzazione di un C.I.E. (Centro di identificazione ed espulsione) a Lampedusa, l'allora ministro dell'interno Roberto Maroni, con un atto di forza aveva militarizzato l'isola, per imporre le proprie scelte in materia di immigrazione […] In quel periodo alcuni di noi presero coscienza del ruolo di Lampedusa nel mediterraneo e negli scenari politici europei, della necessità di creare un presidio culturale e politico indipendente e critico. Cosi nasce Askavusa…[17]

According to the description available on the association's website, *Askavusa* was born in 2009 in order to create an independent critical space to discuss the increasing importance of Lampedusa within the EU's border regime. This description seeks to highlight the members' awareness that the events taking place on the island during those months were not an exception; what was happening on the island was not to be seen only through the lenses of local dynamics and interests, but as a series of events capable of shaping political discussion of migration at a European level.

Nevertheless, the availability of several bios, descriptions, and short entries of the group's objectives on numerous online platforms makes the reconstruction of the association's aims and origins less straightforward. While the account of the 'anti CIE' campaign, and of the general political context, appears to reflect the events of 2009, the stress on the 'militarisation' of the island and of the political role played by the island in EU's border regime suggests that the description might be a retrospective reading of earlier years through the lens of the *Collettivo Askavusa*'s latest political positions.

Details like the adoption of a different denominator (*circolo Arci*, *associazione culturale* or *collettivo*), or the different wording of the group's self-portrayals available online, are fundamental in pinpointing the trajectory of *Askavusa*'s political thought and mirroring the development of the discursive formations constituting Lampedusa's hegemonic symbolism.

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[17] Askavusa, 'Vogliamo Vivere in Pace' <http://www.askavusa.com/vogliamo-vivere-in-pace/> [accessed 27 August 2017].

Although in the eyes of the members *Askavusa*'s path is seen as an 'inevitable' and 'organic', it is nevertheless not devoid of unresolved questions and controversies. Therefore, in order to establish the principles driving the association during the first months of its activities, it is essential to look at the first entry of their outdated *Arci Askavusa* blog:

Il circolo ASKAVUSA è frutto anche degli avvenimenti degli ultimi mesi […] Il punto di partenza è riuscire a trasmettere questa idea: ogni essere umano è una persona, titolare di diritti inviolabili ed universalmente riconosciuti. E per far sì che ogni essere umano diventi persona è necessario innanzitutto creare occasioni in cui si entri in relazione con l'altro, momenti nei quali sia possibile "conoscere", confrontarsi e scegliere. In quest'ottica uno degli obiettivi principali dell'associazione deve essere quello di ottenere l'autorizzazione ad avere accesso al centro […] lo svolgimento di attività culturali per e con gli "ospiti" […] lezioni di italiano ai migranti, attività ludico-ricreative per i bambini, eventi sportivi e di spettacolo.[18]

At the time in which this research was carried out, the focus on tolerance, cultural encounter, and safeguarding the human rights of the people reaching the island by boat was seen by the members as an initial, necessary, but also (to a certain extent) 'naïve' phase in the development of the critical identity of the association.[19] Interviewed in October 2016, co-founder Giacomo Sferlazzo states the fundamental role played by the political context surrounding the events taking place on the island in changing the character and initiatives of the group:

Allora, noi quando nasciamo nel 2009, alcune posizioni sono molto diverse. Diciamo che siamo nel discorso in quel momento. Nel senso che si parla di accoglienza, si parla di canali umanitari, si parla di razzismo in una certa maniera […] Però senza malizia diciamo, o diciamo senza la volontà, la volontà politica di mistificazione, ecco questo voglio dire. Diciamo che eravamo in buona fede. E diciamo però anche un'altra cosa, diciamo che il contesto è cambiato. Un conto era

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[18] Arci Askavusa, 'Presentazione' <http://askavusa.blogspot.com/2009/02/presentazione.html> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[19] My first contact and informal conversations with *Askavusa*'s members took place in 2014. Afterwards, I met and recorded their presentation at the *Ort_M migration memory* exhibition in February 2016 in Hamburg and, after the fieldwork in Lampedusa (October 2016), I had occasional email exchanges with Giacomo Sferlazzo and Francesca Del Volgo in 2017.

parlare di canali umanitari, di accoglienza, di razzismo in certi termini nel 2009 […] E un conto è parlarne oggi, con le retoriche attuali di stato […] in quel momento, forse serviva quello da parte nostra. Perché, qui vale il concetto di prassi, nel senso che: noi siamo in relazione ad un contesto sempre. […] Quindi, le posizioni sono cambiate, ma sono un percorso, un percorso che io vedo come un percorso organico. Non è un percorso che ha avuto dei mutamenti per un qualche opportunità, opportunismo...Anzi! Diciamo che l'opportunismo l'abbiamo messo da parte, perché oggi noi potevamo essere tranquillamente nel Museo del Dialogo e della Fiducia e in tutte le manifestazioni del 3 ottobre a mostrare questi oggetti […].[20]

It is in this receptiveness and attention to the context surrounding the political and the cultural activities taking place on the island that *Askavusa*'s vital role in the discussion of Lampedusa's relevance for discussing migration lies. In less than decade, an association which counts more or less ten active members has progressively become the most visible local contributor to Lampedusa's symbolism. The following pages will clarify how this group of activists assumed this role through a critique of the association's cultural initiatives.

[L]'associazione mira poi a promuovere attività che coniughino lo sviluppo culturale ed economico dell'isola all'obbiettivo dell'integrazione e della conoscenza tra popoli […] un festival internazionale di cultura mediterranea, che sia spunto per creare occasioni di dibattito e di incontro con i musicisti, i cineasti e gli scrittori dei vari paesi del bacino del mediterraneo e dell'africa sub sahariana.[21]

As described by this statement, the group's cultural aims in 2009 can be seen as direct precursors to the institutional attention and the plethora of initiatives that have 'animated' the end of the touristic season in Lampedusa since 2014.[22] Therefore, the debate surrounding the cultural representations of Lampedusa and the memorialisation of the 3rd October 2013 cannot overlook the multifaceted history of this association.

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[20] Giacomo Sferlazzo, Collettivo Askavusa, Lampedusa, 3 October 2016.
[21] Pubblicato da Arci Askavusa, 'Presentazione'.
[22] See for instance the festival *Sabir* and *O'Scià*, the initiatives promoted by the *Comitato 3 ottobre* ('L'Europa inizia a Lampedusa', the 'Museo del Dialogo' etc.).

5.2.1 The members

Essentially, the group's history can be divided in two major phases: the first, from 2009 to the end of 2013, is a period of various collaborations and attempted partnerships in which meeting with the *Arci Askavusa* is an almost inevitable appointment for every actor visiting the island.[23] The second, from early 2014 to October 2016, is the phase in which the now *Collettivo Askavusa* decides to progressively end many of its previous collaborations, especially those born around the curatorship/custody of the migrants' objects.[24] This rationale behind this closure can be summarised by the members' need for a strong, trenchant redefinition of the 'not-aligned' political identity of the group.

All the conversations with *Askavusa*'s members, the visit to *Porto M*, and the interview recorded with Giacomo Sferlazzo in Lampedusa, were carried out in the aftermath of this 'closure' towards partnerships with associations such as the *Archivio Memorie Migranti*.[25]

As a consequence, the original material gathered for this chapter will end up privileging the most recent activities and discussions promoted by the group. As in the case of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, retrieving material describing the activities and aims of *Askavusa* is not a difficult task. On the contrary, the main question is how to find ways to navigate the prolific and variegated online presence of the association.

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[23] *Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana* (Italian Recreative and Cultural Association), a network coordinating various associations close to the parties of the Italian left.

[24] It is difficult to give a judgement on the most recent developments. In 2017, the group seems to have shifted the focus from the migration issue to more local problems such as waste disposal, electromagnetic pollution, and various attempts to 're-discover' or 're-construct' Lampedusa's traditions and heritage. Furthermore, the theme of the militarisation of the island has progressively become the prominent topic of *Askavusa*'s public interventions, and a key through which they seem to interpret the 'borderisation' of the island.

[25] I met *Askavusa*'s members for the first time in a conference at University College London (October 2014). This is also where I met for the first the AMM's founder Triulzi. During my second meeting with them at the SOAS in London (November 2015), where I presented a paper on the activities of the *Archivio Memorie Migranti*, the members of *Askavusa* attending the event (already having disagreements with AMM) welcomed my paper as a sign of 'compability', which put me in a good position for our third meeting in Hamburg. In the German city, I took part in the debate promoted by *Ort_m* on *Askavusa*'s use of migrant objects (February 2016). In brief, the openness of the group during my visit to Lampedusa (September-October 2016) was facilitated by these previous and unintended friendly meetings.

When this chapter was written (September-October 2017) it was possible to retrieve two official blogs (only one still up-to-date),[26] one official website, a Facebook page, and a Twitter account. To these must be added, too, the blogs dedicated to the two major projects: *Porto M* and *LampedusaInFestival*.[27] In addition to these sources, it is important to highlight also the blog and Youtube channel of co-founder and most active speaker of the group, Giacomo Sferlazzo.[28]

The association does not have an official structure. However, it has promoted different forms of membership, mostly seen as forms of fundraising in order to preserve the financial independence of the group.[29] Hence, the amount of people being 'official' members of *Askavusa* could be quantified as shifting between five and fifteen persons, according to the political context and the season. In the summer, the 'local' core of the association is joined by some part-time supporters, friends, and sympathisers not directly identifying with the label *Askavusa*. In winter, the ranks are usually reduced to three to five members living on the island.

Annalisa D'Ancona, Francesca Del Volgo, Giacomo Sferlazzo, and a few others can be considered as the principal actors active on a daily base on the island. Yimer's *Soltanto il mare* highlights the vital role played by another group of friends, relatives, and local artists, who could be considered as the 'precursors' of the political and cultural environment characterising the activities of *Askavusa*.[30]

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[26] 'Askavusa | Collettivo' <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/> [accessed 17 November 2017] the most active and updated one, and ; 'Askavusa' <http://askavusa.blogspot.com/> [accessed 12 October 2016] which refers to the first phase of Arci Askavusa (last entry in July 2013).

[27] Askavusa <http://www.askavusa.com> [accessed 27 September 2017] Last entry May 2015; 'Askavusa Lampedusa' <https://it-it.facebook.com/askavusa/> [accessed 17 November 2017]; Collettivo Askavusa, 'Twitter', 2017 <https://twitter.com/askavusa>; 'PortoM', *PortoM* <https://portommaremediterraneomigrazionimilitarizzazione.wordpress.com/> [accessed 24 October 2015] and not available anymore http://www.lampedusainfestival.com/.

[28] 'Giacomo Sferlazzo' <https://ilfigliodiabele.wixsite.com/giacomosferlazzo> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[29] 'Askavusa: Tesseramento Ass. Askavusa 2012' <http://askavusa.blogspot.de/2011/12/tesseramento-ass-askavusa-2012.html> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[30] This group of people has also produced a series of short films on the theme of migration in Lampedusa: 'Quello è mio fratello' (Salvatore Billeci et al., 2009) *Quello È Mio Fratello in Lampedusa* <https://vimeo.com/channels/lampedusa/6392877> [accessed 17 November 2017].

Figure 22 Stills from Dagmawi Yimer's Soltanto il Mare (2011)

Among them, it is essential to remember the name of the local 'maestro d'ascia', Pasquale De Rubeis, who also starred in Peter Schreiner's feature film *Lampedusa*.[31] To highlight the importance of this figure in *Askavusa*'s experience, I cite the bio offered by the local newscast 'Lampedusa day by day':

> Lui è Pasquale De Rubeis, maestro d'ascia e navigatore che ha costruito la sua casa raccogliendo oggetti gettati per strada o in discarica dagli isolani. Un vero e proprio museo di pezzi di storia dell'isola.[32]

The role played by figures like De Rubeis in influencing Sferlazzo's artistic trajectory, particularly his attention for rescuing and recycling waste and abandoned materials, is evident. This practice appears to have inspired the *Askavusa* founder to define himself, not only as a political activist and singer, but also as a '(re)-assembler of matter'.[33] Clearly, this aspect has also set the precedent for *Askavusa*'s vital relationship with the 'Oggetti migranti', which will be discussed in the third part of this chapter.[34]

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[31] Schreiner.

[32] 'Lampedusa Day by Day - Pasquale, l'architetto Interiore' <http://www.lampedusadaybyday.com/storie/2011/pasquale-l-architetto-interiore.html> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[33] Original biography available on 'Giacomo Sferlazzo', *Giacomo Sferlazzo* <https://giacomosferlazzoilfigliodiabele.wordpress.com/> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[34] For a history of the relationship between Sferlazzo, *Askavusa* and the object see the post 'con gli oggetti' available on *Askavusa*'s website. Askavusa, 'Con Gli Oggetti' <http://www.askavusa.com/progetti/portom/> [accessed 30 August 2017].

While the group's 'local soul' gravitates pretty much around the figure of Sferlazzo and his artistic career, the second half of the group is composed by a number of 'non-local' students, researchers, and activists, who, after a first contact with the group via academic or political interests, decided to become part of the *Collettivo*. Although it could appear arbitrary to divide *Askavusa*'s members on the base of their 'native-ness', this aspect becomes essential in understanding the development and the apparent contradictions characterising the group's political identity and interpretations of Lampedusa's place in the EU's border regime.[35] In this process, the 'rhetoric of presence' has also influenced the group's narrative:

> È il colonialismo, del resto. Se sei colonia sei un'immagine rappresentata e diretta da chi decide per te. Sei l'oggetto di narrazioni altrui […] C'è sempre un punto di vista superiore al tuo che deve pronunciarsi sul tuo conto […] Se sei colonia sei comunque forzato ad essere l'incarnazione di un'essenza che ti dà forma dall'esterno […] Buon selvaggio o barbaro distruttore, accogliente/umanitario o intollerante/xenofobo. Sempre essenze statiche, calate dall'alto. […] Ma quest'isola non gli appartiene. Non è *loro*. È di chi ci è nato, di chi ci vive, di chi la ama. È *nostra*. I territori sono *nostri*, non appartengono a questi sgherri del potere, ai loro appetiti, alla loro arroganza.[36]

These words are central to understanding *Askavusa*'s critical reading of the hegemonic symbolism of Lampedusa, but also for highlighting the apparent tensions between the members' 'localist' claims and the 'non-native' interpretations (particularly those from the academic world) in the development of *Askavusa*'s understanding of the island's relationship with the migratory phenomenon.[37] This situation exemplifies the struggle of producing locality in new globalised ways highlighted by Appadurai.

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[35] I intend as 'native' or 'local' members of *Askavusa* who, during my conversations with them, identified themselves as Lampedusans, and that spend most of their time on the island.

[36] Fasulo.

[37] This influence can come from recognised members, but also from non-members: see for example the recurrence of Cuttitta's work in Askavusa's statements from 2012 onward. Furthermore, it is also relevant to bear in mind the group's fruitful collaboration with Orsini. See 'Lampedusa: A Cruel and Corrupt System', *Discover Society*, 2014 <https://discoversociety.org/2014/05/06/lampedusa-a-cruel-and-corrupt-system/> [accessed 17 November 2017].

It could be argued that the vital role played by the local perspective, and the various condemnations of the many 'untruthful' representations of the island from 'non-local' actors, has gradually become a key aspect in *Askavusa*'s political and cultural work. Yet the apparent contradiction of having members hailing from various European locations seems to have been solved by a process of 'co-optation' or 'adoption'. This process can be linked to various factors, such as the amount of time that someone spends on the island with the group, or the political affinity of the individual in question. The recognition of 'non-local' members also supplies the group with vital 'human capital' to pursue the transnational aims of their activities: see, for instance, the fundamental role played by the 'non-local' members in attending conferences and events, and promoting the group internationally.

5.2.2 From *Arci Askavusa* to *Collettivo Askavusa* (2009-2013)

As witnessed by the very first entries in the *Arci Askavusa* blog, from February 2009 to July 2013, the association aimed to promote tolerance and good relationships between the locals and the migrants forcibly held on Lampedusa.[38] The goal of *Askavusa* was to channel the inhabitants' unrest, and to protest against the government's plans to make Lampedusa a central pillar for the detention and 'repatriation' of people that have 'illegally' entered the country. This was to facilitate an occasion for ab unprecedented alliance with the migrants detained on the island.[39] This objected was briefly, but ultimately ephemerally, realised in January 2009, when around a thousand people unlawfully held in the detention centre joined the locals in protest against the Italian authorities.[40]

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[38] Arci Askavusa, 'Nota Stampa Del Movimento NO C.I.E. Lampedusa' <http://askavusa.blogspot.com/2009/03/nota-stampa-del-movimento-no-cie.html> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[39] Askavusa, 'Askavusa: Le Notizie Che Ci Piacciono!' <http://askavusa.blogspot.de/2009/03/le-notizie-che-ci-piacciono.html> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[40] 'PortoM | Askavusa' <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/con-gli-oggetti/> [accessed 17 November 2017]; 'Lampedusa 24/01/2009', *Vimeo*, p. 1 <https://vimeo.com/6831769> [accessed 17 November 2017].

Arci Askavusa was established in the wake of these episodes. A few weeks later, the launching of the campaign 'Io vado a Lampedusa', and the concurrent planning of the first *LampedusaInFestival*, symbolised the compromise yearned for by the group: the idea of promoting antiracist feelings, and a welcoming culture that would also turn into an economic opportunity for the island's tourist industry.[41]

Il primo progetto su cui i componenti dell'associazione si ritengono sin da adesso impegnati è lo svolgimento di un festival internazionale di cultura mediterranea, che sia spunto per creare occasioni di dibattito e di incontro con i musicisti, i cineasti e gli scrittori dei vari paesi del bacino del mediterraneo e dell'africa sub sahariana. La collocazione del festival in un periodo di bassa stagione farà sì che venga attirato sull'isola un turismo culturale e qualificato.[42]

Despite the later critique of this 'system' developed by the members, the idea of seizing the touristic opportunities offered by the 'borderisation' of Lampedusa has fundamentally shaped and still affects the projects of *Askavusa* today. *Askavusa's* apparent ambiguity in de-coupling the association of Lampedusa with the trope of 'migration crisis', and the promotion of cultural initiatives focusing on the very same topic, can be linked to the vital role played by tourism in the economic viability of life on the island. The trajectory of the association is characterised by a constant oscillation between these aspects: the cultural and economic possibilities created by the migration 'issue', and the wholehearted condemnation of an apparatus that, during the last two decades, has taken over the island, progressively depriving the inhabitants of a space for agency.

The very existence of *Askavusa* and the recent visibility of Sferlazzo's artistic work is unavoidably bound to Lampedusa's relationship with the migratory phenomenon, and its construction as a symbolic place. Sferlazzo himself recognises this close relationship:

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[41] The petition promoting alternative forms of tourism on the island was signed by various Italian journalists, writers etc. Arci Askavusa, 'Io Questa Estate Voglio Andare in Vacanza a Lampedusa' <http://askavusa.blogspot.com/2009/02/io-questa-estate-voglio-andare-in.html> [accessed 17 November 2017].
[42] Arci Askavusa, 'Presentazione'.

> Io in questi giorni, sai cosa ho pensato? Che siamo anche noi, abbiamo contribuito anche noi a questa situazione. Nella creazione comunque dell'immagine di Lampedusa, in qualche maniera Askavusa ha giocato un ruolo. Tu prendi il Prix Italia, tutta la coreografia è ispirata a Porto M. Gli oggetti esposti al museo lì sono ripresi dal nostro lavoro. Quindi è praticamente quel meccanismo di sussunzione, se vuoi, o di appropriazione e capovolgimento di cui parlava Debord o anche altri insomma, nella creazione del discorso così potente di Lampedusa, il problema è che poi questo discorso viene assolutamente ingabbiato e risucchiato dal potere appunto che diventa egemonia.[43]

As witnessed by Sferlazzo's words, the association played a fundamental role in starting the first cultural activities focussed on the island's recently-born ties with theme of migration. These initiatives were promoted through the group's affiliation to the ARCI (Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana) and later to the RECOSOL (Rete dei comuni solidali), and are exemplified by the history of *LampedusaInFestival*.

The first edition of 'LampedusaInFestival' (July 2009) was dedicated to 'migration and the recovery of oral stories'. As described in the blog post summarising the characteristics and aims of the first edition, the principal objective of this initiative was to create an alternative space for dialogue and 'reciprocal awareness', capable of overcoming that prejudice characterising the comparison between the 'migrant' and the 'non-migrant'.[44] In turning these principles into practice, the figure of Dagmawi Yimer played a vital, and sometimes forgotten, role.

Yimer became the representative of migrant subjectivity in the development of the festival, not only introducing his films on the stage, but also playing a fundamental role in establishing the partnership between the *Archivio Memorie Migranti* and *Askavusa*. This led to the development (around Sferlazzo's recovery of the 'oggetti migranti') of the original project of a migration museum on the island.

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[43] Giacomo Sferlazzo, 'Collettivo Askavusa, Lampedusa, 3 October 2016'.
[44] Askavusa, 'Lampedusa in Festival' <http://askavusa.blogspot.com/2009/07/> [accessed 17 November 2017].

Figure 23 Dagmawi Yimer at the LampedusaInFestival (2010)

For six years, the festival became a key setting for discussing and understanding Lampedusa's relationship with migration from a critical point of view. Artists, film-makers, and activists from all over Europe visited the island, inspiring various collateral initiatives such as the publishing of a book collecting comic strips on the topic of migration.[45] In 2013, the initiative was rewarded with the first economic endorsement from the city council (thanks to then recently-elected mayor Nicolini), and celebrated with a long post in the pages of *Askavusa's* official website significantly titled 'Lampedusa un'isola da Nobel'.[46]

The end of the event, understood as a film festival and space for artistic performances, can be dated to the edition of September 2014, when *Askavusa's* new political identity began to surface, affecting the future of the festival. The theme of 'militarisation' and the questions on the morality of the festival's sponsors became central to *Askavusa's* narrative.[47]

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[45] *Le Rughe Sulla Frontiera. Lampedusa: Restiamo Umani!*, ed. by Giampiero Caldarella (Palermo: Navarra editore, 2011) <http://www.navarraeditore.it/catalogo.html?page=shop.product_details&flypage=flypage-ask.tpl&product_id=100&category_id=13> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[46] Askavusa, 'Un'isola Da Nobel' <http://www.askavusa.com/lampedusa-unisola-da-nobel/> [accessed 30 August 2017].

[47] Askavusa, 'Al via La VI Edizione Di Lampedusainfestival Dal 25 Al 30 Settembre 2014' <http://www.askavusa.com/al-via-la-vi-edizione-di-lampedusainfestival-dal-25-al-30-settembre-2014/> [accessed 30 August 2017].

Despite the increasing web-presence, a crowdfunding campaign, and a remarkable attendance record, the sixth edition can be considered as the 'swan song' of this experience. In 2015, the film festival format was abandoned and replaced by a concert (Sferlazzo's 'Lampemusa'), and by a series of workshops surrounding the newly constituted *Porto M*. Furthermore, in October of the same year, the group started promoting Antonino Maggiore's investigative documentary 'I Giorni della Tragedia. 03 Ottobre 2013 Lampedusa'.[48] Finally, during my visit to the island in 2016, the festival was first turned into a debate, then called off altogether.[49]

In the midst of the ever-growing presence of institutional initiatives such as the *Comitato 3 ottobre* and the *Museo della fiducia e del dialogo*, this progressive disengagement and silence is described by the members as a new and necessary strategy:

GS: [C]redo che noi in questa fase noi stiamo lavorando sul consegnare poi alla storia alcuni documenti importanti. Il discorso è avere una visione storica, e non fermarsi a quello che sta accadendo ora.

JC: Diciamo che avete rinunciato alla visibilità, o a raggiungere un certo tipo di, un maggiore numero di persone e avete puntato più su...ok facciamo questo, questo rimane.

GS: Si, poi vedi a noi continuano a chiamarci radio, televisioni […] oggi internet il web ci dà una possibilità con tutte le sue contraddizioni e altre cose e noi stiamo usando secondo me lo strumento internet, secondo me, in maniera buona. Comunque quello che scriviamo, viene letto e viene letto da un pubblico che crea cultura. Questo è il discorso. Quello che io osservo è che la nostra produzione culturale viene ripresa, dal mondo che produce cultura anche di un certo tipo, che diventerà documento storico. E quindi in questo momento, in questa fase credo che sia la cosa da fare. Perché noi potevamo anche andare con gli striscioni, fare casino, andare su blob che abbiamo già fatto...

[48] 'Lampedusainfestival. VII Edizione. Contro Le Frontiere', *Contropiano*, 2015 <http://contropiano.org/contropianoorg-old-eventi/2015/09/21/lampedusainfestival-vii-edizione-contro-le-frontiere-032963> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[49] Askavusa, 'Lampedusainfestival VIII Ed. Dal 30 Settembre Al 3 Ottobre a Lampedusa | Askavusa' <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2016/06/23/lampedusainfestival-ix-ed-dal-30-settembre-al-3-ottobre-a-lampedusa/> [accessed 17 November 2017].

JC: Infatti, c'è qualcuno che dice: 'chissà cosa preparano?'

FDV and GS: Si, tutti!

FDV: Da mesi ci domandano quale...ora la sorpresa è che non ci siamo!

GS: e questo è interessante secondo me, non stare all'aspettativa. Noi non facciamo niente, questa è anche strategia. Nel senso che tu ti aspetti qualcosa da me che io non ti do. Perché rientro nella logica, perché la logica dello spettacolo ad un certo punto vuole che ci sia il contestatore.[50]

From this moment on, the festival has disappeared indefinitely from *Askavusa's* activities. The reasons behind the end of this initiative are complex, but can all be linked to *Askavusa's* severing of all its institutional bonds, which took place between the spring of 2013 and the summer of 2014, as described in the work of Vecchi.[51] While, a more detailed account of the vital role played by the shipwreck of the 3rd of October 2013 in enhancing this 'closure' will be discussed in the following pages, for now, it is relevant to stress the importance of the question of the ethical scrutiny of *Askavusa's* sponsors and partners.[52]

Far from being painless, the ending of relationships with old partners created various controversies, and it was accompanied by official stances which condemned the 'compromised' status of previous cultural partners. The hostile remarks reserved for Italian actor and play-writer Ascanio Celestini exemplify the escalation of this dispute:

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[50] Giacomo Sferlazzo, 'Collettivo Askavusa, Lampedusa, 3 October 2016'.
[51] Vecchi, p. 170.
[52] Askavusa, 'Rinuncia Ai Fondi Del Comune per La Sesta Edizione Del Lampedusainfestival' <http://www.askavusa.com/rinuncia-ai-fondi-del-comune-per-la-sesta-edizione-del-lampedusainfestival/> [accessed 27 September 2017].

> Del resto l'imbonitore *radical-shit* del ceto medio di sinistra, Ascanio Celestini – pagato con i soldi del Ministero degli Interni e del destabilizzatore nazista-NATO Soros – lo ha anche proclamato: «a Lampedusa una produzione culturale vera e propria non è mai stata fatta». Allora Lampedusa non avrebbe cultura. Se è così deve essere guidata, tenuta per mano, come un bimbo incerto ai suoi primi passi [emphasis in original].[53]

Celestini, 'guilty' of being among the promoters of the new concomitant and 'rival' festival 'Sabir'[54] (as well as having controversially declared that Lampedusa has never experienced a 'real' cultural production), was one of the targets of *Askavusa's* critique.[55] Another significant subject of *Askavusa's* statements was the figure of the then mayor Giusi Nicolini, who, in the space of a few years, has transitioned from benefitting from *Askavusa's* political support to becoming a recurrent target of the *Collettivo's* criticism.[56] Nevertheless, none of these actors can match the figure of business magnate and philanthropist George Soros, who eventually became the most cited name and principal 'enemy' of *Askavusa*.[57]

The end of major institutional ties did not only mean fewer financial resources, but also an evident decrease of the visibility of *Askavusa's* initiatives. It can be argued that *Askavusa's* refusal to accept state endorsement and/or external financial support has paved the way for the institutional take-over of the cultural representations of Lampedusa's relationship with migration. According to Sferlazzo, the privileged position enjoyed in recent years by initiatives like the *Comitato 3 ottobre* could have easily been *Askavusa's*:

> GS: ci sono le due medaglie di Napolitano che noi rimandiamo indietro. Napolitano ci manda due medaglie, e noi le rimandiamo indietro dopo, nel 2011. Ci sono, nel ministero, c'è un

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[53] Fasulo.

[54] Anna Cepollaro, 'Sabir Festival, La Solidarietà Ai Migranti Di Lampedusa Si Trasforma in Una Festa', *Spettacoli - La Repubblica*, 2014 <http://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli/teatro-danza/2014/09/20/news/lampedusa-96232991/> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[55] 'Lampedusa Secondo Ascanio Celestini', *Corriere Delle Migrazioni*, 2015 <http://www.corrieredellemigrazioni.it/2015/01/18/lampedusa-secondo-ascanio-celestini/> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[56] Askavusa, 'Il Fallimento Di Giusi Nicolini. | Askavusa' <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2016/01/09/il-fallimento-di-giusi-nicolini/> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[57] Askavusa, 'Ancora Morti' <http://www.askavusa.com/ancora-morti> [accessed 30 August 2017].

programma...non me lo ricordo più, contro il razzismo, credo che l'abbiano chiuso […] però voglio dire: in quell'ottica noi potevamo, se continuavamo in quell'ottica, ad arrivare a essere come il Comitato 3 ottobre.

JC: Si, trovare legittimazione, fondi...

GS: Tutto!

JC: Perché, in realtà, il Comitato è venuto fuori dopo il vostro rifiuto?

GS: Il Comitato del 3 ottobre viene dopo il 3 ottobre. Si, o sarebbe venuto lo stesso, non lo so.

JC: Poi c'era Sabir per esempio con il festival.

GS: Esatto, Sabir ci volevano mettere dentro e abbiamo detto di no. Per Sabir, Celestini ci chiede la sede per fare video, ad un certo punto diciamo no, non è quello che vogliamo fare.[58]

Askavusa's 'refusal' sought to expose the interests comprising the humanitarian discourse promoted by initiatives such as the *Comitato 3 ottobre*. When asked whether the decision to leave the cultural representation of Lampedusa to initiatives like the *Comitato* was correct, Sferlazzo answers with awareness, detachment, and a certain amount of fatalism:

Guarda io ho imparato, in questi anni ho visto tante cose nascere e morire […] Se era qualche anno fa, m'incazzavo di più. Ora ho imparato ad osservare, con un po' di distacco, e inserire in una fase questa faccenda, che finirà. Quando cambierà la situazione politica, il Comitato 3 ottobre sparirà e non avrà più senso. Quando cambieranno i vertici della Rai, Valerio Cataldi andrà a fare qualcos'altro perché non c'è dietro una motivazione fondante forte. È un'opportunità, come tutte le opportunità passato il momento, svanirà.[59]

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[58] Giacomo Sferlazzo, 'Collettivo Askavusa, Lampedusa, 3 October 2016'.
[59] Giacomo Sferlazzo, 'Collettivo Askavusa, Lampedusa, 3 October 2016'.

Almost two years after this conversation, the negative consequences of *Askavusa's* 'isolationism' on the group's visibility and reach have become evident. Without the festival and partners like the AMM, the group's statements and initiatives seem to have lost that prominence in representing and channelling the local critical perspective on a national and transnational level.

The end of *Askavusa's* partnerships, and the consequent demise of successful projects like *LampedusaInFestival*, should not only be linked to question of the ethical 'revision' of the financial supporters of the group. Although the harsh words used to communicate this decision create a sense of abruptness, this process was not sudden as it appears:

> Nel 2011 nasce una prima forte riflessione. Sia in base a quello che è accaduto qui a Lampedusa, sia in base a quello che è accaduto nelle cosiddette 'primavere arabe' […] lì comincia un lavoro sull'imperialismo, cioè sul concetto di imperialismo, sulla storia coloniale dell'Europa. Quella è la svolta.[60]

According to Sferlazzo and co., the decision was due to a wider political reflection which had already started before the end of 2013. This wider reflection was, in part, the members' renewed 'awareness' and reading of the international political context (particularly of the Tunisian revolution, NATO's intervention in Libya and, later, of the Syrian civil war), but it was also a disenchantment with the political exploitation of the 'welcoming' attitude of their fellow citizens.

Askavusa's hope in the civic, sympathetic and brotherly character of the Lampedusans was progressively lost after the protest of a group of Tunisians citizens escaped from the island detention centre was answered by police repression and a violent xenophobic riot, promoted by the then mayor Bernardino De Rubeis.[61] These events mark the first turning point in the experience of *Askavusa*. Their critical approach

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[60] Giacomo Sferlazzo, 'Collettivo Askavusa, Lampedusa, 3 October 2016'.
[61] Arci Askavusa, 'Pagine Tunisine' <http://askavusa.blogspot.com/2011/10/pagine-tunisine.html> [accessed 17 November 2017].

towards the migration apparatus, based on a cross-alliance between the migrants and locals, appears to be permanently compromised by the violence promoted by part of the population in answer to the Berlusconi government's unwillingness to empty the island.

> Oggi è uno dei giorni più brutti che io abbia mai vissuto, la speranza di una Lampedusa faro della solidarietà del diritto e dell'umanità si è talmente affievolita che ormai sembra solo una fantasia retorica […] L'unico valore che accomuna una parte di lampedusani che non so quantificare, è la stagione estiva che tradotto significa lo sfruttamento del territorio per fare soldi […] mentre Berlusconi al suo arrivo sull'isola viene acclamato da una folla violenta che impedisce a chi non è d'accordo di manifestare contro la politica del governo […] compagni, vengono minacciati […] Queste persone sono le stesse che hanno applaudito Crialese […] sono quelle che applaudono i cantanti che vengono a cantare per la solidarietà durante la manifestazione O scià […] Le persone che dicono buttateli in mare, bruciateli, sono tutti delinquenti, magari oggi portavano in spalla la statua della madonna di porto salvo […] Queste persone che si dice vogliano buttare giù "La porta d'Europa" […].[62]

The striking difference between the bitter words used after this episode and the framing of local responses to migration in the 'Io vado a Lampedusa' campaign summarises *Askavusa's* disillusion with their fellow citizens. They testify to a shift towards a more critical attitudes toward all Lampedusans, including those promoting a 'welcoming' culture.[63]

The *Askavusa* members' disappointment in their fellow-citizens needs to be linked to the critique of the locals' association with the wild, and mostly illegal, urban development on the island, and the absence of care for the island's environment and historical heritage. The association's shift from the human rights rhetoric of the first years to a campaigning against the 'borderisation-militarisation' of Lampedusa has always been accompanied by attention to more purely local themes such as waste

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[62] Arci Askavusa, '21-22/09/2011' <http://askavusa.blogspot.com/2011/09/21-22092011.html> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[63] 'Lampedusa day by day - IO VADO A Lampedusa & Askavusa' <http://www.lampedusadaybyday.com/storie/2011/io-vado-a-lampedusa-askavusa.html> [accessed 19 February 2019].

disposal, the request for a local hospital, electromagnetic pollution, and other heritage-oriented initiatives.

When asked whether *Askavusa* aims to represent the relationship between the island and migration or Lampedusa in general, Sferlazzo answers:

No, è Lampedusa. Anche perché l'immigrazione non è solo immigrazione. Lampedusa e migrazione significa un determinato sviluppo storico dell'immigrazione, no? E se vuoi analizzare ad esempio l'impatto dell'immigrazione sul turismo, devi capire come è nato il turismo. Sennò non lo afferri fino in fondo. Cioè, se tu sai che qui il turismo è avvenuto in maniera disorganizzata, avrai un elemento per capire che l'immigrazione e le politiche sull'immigrazione avranno un impatto più devastante sul turismo [...] per esempio, qui non ci sono cooperative che hanno mai funzionato, no? Ma neanche per la pesca. Questo è un elemento fondamentale per capire il lampedusano e forse anche il siciliano. Quindi, sono piani che si sovrappongono, se tu sai che l'isola è stata sempre usata dal potere, come luogo o di confino, o carcere o luogo militare. Vedrai una continuità storica [...] Non c'è nostalgia del passato, attenzione. In alcune cose si. C'è un rendersi conto che l'isola, a livello paesaggistico, a livello naturalistico, a livello sociale ha perso un enorme patrimonio. A livello, se hai parlato con Nino [Taranto from the Archivio Storico], a livello archeologico, c'è stata una distruzione totale del patrimonio archeologico.[64]

The political campaigns of the group, initially intended to highlight the potential space available for the locals to reclaim agency and reshape their 'destiny', have in time turned into a clear disillusionment with the locals' 'passivity' in accepting every new imposition from Italian and European authorities. In this critique, former mayor Giusi Nicolini and her international celebrity are recurring features:

[...] È giusto anche ricordare che il fallimento non è solo di Giusi Nicolini ma di un'intera comunità che ha messo davanti a tutto il profitto e l'interesse personale, a parte le eccezioni, notiamo negli isolani rassegnazione e il tentativo di provare a restare a galla in un mare di m...[65]

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[64] Giacomo Sferlazzo, 'Collettivo Askavusa, Lampedusa, 3 October 2016'.
[65] See the detailed retelling of the elections from Sferlazzo's point of view here Askavusa, 'Con Gli Oggetti'.

For *Askavusa*, Nicolini is not only a mayor who has evidently failed in pursuing policies answering to local necessities, but the Italian government's instrumental use of her is symptomatic of the increasingly narrow space available to locals for dismantling the entanglement of the island with the migration 'issue'. In the eyes of the group, the mayor and the city council exert a certain agency in using the so-called 'emergency' to obtain financial support from the central government, but also repeatedly fail to bring change on the island.

According to *Askavusa*, this situation is not only due to the locals' incapability, jealousies and, lack of solidarity, but must be linked to a precise political will, which for almost a century has made of Lampedusa 'a prison and a militarised place where rhetoric and discourses are created for use and consumption of the political and military apparatuses'.[66]

In the words of the members, Lampedusa and its inhabitants should be seen as a colonial space, where the 'the locals' and 'the migrants' are reduced into pre-constituted 'essences' constructed by hegemonic actors (for instance: politicians, armed forces, and the media). For the group, these 'essences' legitimise the militarisation of the island for the 'imperialist interests' of the EU, NATO, international finance, and other international bodies.[67] In outlining the role played by these two 'essences', *Askavusa's* words connect the locals' subalternity to that of the migrants.

The comparison, although highlighting some similarities between the locals and the migrants' experiences (for instance the difficulty in escaping the pre-constituted role bestowed on them by the hegemonic representations of the island), ends up indirectly overshadowing the 'migrant subject', reducing further the space available for migrant self-representation.

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[66] Giacomo Sferlazzo, 'LETTERA APERTA AL SINDACO DI LAMPEDUSA E LINOSA | Askavusa' <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2015/02/23/lettera-aperta-al-sindaco-di-lampedusa-e-linosa/> [accessed 17 November 2017].

[67] Askavusa, 'Le Elezioni a Lampedusa Un Cortocircuito Inevitabile. | Askavusa' <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2017/06/13/le-elezioni-a-lampedusa-un-cortocircuito-inevitabile/> [accessed 18 November 2017].

5.2.3 'Senza paura'. *Askavusa's* political identity after the 3rd of October 2013

In September 2013, with the launch of a new blog that quickly become the principal media outlet of the group, *Askavusa* set forth the beginning of new era.[68] The previous sections, analysing some of the group's initiatives, relationships, and significant episodes of Lampedusa's recent history, have witnessed the transition of *Askavusa* from a cultural association to an autonomous political collective. The transformation from *Arci* to *Collettivo*, as anticipated in the previous pages, has led to the interruption of various projects and to the surfacing of the group's tensions and frustration with the numerous actors active on the island. While *Askavusa* has seen this shift as a 'natural' outcome of almost eight years of campaigning, this decision has not been devoid of complications, and still poses many questions on the future and aims of the now *Collettivo Askavusa*.

This section will summarise the key themes of the group's political interpretation of the processes taking place on Lampedusa, pointing out both the insightful and the controversial readings offered by its members. Finally, this section will highlight the potential negative consequences of this 'closure' on the group's critical deconstruction of hegemonic discourses surrounding Lampedusa.

Against imperialism. Askavusa's ideology through the years

Askavusa was born to create new cultural initiatives connecting the theme of migrants' human rights to the goal of promoting 'turismo qualificato' on the island. At its heart, it is multiculturalist and antiracist, but the group has also been characterised by anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist stances due to the left-wing political background in which it was established. Other themes like that of colonialism, militarisation, and neo-liberalism have surfaced through the years in the members' statements.

The transformation into a collective meant the prioritisation of certain themes over and above others, both as a key to interpret the processes taking place on the island, and in order to re-direct the aims of the collective's initiatives. Between the summers of

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[68] Askavusa, 'Da Sabra e Shatila a Lampedusa | Askavusa'
<https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2013/09/16/da-sabra-e-shatila-a-lampedusa/> [accessed 18 November 2017].

2013 and 2014, the group transformed the various instances characterising their activities into an apparently monolithic political identity:

> Il nostro "fare" è profondamente politico, anticapitalista e antimperialista. Siamo comunisti anarchici. Spesso ci siamo sentiti usati e inglobati dal sistema, nostro malgrado e dobbiamo ammettere che questo ci capita ancora. Ma ora studiamo anche come creare guasti.[69]

In contrast to the human rights-based focus of the early years, *Askavusa's* members have now created an identity drawing an unbridgeable gap between them and the various partners that have collaborated with before. Often, the tone of the group's more recent statements is more openly hostile:

> Ai governanti, alle ONG, agli esportatori di diritti umani, a chi sfrutta i lavoratori e i territori, ai capitalisti, a chi usa le tragedie e Lampedusa per i propri sporchi affari diciamo: "SIETE I NOSTRI NEMICI" [emphasis in original].[70]

The cases of the failed 'Museo delle Migrazioni' project with the *Archivio Memorie Migranti* and *Askavusa*'s rebuttal of the 'Carta di Lampedusa' project are two vital examples of this transition, characterised by the group's continuous reference to businessman and philanthropist George Soros and his *Open Society Foundation*.[71] Beyond the disagreements on how to proceed with the ongoing projects or on the significance of Lampedusa's nexus with migration, getting money from *Open Society Foundation* became a point of no return. According to the group:

> Lampedusa è stata invece sacrificata dai potenti e sulla pelle dei suoi abitanti e dei migranti è stata fatta diventare un laboratorio di controllo, repressione e retorica. Ong, associazioni

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[69] 'PortoM | Askavusa'.
[70] Askavusa, 'Ancora Morti'.
[71] 'About Us', *Open Society Foundations* <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about> [accessed 18 November 2017].

umanitarie, cooperative, politicanti hanno guadagnato in termini economici e di visibilità, servendo gli interessi di personaggi come Soros.[72]

Finally, the group developed an increasing intolerance for any sort of instrumental use of the name Lampedusa by actors not materially connected to the island. These processes, although highlighting many malpractices and initiatives used to tie Lampedusa to migration for political reasons, have brought the group to assume a censor-like role that has undermined the credibility and visibility gained from years of meaningful activities.

Sferlazzo himself has produced a detailed history of the group, summarising the episodes that have led to its recent political position.[73] In this account, *Askavusa's* founder suggests that the group's history is intimately connected to the recovery of migrant objects. His account of the various ideas and proposals received from the numerous actors met by *Askavusa* through the years expresses a growing scepticism towards the turning of this heterogenous collection of things found in Lampedusa's boat-cemetery into a museum.

Gatta and Vecchi also share the idea that the series of misunderstandings and other circumstances surrounding Sferlazzo's recovery of migrant objects played a fundamental role in this transition. While Vecchi focuses on the group members' distrust of local politicians involved in the project and their refusal to catalogue, label, and display the objects according to a 'traditional' museum concept, Gatta stresses the role played by the theme of militarisation, and by the group's emotional reaction to the shipwreck of the 3rd of October 2013.[74] According to Gatta, the issue of militarisation has positioned *Askavusa's* interpretation of the 'borderisation' of Lampedusa in a wider theoretical framework that takes into account the role of global dynamics and power relations in producing migrants' 'illegality'. However, he also stresses that the prioritisation of this theme has slowly reduced the space for the expression of migrant subjectivities within *Askavusa's* cultural production.

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[72] Askavusa, 'Pupi, Pupari e Pupiddi | Askavusa' <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2014/09/21/pupi-pupari-e-pupiddi/> [accessed 18 November 2017].
[73] Askavusa, 'Con Gli Oggetti'.
[74] Gatta, 'Stranded Traces', pp. 184–85.

Therefore, the significance afforded by the literature to the 3rd of October, the theme of militarisation, and the group's relationship with migrant objects, are all vital in understanding the construction of *Askavusa's* actual political identity. Nevertheless, the present work, in order to shed light on the political changes undergone by *Askavusa*, will focus on another meaningful episode: the case of the 'Carta di Lampedusa'.

La Carta di Lampedusa

The history of the 'Carta di Lampedusa' is rooted in the aftermath of the deadly shipwrecks of the 3rd and 11th of October 2013. The project, promoted by various grassroots activities focussed on migrants' rights, was hosted by *Askavusa* between the 31st of January and the 2nd of February 2014.[75] The group's initially hopeful promotion, and then later bitter condemnation of this project, not only summarises many of the themes and political positions discussed by the members, but also capture very vividly the timeframe and contradictions of this transition.

In a first post at the end of October 2013, responding to the proposal of *Progetto Melting Pot Europa*, *Askavusa* invited all the associations and collectives from Italy and Europe to a general meeting with Lampedusa's mayor, fishermen, rescuers, migrants, and citizens.[76] After this announcement a series of preliminary meetings were scheduled to plan the key points to be included in the charter. In these meetings *Askavusa's* new priorities came to the surface through a series of clarifications which also highlighted the group's recent aversion towards any institutional actors, and the role of 'financial capital' in NGOs. *Askavusa's* statements are quite relevant, because they seem to confirm the fundamental role played by the group's emotive reaction to the 3rd of October, and its subsequent attention towards the issue of militarisation:

> Nei giorni successivi alla strage del 3 ottobre […] mentre il nostro senso di impotenza si faceva
> ancora una volta più grande e tutte le azioni svolte fino a quel momento ci apparivano ridicole
> […] A volte mi sono sentito in una festa autoreferenziale, in cui il marketing dell'associazionismo

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[75] 'The Charter of Lampedusa - Preamble'.
[76] Askavusa, 'Ripartiamo Da Qui! Venite a Scrivere La Carta Di Lampedusa', *Askavusa*, 2013 <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2013/10/24/ripartiamo-da-qui-venite-a-scrivere-la-carta-di-lampedusa/> [accessed 18 November 2017].

a prevalso su tutto il resto, incontri sui migranti dove i migranti non c'erano, eventi finanziati dall'Enel/Eni, da Soros, da fondazioni bancarie etc etc […] La carta di Lampedusa può essere un appuntamento importante anche per questo. Quello che suggeriamo noi è non avere sigle, intestazioni, loghi o sponsor di nessun tipo. Scegliere pochi punti da discutere uno dei quali crediamo sia essenziale: La militarizzazione del mediterraneo attraverso le leggi sulle migrazioni. Noi non diamo alcun valore alle istituzioni, i nostri referenti non sono i capi di stato, i ministri, i parlamentari, i nostri referenti politici sono gli ultimi e con loro che vogliamo parlare e con loro che possiamo costruire altre forme di socialità.[77]

In debate surrounding the 'Carta di Lampedusa', *Askavusa* specifies that, not having specific competence on the subject of migration, the role of its members will be that of direct witnesses:

Noi non abbiamo competenze specifiche in materia di immigrazione, siamo testimoni diretti di quello che accade a Lampedusa da anni e questo è quello che possiamo restituire alla discussione oltre ad una esposizione della vita generale dell'isola.[78]

As mentioned before, this role has often led the group to use this position to undermine the critical takes on the island that did not fit their very specific interpretation of the events. On this basis, the various groups which had subscribed to *Melting Pot* and *Askavusa's* appeal met on Lampedusa at the end of January 2014.

The outcome of this meeting was a universal declaration comprising a series of principles (freedom of movement, freedom of choice, freedom to stay etc.) and responses to the current migration policies and militarisation of national borders. While the text of the 'Carta' and its various translation are still accessible online, this project had a very short-lived visibility and success. Arguably, the project was destined to fail by *Askavusa's* fierce and almost unexpected refusal to sign the final draft. The statement summarising the reasons behind this abrupt rejection is a key document for

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[77] Askavusa, '29 Novembre 2013 Assemblea Online per Costruire La Carta Di Lampedusa' <http://www.askavusa.com/29-novembre-2013-assemblea-on-line-per-costruire-la-carta-di-lampedusa/> [accessed 27 August 2017].
[78] Askavusa, '29 Novembre 2013 Assemblea Online per Costruire La Carta Di Lampedusa'.

understanding the 'latest' iteration of *Askavusa*. The group makes seven points, each of them a reminder of the issues touched on by the collective throughout the years.[79]

> 1. Come tanti eventi che usano il nome di Lampedusa anche questo non nasce da una esigenza degli isolani e non è l'espressione del pensiero degli isolani.

The first reminds us that, despite the members' appeals to the mayor and their fellow 'Lampedusani', the locals have ignored the 'Carta' initiative, but they have also been ignored by the actors writing up the document. The 'Carta' does not represent the island's needs and thoughts. The statement can also be considered as an attempt to dismantle the instrumental use of the name Lampedusa and, more specifically, *Askavusa's* growing desire to disentangle the association between the island's name and the theme of migration.

The second and third points are fundamental in highlighting the beginning of the group's personal 'crusade' against American and European capitalism, and its interference in the Libyan, Ukrainian, and Syrian conflicts. The peculiar and significant aspect of these points is that, instead of drawing from a generic anti-American and pacifist tradition typical of the Italian left, *Askavusa* individuates in Soros and his *Open Society Foundation* a very specific target. From this moment, whether their campaigning has been focused on the militarisation of Lampedusa, the institutional take-over of cultural practices on the island, or the critique of the latest film on Lampedusa, a reference to the tycoon's capital has become unavoidable.[80]

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[79] For the full text of Askavusa's letter see Askavusa, 'Motivazioni per Il NO Di Askavusa Alla Carta Di Lampedusa.', *Askavusa*, 2014 <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2014/03/21/motivazioni-per-il-no-di-askavusa-alla-carta-di-lampedusa/> [accessed 18 November 2017].
[80] Askavusa, 'Pupi, Pupari e Pupiddi | Askavusa'.

Figure 24 Image from Collettivo Askavusa's blog (September 2014)

This ideological turn brought the members to controversial actions such as the interruption of President of European Parliament Martin Schulz's press conference in Lampedusa with the cry of 'Nazi Europe', and the placing of a European flag with a swastika at its centre behind the set of the TV series *Lampedusa*.[81] While these episodes could be dismissed as protests driven by the emotional aftermath of the 3rd of October, it is important to view them with a critical eye. The preoccupation with Soros, seen as a figure capable of destabilising countries in the name of American and European economic interests, is not only a key theme of *Askavusa's* outputs, but is also taken up by some agents of the Italian autonomous left and by many Italian far-right and neo-fascist movements.[82] The 'obsession' with the magnate has also gained the attention of

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[81] See Libera Espressione, *Lampedusa Tra Cerimonie e Proteste " Europa Nazista "*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71uJ5SOuH8I&feature=youtu.be&t=239>; Askavusa, 'DENUNCIATI PER VILIPENDIO ALLA BANDIERA EUROPEA / REPORTED FOR CONTEMPT OF EUROPEAN FLAG / POURSUITES POUR OUTRAGE AU DRAPEAU EUROPEEN', *Askavusa* <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2015/07/13/denunciati-per-vilipendio-alla-bandiera-europea-reported-for-contempt-of-european-flag/> [accessed 24 October 2015].
[82] See for instance the recurrence of this name in the articles of the online communist newspaper 'Contropiano'. 'I Soldi Di Soros. Ecco Chi Li Ha Presi, Anche in Italia', *Contropiano*, 2016 <http://contropiano.org/altro/2016/08/18/soldi-soros-li-presi-anche-italia-082612> [accessed 18 November 2017]; 'Forza Nuova Denuncia Soros: "Specula Sui Migranti Finanziando Le Ong"', *IlSicilia.It*, 2017 <http://www.ilsicilia.it/forza-nuova-denuncia-soros-specula-sui-migranti-finanziando-le-ong/> [accessed 18 November 2017].

the mainstream media, which has noted the anti-semitism underpinning the dislike of Soros, and the conflation between two apparently opposing political spectrums.[83]

While there is no trace of a reflection from *Askavusa* on the controversial commonalities with movements that have made of racist and anti-immigrant rhetoric a key feature of their political activity, the recurrence of the figure of Soros can be used to highlight the group's abandonment of a purely localist discourse. The members appear no longer to speak only to their fellow citizens.[84]

The struggle between the various episodes underpinning the global production of Lampedusa's locality, highlighted by Appadurai, has led the members to direct their attention towards a richer, albeit ideological, critique of society, which can be summarised by the remaining points in their statement against the 'Carta di Lampedusa':

4. Non aspiriamo ad un modello universale di società, tanto meno ci poniamo il problema di come governare le migrazioni e l'accoglienza […]

5. La nostra prospettiva di organizzazione comunitaria è comunista ed anarchica, rifiutiamo tutte le autorità esistenti in Europa, in quanto espressione di una sudditanza politica, militare ed economica nei confronti degli Stati Uniti d'America […]

The members' idea of society appears affected by the sense of oppression and encirclement that a small community such as Lampedusa has suffered in recent years.

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[83] Because of Soros' Jewish origins, his case can be seen as a modern transposition of historical anti-semitic conspiracy theories: Mattia Salvia, '"Pagati Da Soros" - Come Un Miliardario Ebreo è Diventato l'ossessione Dei Complottisti Italiani', *Vice*, 2017 <https://www.vice.com/it/article/9aewge/soros-ossessione-dei-complottisti-italiani> [accessed 18 November 2017].

[84] A clear example is given by this post, which focusses on the global significance of Lampedusa: 'Le Catene Di Spartaco. Askavusa, 'Le Catene Di Spartaco. Bollettino Resistente / N1. «Nel Paese Della Bugia, La Verità è Una Malattia» | Askavusa' <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2015/03/07/le-catene-di-spartaco-bollettino-resistente-n1-nel-paese-della-bugia-la-verita-e-una-malattia/> [accessed 18 November 2017].

However, once again, this statement ends up relying on another conspiracy theory dear to xenophobic and anti-EU right-wing movements: that of the so-called 'Kalergi Plan'.[85]

7. Restiamo molto critici e perplessi verso certe retoriche che, sia pure con varie e diversificate connotazioni, esaltano sempre di più concetti quali il meticciato, il multietnico, il multiculturalismo […] Crediamo che si possa e si debba coesistere nelle diversità, ma crediamo altresì che l'Europa e gli Stati Uniti portino avanti una politica di omologazione che nasconde, dietro alla retorica *politically correct*, […] esigenze del capitale finanziario globalizzato. […] Dai di tempi del senatore Fullbright […] del conte Richard Nikolaus di Coudenhove-Kalergi, è stata promossa un Europa [sic] multiculturale e meticcia, attraverso cui si cancellano le storie e le culture delle comunità, in favore delle aspirazioni di un "Individuo" spogliato del proprio passato e del proprio posizionamento di classe. […] Riteniamo che l'identità sia un processo dinamico che non può essere tradotto in una granitica lista di valori o tradizioni estetiche e culturali ma che al contempo non possa venire assorbito e digerito dall'indistinzione dell'individuo atomizzato dei mercati, soggetto esclusivo di produzione e di consumo.

The *Collettivo*'s positions on the concept of multiculturalism and of identity are caught in a conundrum between the anti-racist and human rights-based principles of the *Arci Askavusa's* early outputs, and the anti-migrant sentiments which have driven the multicultural 'backlash' discourse across Europe in the last years.[86] This contradiction recalls the fear of cultural homogenisation discussed by Appadurai in the construction of locality, and brings us to the consequences of *Askavusa's* closure.

The marginalisation of Askavusa

Despite the controversies connected to the group's political turn, it is fair to say that *Askavusa's* analysis of some of the processes taking place on the island, and of the political use of its symbolism, has often hit the mark. The linking of the Lampedusa case to global phenomena such as capitalism, neo-liberalism, imperialism, colonialism etc. is a significant sign of the rich theoretical framework in which the *Collettivo* operates.

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[85] Clara Amodeo, 'Cos'è Il Piano Kalergi, La Bufala Dei Migranti Che Uccideranno Gli Europei', 2015 <http://www.linkiesta.it/it/article/2015/09/28/cose-il-piano-kalergi-la-bufala-dei-migranti-che-uccideranno-gli-europ/27568/> [accessed 18 November 2017].
[86] *The Multiculturalism Backlash*, ed. by Steven Vertovec and Wessendorf, 1st edn (London ; New York: Routledge, 2009).

Nevertheless, their increasingly ideological reading of events on the island has led to an oversimplification of the structural factors at stake. It would be simpler to reduce Lampedusa's problems and the questions posed by the migratory phenomenon to a few faces and 'enemies', but the question necessarily recalls the members' contradictory relationship with the potential agency of the Lampedusans in the construction of the island's hegemonic symbolism.

As mentioned before, *Askavusa* is caught between hope in and scepticism of the locals' capacity to affect the processes taking place on the island and their representation. In processing these doubts, *Askavusa* draws a difficult parallel between the migrant subjects and the 'Lampedusani', constructing Lampedusa as a colonial space:

> Quest'isola subisce da anni lo stesso processo coloniale che ha subito nei secoli l'Africa. Lampedusa non ha petrolio, non ha coltan, non ha gas né acqua; Lampedusa ha una cosa però che è fondamentale nelle strategie di guerra e nelle nuove politiche coloniali: LA SUA POSIZIONE GEOGRAFICA. […] A Lampedusa è inoltre possibile produrre emergenze e retoriche che altrove sarebbero impossibili da riprodurre, da gestire e da mettere in scena. […] Un enorme set, dunque, dietro le cui quinte si affollano frementi giornalisti, fotografi, registi ma anche artisti, scrittori, studiosi ed esperti di varia natura: tutti accomunati dalla magica capacità di raccontarci l'isola e i suoi abitanti dopo un soggiorno che nella migliore delle ipotesi dura appena una settimana. […] Come nei migliori processi coloniali, infatti, l'autonoma economia locale deve essere scoraggiata e la vita sul posto sfavorita. Il turismo, la nostra prima forma di economia, è stata in questi anni messa a dura prova, dalle scelte politiche e dall'uso (come dicevamo prima) di Lampedusa come grande set mediatico [emphasis in original].[87]

However, Lampedusa is a not a straightforward (post)colonial space. The conflation of the locals' perspective to that of the 'new comers' ends up overshadowing, once again, the migrant point of view. In fact, it is not a coincidence that migrants' involvement in *Askavusa's* initiatives, particularly in the curatorship of the objects rescued by the group, has disappeared from the group's priorities concurrently with

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[87] Askavusa, 'Lampedusa, Centro Del Mediterraneo. (IT-EN)', *Askavusa*, 2015 <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2015/04/23/lampedusa-centro-del-mediterraneo/> [accessed 18 November 2017].

their political rethinking. The prioritisation of a class struggle against capitalism, militarisation, and imperialism has – whether intentionally or unintentionally – outshone issues of race, privilege, gender, and, above all, the central question of migrants' subjectivity in the processes taking place on Lampedusa.

> Per noi i problemi restano alla radice: Le guerre imperialiste, lo sfruttamento dei territori, l'assenza di diritto, l'Eurocentrismo, il capitalismo, la globalizzazione […] le migrazioni sono un riflesso di questi processi in atto da secoli e oggi portati alle estreme conseguenze, non si tratta di essere buoni o cattivi, pro o contro la società multiculturale, si tratta di prendere atto di un massacro che dura da secoli e che oggi ha mutato solo aspetto ma nella sostanza resta invariato, tutto ciò che è legato alle politiche sulle migrazioni umane è un aspetto di questo processo: l'imperialismo.[88]

According to Gatta, *Askavusa's* subordination of 'questions of gender and race in favour of a class struggle' underestimates the 'particularity of colonial systems of domination,' and makes the migrant voices 'secondary to *Askavusa's* cultural project'.[89] Furthermore, I argue that this choice has precipitated the decline in migration-themed cultural productions in *Askavusa's* work, harming in this way the visibility of the counter-representations of Lampedusa produced by the group.

Although Gramsci's ideas seem to have influenced the members' interpretations of the processes taking place on Lampedusa (his name is a recurrent one in their statements), *Askavusa's* prioritisation of an economist reading of the causes of the island's involvement in the migration 'crisis' contrasts with the Italian philosopher's thought. Following Hall's take on Gramsci, the group appears to have abandoned the 'field of representation' to the hegemonic actors:

> Popular beliefs, the culture of a people – Gramsci argues – are not arenas of struggle which can be left to look after themselves. They "are themselves material forces" (PN, p. 165). It thus

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[88] Giacomo Sferlazzo, 'Situazione Invariata' <http://www.askavusa.com/situazione-invariata/ sferlazzo> [accessed 27 September 2017].
[89] Gatta, p. 188.

requires an extensive cultural and ideological struggle to bring about or effect the intellectual and ethical unity which is essential to the forging of hegemony: a struggle which takes the form of "a struggle of political hegemonies and of opposing directions, first in ethical field and then in that of politics proper (PN, p. 333). This bears very directly on the type of social struggles we identify with national, anti-colonial and anti-racist movements.[90]

By drawing a line between 'them' and their 'enemies', and prioritising their struggle against the 'real causes' of Lampedusa's instrumental symbolism, *Askavusa* members appear to have lost a degree of visibility that could have been exploited to contrast the institutional take-over of the cultural representations of the island. In their refusal to compromise, their initiatives seem to have lost the capability to create space for the 'aesthetic of subversion' hypothesised by Mazzara, ending up being isolated and replaced by those actors which they have criticised so vociferously.[91] While it is impossible to state whether *Askavusa's* decision of creating *Porto M* and ending the cultural activities linked to *LampedusaInFestival* has triggered the cultural offensive from the institution, it is evident that the alternative platform constructed by the group in many years of remarkable work – a platform where the voice of the marginalised protagonists of Lampedusa could be heard – has been compromised.

5.3 Historicising-memorialising Lampedusa

The analysis of *Askavusa's* history has encompassed many of the overlapping processes underpinning the relationship between the theme of migration and Lampedusa. Despite the growing unrest towards this nexus, the presence of the *Collettivo* is without doubt rooted in the construction of the island as a symbolic place for analysing migration. Beyond the ideological controversies and the theoretical hurdles, after almost two decades of media over-exposition and conflictual relationship with the presence of the migration apparatus, the island is now subject to a series of initiatives apparently willing to come to terms with historical significance of these events. Although driven by

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[90] Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity', p. 21.
[91] Mazzara, 'Spaces of Visibility for the Migrants of Lampedusa'.

different instances and interests, various actors have begun a process of historicisation-memorialisation of the island's relationship with migrant presence, passage, and death.

Arguably, the commemoration of the shipwreck of the 3rd of October 2013 can be seen as a turning point in the representation of the events taking place on the island. In the wake of the emotive impact of this episode, the island has witnessed unprecedented institutional attention to the cultural representations of Lampedusa's relationship with migration. The Italian, but also European, institution has shown a determination in inserting the episode of the shipwreck into a pre-constituted narrative, seeing the shipwreck as the inevitable consequence of the humanitarian crisis/emergency unfolding in the Mediterranean.

The cultural activities carried out to commemorate the victims of the 3rd of October, the establishment of the *Museo della Fiducia e del Dialogo per il Mediterraneo*, etc. have not only made Lampedusa a place where political responsibilities for the death toll of people attempting to enter Europe by boat are sanitised by a humanitarian reading of events which functions as a tool for justifying militarised border control and building national identity. They have also been used to promote new forms of tourism on the island.

In this process, *Askavusa* is not only the local critical recorder of these developments, but its members need to be seen as the precursors of this tourism-oriented turn. In this section, I argue that their original project of creating a 'well-informed' and sustainable tourism, capable of attracting tourists in low-season periods, has never been abandoned. On the contrary, it has been controversially carried on by institutionally-driven or sponsored actors that want to make of the image of the 'welcoming Lampedusa' a heritage destination.

Figure 25 Members of Askavusa welcoming 'turisti solidali' (responsible/ethical tourists) at Porto M (October 2016)

This section will use the concept of 'dark tourism' to address the manner in which Lampedusa is historicised/memorialised, highlighting the difference between institutional initiatives and *Askavusa's* practices. Alison Landsberg's concept of 'prosthetic memory' will be used to address whether the forms of memory promoted by these initiatives are the outcome of more traditional processes of memorialisation based on 'claims of authenticity, "heritage," and ownership, or whether they bear the potential to challenge the essentialist and nationalist logic of these practices.[92]

5.3.1 Lampedusa as a dark tourism destination

The concept of 'dark tourism' was used for the first time in the late 1990s by Foley and Lennon to discuss the political, social, economic, and ethical questions posed by the growing phenomenon of people travelling to places or areas that are somehow associated with death.[93] The attraction of death and disaster highlighted by the authors encompasses a heterogenous range of locations: from historical battlegrounds, former prisons, to sites of natural disasters, mass murder, and genocide such as Auschwitz.

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[92] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 3.
[93] John Lennon and Malcolm Foley, *Dark Tourism*, UK edition (London ; New York: Cengage Learning EMEA, 2000).

Privately owned exhibitions, institutionally driven museums, and memorials can also be considered 'dark tourism' destinations.

Also known as 'thanatourism': '[D]ark tourism may be defined simply and more generally as *the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre* [emphasis in original]'.[94] This field of studies has raised a number of essential questions surrounding the reasons driving tourists to visit such places, and whether it is possible to unite such different experiences under one term. The literature supplies a helpful framework for discussing the political, economic, and cultural factors underpinning the transformation of Lampedusa into a place for commemoration. The following pages will pay attention to the ethical, interpretative, and managerial questions posed by the opening of two museum spaces on the island.

Porto M and the Museo della Fiducia del Dialogo per il Mediterraneo

While the *Porta d'Europa* was already placed as a memorial to migrant deaths at sea in June 2008, it was not until the aftermath of the 3rd of October 2013 that Lampedusa was turned into a place for periodical and institutionalised ceremonies. After years of attempts aimed at dismantling the Lampedusa-migration crisis nexus for fear of damaging commercial tourism on the island, the Italian government and local administrators have started promoting a different relationship with the phenomenon.

Alongside the political implementation of the search and rescue operation 'Mare Nostrum', the emotional backlash of the shipwreck has led to the institution of a series of official commemorations, now held on the island on a yearly basis. Among the different actors active on the island, the *Comitato 3 ottobre*, founded by Rai-news journalist Valerio Cataldi, has quickly assumed a prominent position.

The 'Comitato', born with the objective of making of the 3rd of October the official day 'of memory and welcoming' on a national and European level (a proposal made law

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[94] *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, ed. by Richard Sharpley and Philip R Stone (Bristol (UK); Buffalo (NY); Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2009).

by the Italian government in March 2016),[95] became one the principal partners of the *MiBact* (Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism) in promoting the establishment of a museum on migration in Lampedusa. In the context of the first ever institutional visit of a President of the Italian Republic, the museum was inaugurated in June 2016.[96]

If the history of the *Museo della Fiducia e del Dialogo* is clearly entangled with the infamous shipwreck in which 368 people lost their life, *Porto M's* relationship with this event is less evident. As seen in the previous pages, *Askavusa's* project has its origins in a series of difficult partnerships, failed attempts, and a long and tormented theoretical elaboration.[97] Nevertheless, the 3rd of October can also be considered a fundamental premise of the current project:

> Con i naufragi di ottobre a Lampedusa e le conseguenze politiche e mediatiche, si decide di intraprendere un percorso il più possibile condiviso da tutti coloro che fanno parte del collettivo Askavusa e di praticare da subito tutto ciò che in questi anni è emerso come linea politica e di conseguenza culturale. Con l'apertura di Porto M e il progetto multimediale Lampemusa il collettivo Askavusa riafferma la centralità assoluta in tutte le scelte che riguardano le proprie attività ed apre una nuova fase nel rapporto con la comunità di Lampedusa.[98]

In discussing how a place can become a destination for *dark tourism* Seaton draws from Said's distinction between *beginnings* and *origins*: the first concept entails the presence of a purposeful agency in the triggering of a process, and the second defines those phenomena that have been generated by accident or where the individuals have lost their control.[99] Seaton makes a distinction between locations that have emerged as

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[95] 'Chi Siamo', *Comitato 3 Ottobre* <http://www.comitatotreottobre.it/comitato/> [accessed 18 November 2017].

[96] 'Lampedusa, Mattarella Inaugura Il Museo Della Fiducia E Del Dialogo'.

[97] 'Porto M' was officially inaugurated on 01/02/2014, the same day of the final draft of the *Carta di Lampedusa*.

[98] Askavusa, 'Con Gli Oggetti' <http://www.askavusa.com/progetti/portom/> [accessed 30 August 2017].

[99] Tony Seaton, 'Purposeful Otherness: Approaches to the Management of Thanatourism', in *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, ed. by Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone (Bristol (UK); Buffalo (NY); Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2009), pp. 75–108 (p. 90).

sites of 'thanatourism' spontaneously (independently from any sort of planning), gradually (through processes of historical change and consequent re-framing for other purposes), and sites that have answered to a precise 'thematization strategy'.[100]

It could be argued that on Lampedusa the three processes highlighted by Seaton coexist. While the origin of a heritage-based focus on the theme of migration can be found in *Askavusa's* work, since the 3rd of October 2013 the island has undergone a 'thematisation strategy' exemplified by the collaboration between Nicolini's administration, the Italian government, and actors like the *Comitato 3 ottobre*. The 'thanatorial' aura deriving from the shipwreck appears not only to be appropriated to create the humanitarian identity of the Italian actors involved in the phenomenon discussed in chapter two, but is also turned into an economic opportunity as expressed by Lampedusa's vice-mayor:

> Per noi è importante questo, è un modo per dire, venite a Lampedusa anche per affrontare un altro tipo di turismo. Si, il turismo naturalistico […] ma anche un turismo che cerca di capire e di approfondire meglio la tematica dell'immigrazione, e con noi ci si può confrontare su questo. Con i lampedusani che tutto l'anno, ogni giorno, vivono questa tematica.[101]

One could argue that such events do not necessarily underpin the fascination for death typical of a dark tourism destination. However, some sections of the *Museo del dialogo*, and the fact that the majority of the initiatives are connected to the commemoration of the 3rd of October's victims, appear to support such framework. Let us now discuss the setting up of the two 'museums'.

In both the cases, the word 'museum' can be considered to some extent misleading. The initiative promoted by the Italian government is named *Museo*. In fact, it was a temporary exhibition of objects borrowed from different international collections which lasted only four months, whereas *Porto M* is considered as a sort of 'anti-museum'. Although most of the migrant objects are displayed on a permanent basis on the island,

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[100] Seaton, pp. 90–91.
[101] Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, *Summer School Lampedusa | Damiano Massimiliano Sferlazzo* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkNxFJ3RbcI>.

Askavusa's members refuse firmly the identification of their project as a museum. Mostly during the winter, some objects are turned into a travelling exhibition which can be borrowed and displayed in other locations.

Figure 26 Objects from Porto M displayed at the exhibition Ort_m migration memory (Hamburg, 24/1/2016)

Precisely this opportunity to display the objects in different contexts is considered by *Askavusa* as one of the principal means of promoting their political message. In the words of the members:

After that we split with the archive [AMM] and we decided to go on by ourselves, because we believed the objects should not be musealised [sic] and put...described and put in a place still, but we as you can see from the other room [he refers to the Ort_m exhibition] we like to bring the objects around and to bring a story with them [...] to use memory as a political tool. So, through the objects we go, and we tell people what we believe is going on in Lampedusa, in the

Mediterranean Sea, because memory is always a political tool, you decide what to remember and what not, and museums are always difficult places.[102]

According to them, the decision to end the partnership with the *Archivio Memorie Migranti* and the city council to create the *Museo delle migrazioni*, in order to establish *Porto M* instead, is a way of avoiding the application of pre-constituted meanings to the objects as entailed by their understanding of museum practices.

Porto M ('eMMMMe') – in which the letters 'M' stand for Mediterranean Sea, migration, militarisation and memory – has been located since 2015 at *Askavusa's* new headquarters, a building facing Lampedusa's harbour. The space is intended not only as a memorial of migrants' passage through the island, but is designated as an open space for meetings, concerts, and other social events.[103] Free visits, under the supervision and the guidance of one of the members, are open to tourists, journalists, researchers, and others upon request.

At the time of my visit, the setting of *Porto M* was characterised by the presence of the heterogenous series of migrant objects preserved by the members through the years. Clothes, shoes, life vests, tea pots, cutlery, old food, music tapes, and various other objects were grouped mostly by category on shelves made of recycled wood rescued from the island's boat cemetery. The idea of recycling, manipulating, and giving 'new life' to the migrant boats' wood and the objects was also seen in the exhibition of some of Sferlazzo's artworks. With the exception of the migrants' books and letters, the objects were not labelled, and were free to be touched and moved by the eventual visitors.

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[102] Collettivo Askavusa, *Presentation of the Migrant Objects at Ort_m Exhibition in Hamburg 25 January 2016*.
[103] See the video presentation here Lorenzo Sibiriu, *EMMMMe - Porto M. Lampedusa*, 2016 <https://vimeo.com/150889308>.
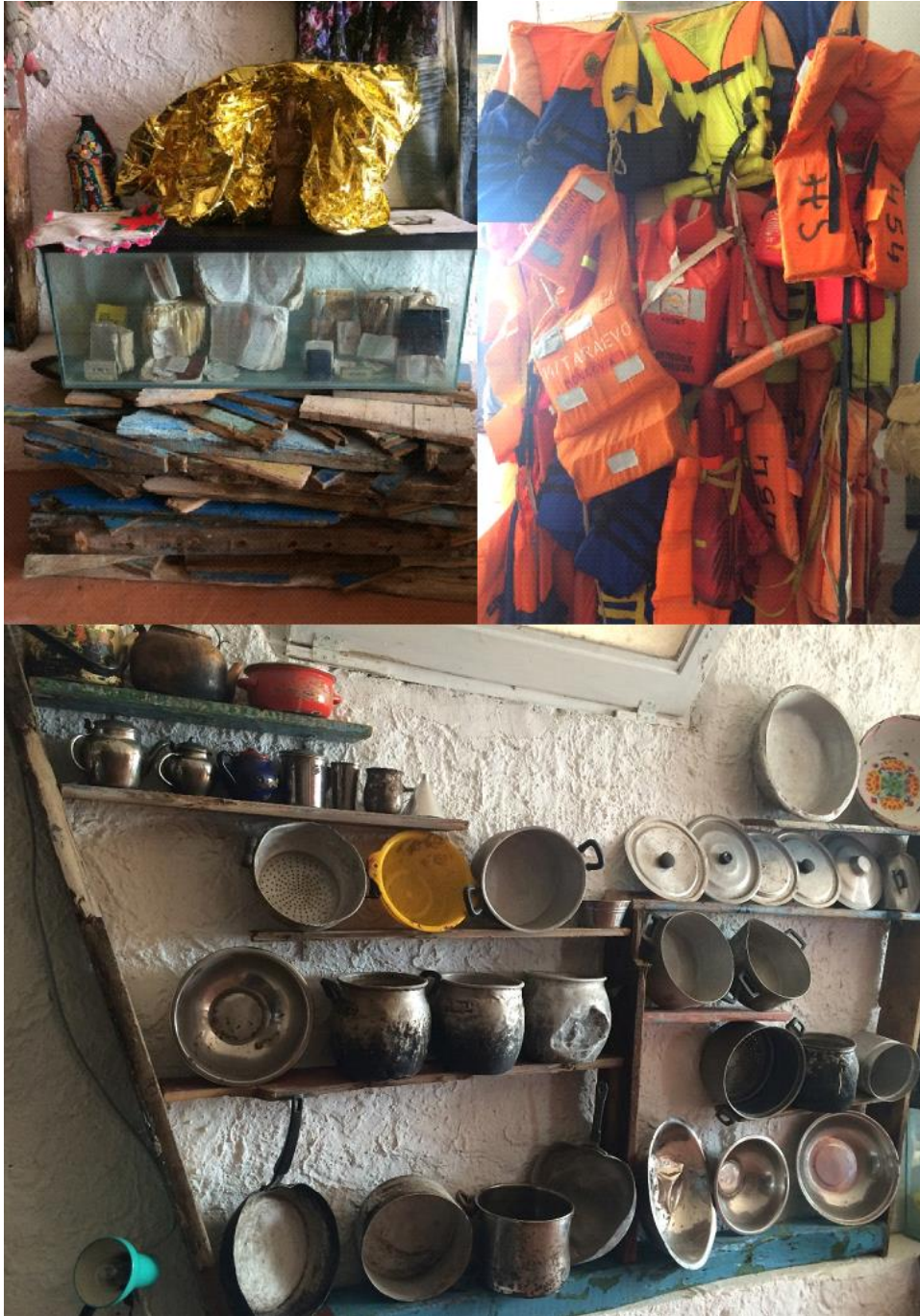
Figure 27 Porto M (1 October 2016)

The decision to not label or classify the objects can be considered both a manifesto of the group's theoretical reflection on the political use of these artefacts, and a symbol of the contradictions and criticisms drawn by their work. By mean of not labelling, contextualising, or describing the objects, the group aims to avoid imposing any form of representation, leaving space to the potential visitor to 'freely' observe and interpret the meaningfulness of such artefacts:

> Crediamo che questi oggetti vadano mostrati, non studiati, non catalogati, non restaurati, non "rinchiusi", ma mostrati, senza aggiungere altro. Farlo senza alcuna informazione didascalica non è un atto neutrale, ma una scelta politica. Non è ricerca di oggettività […] La scelta di salvare questi oggetti e conservarli è un modo di considerarli vivi di per sé. […] chi lo ha salvato lo ha già posto su un livello nuovo: da spazzatura è divenuto simbolo stratificato. […] L'oggetto invece parla muto […] Non vogliamo dire con questo che studiare gli oggetti, identificarli e rinominarli sia sbagliato. Non sappiamo cosa è giusto e sbagliato. […] Sappiamo qual è il percorso che vogliamo fare con questi oggetti (che non è mai definitivo).[104]

It is around the memorial role of these objects, their potential value as carriers of 'prosthetic memories', that the theoretical reflections of *Askavusa* clash with its practical enactment. Not labelling as a means to avoid fixity becomes, in practice, another means of caging these objects in unchanging, pre-constituted meanings.

According to Landsberg, with prosthetic memories 'people are invited to take on memories of a past through which they did not live'.[105] Thus, 'people who share little in the way of cultural or ethnic background might come to share certain memories'.[106] The radical power of prosthetic memories is found in their capacity to construct common origins without erasing the differences between those who feel connected to them. With *Askavusa's* closure to any partnership or shared curatorship on the objects, the group actively claims ownership of objects that do not necessarily belong only to them.

The paradox posed by this impossible renunciation of representation is highlighted by the fact that visits to *Porto M* or the displays of the objects in other locations are necessarily accompanied by the members' take on what is happening on Lampedusa:

> Yes, to illustrate what L. just said, we have been invited by the French immigration museum in Paris […] They are actually organizing a big exhibition about memory and migration and we refused to bring the objects there […] but our idea is not to bring them and to leave them there, we want, if we are invited, to have a space for debate and exchange and this structure wasn't able to respond to our way to present these objects. And, so we refused one part because of that

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[104] Askavusa, 'Con Gli Oggetti'.
[105] Landsberg, p. 8.
[106] Ibid.

and as well also because this museum is...receive funds by the government […] French foreign policy at the political and economic level is responsible for why people cannot stay home, and they have to escape their countries. And if, on one hand, they are saying 'yes we need to rescue people on the Mediterranean Sea' […] on the other hand, they are still who securitized the borders […] this ambiguous politic between humanitarian and militarization, securitization of the territories is one of our points...our idea that we want to speak to make change.[107]

Therefore, no matter if the objects are left anonymous and uncatalogued, the poignant denunciation of the interests and controversies underpinning the EU's border regime ends up inserting them, perhaps in a subtler way, into a 'master narrative'.[108]

Furthermore, it is significant to note that the questions posed by *Askavusa's* reflection on the issues of representation, interpretation, selectivity, and agency mirror the challenges faced by the AMM discussed in chapter three. *Askavusa's* decision to avoid these difficulties by attempting to renounce representation and, more importantly, by doing it alone (therefore breaking up the collaboration with the *Archivio*) have attracted the criticism of some of the AMM's members.

In the words of member Gianluca Gatta, the contradiction of promoting a project on migrant memory on Lampedusa, without the involvement of fundamental stakeholders like the people that have entered Europe through the island, is exemplified by the absence and/or unintended removal of Dagmawi Yimer in the later re-telling of *Askavusa's* relationship with the objects.

Nella narrazione della ricostruzione del museo, anche molto bella, fatta da Giacomo [Sferlazzo] in cui si costruiscono tutte le tappe, cita me, cita Sandro [Triulzi], cita il professor Basile ecc. Dimenticando, ma non solo in questo, ma anche sui siti...C'è un lapsus, una rimozione, la figura di Dag. Dag non è citato e mi ricordo che Dag, che venne a Roma all'assemblea di AMM nel 2011, non mi ricordo, dopo aver girato Soltanto il mare. Lì, Giacomo stava provando a fare, insieme ad altre persone, un museo diamogli una mano, proviamo a...e c'è un piccolo video di Giacomo che dona a Dag una sua opera […] Allora perché questa rimozione? Per me, è molto sintomatica questa rimozione. Perché è un contenuto con cui Giacomo, in particolare, ha difficoltà a

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[107] Collettivo Askavusa.
[108] Remarkably, the full text of *Askavusa*'s view on the value and use of the objects is reported on a sign placed at the entrance of *Porto M* (the text is also translated in English).

rapportarsi. Perché lui condivideva l'idea di AMM di un coinvolgimento delle persone direttamente interessate a quella vicenda, a quel viaggio, nel processo fra virgolette di musealizzazione. Insieme avevamo sollevato la questione del museo e dell'archivio come strutture critiche [...] La rimozione di Dag, era incongruente. Era impossibile mettere quel contenuto e dire noi adesso lottiamo contro la militarizzazione. Il coinvolgimento stesso di AMM è venuto non perché io avevo lavorato a Lampedusa, è venuto perché Dag di fronte a questo incontro con Giacomo, ha detto: tu conosci Giacomo da anni, perché non facciamo qualcosa? E a noi è sembrato interessante perché veniva da un'istanza di chi voleva rimettere mano su quella vicenda [...].[109]

Following the AMM's decision to independently promote an event focused on the curatorship of the objects restored during the brief partnership with *Askavusa*,[110] the controversy between the two associations was escalated, once more, by the harsh words of Sferlazzo:

Gli oggetti che sarà possibile visionare nei prossimi giorni vennero quindi temporaneamente consegnati al Comune di Lampedusa e Linosa perché la biblioteca Regionale Siciliana, dopo averli restaurati grazie all'intervento di Pippo Basile, necessitava di un referente istituzionale a cui consegnarli. Ma quegli oggetti attualmente di chi sono? Chi deve gestirli? Chi deve conservarli? E come mai non siamo stati interpellati quando si è deciso di usarli? Si omette ad esempio, che a Lampedusa esiste un luogo in cui molti oggetti sono *già* visionabili [...] dove si produce cultura, controinformazione, opposizione alla militarizzazione e alla distruzione dei territori. Tale luogo si chiama Porto M. Non ci stupisce che non se ne parli. Siamo autorganizzati e autofinanziati e il mainstream non ama certe iniziative. Né si è avuta prova in occasione dell'operazione mediatica di colonizzazione culturale che si è realizzata con il Museo della fiducia e del dialogo [emphasis in original].[111]

The words characterising *Askavusa's* sharp response to the AMM's initiative summarise the unsolved questions raised by these objects. Given the progressive

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[109] Gianluca Gatta.

[110] 'OGGETTI MIGRANTI. Dalla Traccia Alla Voce | Polo Museale - Sapienza' <https://web.uniroma1.it/polomuseale/archivionotizie/oggetti-migranti-dalla-traccia-alla-voce> [accessed 18 November 2017].

[111] Askavusa, 'Oggetti Migranti. Da Quale Traccia a Quale Voce?', *Askavusa*, 2017 <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2017/03/18/oggetti-migranti-da-quale-traccia-a-quale-voce/> [accessed 18 November 2017].

closure of the group, asking to whom these objects belong appears to be more of a rhetorical exercise. The practices that have brought to the creation of *Porto M* are symptomatic of the fact that *Askavusa* has developed a sense of ownership over these objects which contrasts with their stated ambitions.

Indeed, while they affirm that the interpretation and use of these objects should be open to new connotations, in practice their unilateral approach hinders new meaningful collaborations, in particular those of the migrant protagonists.[112] On this topic, it is important to note that some of the members have started to show some doubts:

> Although the point of creating this exhibition was to present and preserve the heritage of Lampedusa and the remains of the passage of the migrant, PortoM is a place between an art collection and a memorial, where objects are placed in the space in a similar way to how they are displayed at Auschwitz. […] The lack of a clear process has cost the group the relationship and collaboration with similar groups working and lobbying for migrants' rights due to their funders; for example the AMM. This attitude has raised a number of criticisms, which at times have made Askavusa's members act more as censors than as acute criticizers of the dangerous policies of the Italian Government or of the EU regarding asylum seekers and detention.[113]

These words from Vecchi bring back the question of whether Lampedusa can be considered as a dark tourism destination. Significantly, the new location of *Porto M* appears to address some of the tourism-oriented goals of the original *Arci Askavusa.* Therefore, it is not surprising to find *Porto M* among the destinations in 'ethical tourism' packages ('turismo solidale') for people that want to visit the island 'responsibly'.[114] While it can be argued that the desire of visiting *Porto M* is not necessarily driven by the 'allure' of the death and tragedy underpinning practices of dark tourism, Vecchi's reference to Auschwitz and the memorial aura of the site hint to more complex circumstances.

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[112] It is important to note that the use and display of the objects in *Porto M* has not significantly changed since 2014.

[113] Vecchi, p. 177.

[114] Viaggisolidali.it, 'Lampedusa- Il Turismo Responsabile', *Www.Viaggisolidali.It* <http://www.viaggisolidali.it/packages/lampedusa/> [accessed 18 November 2017].

The stress on the self-speaking evocative power of the objects, and the way in which they are displayed, recalls the 'confrontation with death' suggested by a dark tourism destination. The case of the *Museo della fiducia* will further support this hypothesis.

The set-up of the museum's temporary exhibition is an odd patchwork of objects, artworks, and audio-visual materials that exhibit many of the features that, according to Walter, characterise a dark tourist site: information, education, entertainment, *memento mori,* remembrance, and so on.[115] The displayed objects, moreover, range from archaeological artefacts, religious books and relics, to atlases and various famous paintings by different celebrated artists. The collection is then completed by a series of private objects belonging to the 'broken lives' known to the Italian public (e.g. Giovanni Falcone and Giulio Regeni), and to the migrants who met their end in the sea surrounding Lampedusa.[116]

Figure 28 Museo della Fiducia e del Dialogo per il Mediterraneo (30 September 2016)

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[115] Tony Walter, 'Dark Tourism: Mediating Between the Dead and the Living', in *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Bristol (UK); Buffalo (NY); Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2009), pp. 39–55.

[116] 'Lampedusa. Verso Il Museo Della Fiducia e Del Dialogo per Il Mediterraneo', *Direzione Generale Musei* <http://musei.beniculturali.it/progetti/lampedusa-verso-il-museo-della-fiducia-e-del-dialogo-per-il-mediterraneo> [accessed 17 November 2017].

The heterogenous assortment of artefacts in the museum is held together by various themes ('memory', 'crossings', 'the elsewhere', 'the horizon', 'responsibility') and supported by an official framework summarised in the information board welcoming visitors at the entrance of the exhibition. The text appears as a peculiar, but essential, document of the official narrative underpinning the project.

The board reminds the visitors of the symbolic role played by the 'welcoming Lampedusa' in supporting the trust and dialogue necessary to promote peace and social responsibility in this particular historical period. The curators see the concept of 'glory' and 'border' as the two 'cultural premises' holding together the 'scientific theme' of the project. The references to the 'proper maintenance of national and international economic and social system' and to 'war and terrorism', become a clear testimony of the hegemonic framing of Lampedusa. The humanitarian aspect of dialogue and peace is connected to the security necessities of defending the national and international economic system.[117]

While the processes of othering and national identity-building entailed by the exhibition will be discussed in the final part of this section, here it is important to highlight that the theme of migration and mobility appears only as a secondary aspect of this description. Nevertheless, the focus on migrants and migration becomes more evident in the actual set-up of the artefacts. It is in this context that the *Museo*'s undertones of dark tourism emerge.

An entire section is dedicated to the drawings of 'Adal', describing in detail the violence of the Eritrean regime. Two further showcases are dedicated to the objects left behind by the migrants that perished during the crossing.[118] These objects, mostly documents and pictures belonging to the victims of the 3rd of October 2013 and of the incident filmed in Rosi's *Fuocoammare*, are matched with the objects and photos of other notable Italian 'broken lives'. Caravaggio's 'Amorino dormiente', the most famous

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[117] The text of the information board has been transcribed and translated by the author.
[118] 'Disegni Di Torture per Raccontare l'Eritrea Di Cui Nessuno Parla - Rai News' <http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/Disegni-di-torture-per-raccontare-lEritrea-di-cui-nessuno-parla-4c6b6477-0329-4505-9569-d9af26bf14f4.html> [accessed 18 November 2017].

artwork included in the exhibition, is also used to draw a parallel with the infamous picture of Aylan Kurdi, the boy found dead on a Turkish shore which became for a short time the symbol of the 'European refugee crisis'.[119] Thus, attention to migrant death and suffering appears to subsume the themes outlined in the introduction, becoming also the principal tool of promotion and the focus of the media coverage of the project.

Despite the different theoretical premises and aims of the two experiences, it is clear that *Askavusa's* attention to the recovery and preservation of migrant objects had an influence in the final set-up of the exhibition of the *Museo della Fiducia.* Nevertheless, the ways in which these two projects have made use of the objects is symptomatic of a theoretical and, arguably, moral divide between the initiatives.

Askavusa, by refusing to display any of the pictures recovered in the boat cemetery, has shown a certain awareness of issues of appropriation and consent in such practices. Furthermore, conversely to the objects exposed in the *Museo della Fiducia*, the objects of *Porto M* are not directly associated with a specfic deadly shipwreck or incident. *Askavusa's* artefacts are not necessarily burdened by the theme of death, and could theoretically still be reclaimed by their previous owners.

Remembrance, othering and national identity

The literature highlights a series of interpretative issues posed by dark tourism sites and attractions. Great attention, for instance, has been paid to the role played by the recent flourishing of Holocaust memorials in the construction of the national identity of various countries.[120] In particular, how 'dark tourism sites offer the opportunity to write or rewrite the history of people's lives and deaths, or to provide particular (political) interpretations of past events'.[121]

In the case of Lampedusa, as stated in various sections of this work, it is evident that a hegemonic representation or interpretation of events has been supported and

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[119] Anna Spena, 'L'Amorino Dormiente a Lampedusa per Non Dimenticare Aylan', *Vita*, 2016 <http://www.vita.it/it/article/2016/05/30/lamorino-dormiente-a-lampedusa-per-non-dimenticare-aylan/139599/> [accessed 18 November 2017].

[120] Ashworth and Hartmann.

[121] Richard Sharpley, 'Shedding Light on Dark Tourism: An Introduction', in *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, ed. by Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone (Bristol (UK); Buffalo (NY); Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2009), pp. 3–22 (p. 8).

reproduced, through the years, by various actors. The construction of visitor experiences and attractions on the topic of migration brings this hegemonic reading to a new level, testifying to institutional awareness that cultural representations of the island should not be undermined or left to independent bodies like *Askavusa*. With the construction of the *Museo della Fiducia e del Dialogo*, the Italian government has assumed the role of 'marketer of cultural meanings', using tourism to encourage a certain cultural and political agenda, enhancing group or national identity.[122]

Thus, the marketing and promotion of the museum turns into a new opportunity to reaffirm the legitimacy of the humanitarian and securitarian approach to migration management. Significantly, the visual representation of the exhibition ends up reproducing the hegemonic tropes already highlighted in *Fuocoammare* or in *La scelta di Catia*. The images of Lampedusa's natural beauties, 'welcoming locals', and migrants are always accompanied by those of the armed forces. Whether rescuing migrants, protecting the citizens, or taking care of the artworks included in the exhibition, these actors testify to the reassuring presence of the state, and the entanglement between humanitarian and securitarian discourse.

Figure 29 Stills from a promo video for the Museo della Fiducia e Dialogo

This 'master narrative' is not only implemented through the creation of a museum, but is also accompanied by various side initiatives that reflect many of the characteristics

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of a dark tourism destination. Alongside the 'entertainment' side of the project (the visitors can enjoy a series of migration-themed plays, concerts, and public screenings) education becomes a fundamental part of this institution-driven project.

Thus, it is not a coincidence that, since 2016, schools from Italy and other European countries are invited to the island to meet the locals and the 3rd of October survivors to build a 'new Europe'. Under the patronage of the Italian Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR), in the 'L'Europa comincia a Lampedusa' programme the students are invited to attend workshops and to produce short audio-visual materials on the subjects of migration, human rights, and hospitality.[123] The yearly student visits to the island are thus used to reassert the humanitarian connotation of a hypothetical European collective identity.

Finally, their meeting with the survivors, and their participation in the various commemorations taking place around the 3rd of October, underlines the fundamental role played by the issue of 'remembrance' in the consolidation of the hegemony of the institutional interpretation of the processes taking place on the island.

Figure 30 Commemoration at the Porta d'Europa (Lampedusa, 3/10/2016)

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[123] 'L'Europa Inizia a Lampedusa', *Comitato 3 Ottobre* <http://www.comitatotreottobre.it/progetti/progetto-europa-lampedusa/> [accessed 6 October 2016].

While the museums and the events run by the *Comitato 3 ottobre* et al. are the places where the 'edutainment' takes place, the annual march and commemorations at the *Porta d'Europa* are the symbol of the functional role played by remembrance practices in the consolidation of the symbolic value of Lampedusa. These commemorations offer a chance to exorcise the haunting provoked by the deadly shipwreck, and sites like the *Porta d'Europa* become a tool for mediating death.

Through a process that could be defined as the 'theodicy' of the 3rd of October, all the actors populating the 'border Lampedusa' (politicians, religious authorities, armed forced, NGOs, and the locals) create a space where the unjustifiable death of three hundred and sixty-eight people can become somehow comprehensible. People have not died in vain if this episode can promote a renewed welcoming (open to 'dialogue' and 'trust') narrative of the nation. It is clear that the self-absolutory power entailed by these practices presents various problems.

On the one hand, it is not guaranteed that the potential tourist will visit these sites according to the narrative imposed by the curators: like any other heritage site the *Porta d'Europa* or the *Museo della Fiducia* may be just one of many things to be ticked off the list (the 'authentic' Lampedusa is not found any more only in its beaches and sea, but also in a visit to the boat cemetery or Mimmo Paladino's monument). On the other hand, visits to such places can be driven by various factors, and can also become a way to overcome the potential guilt in enjoying the island's amenities.

The problematic consequences of the insertion of such sites into a pre-established and state-driven narrative is the potential normalisation of the heterotopic character of Lampedusa described by Joseph Pugliese.[124] In Lampedusa, tourism can and must coexist with the deadly consequences of border control. Through such ceremonies in which the survivors and, more in general, the migrant experiences are marginalised or silenced, the island undergoes a process of 'absolution'. The material and political responsibilities are subsumed and sanitised into wider references to hospitality, human rights, Mediterranean identity, and 'trust and dialogue'.

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[124] Pugliese, p. 672.

The 'selective amnesia' already characterising instances of intolerance and xenophobia coming from the local population is projected at a national and international level in orer to hinder any notion of institutional accountability. As in the example of the city of Otranto's relationship with the memory of the 'Katër I Radës' shipwreck described by Salerno, the political responsibilities of the 3rd of October 2013, but also of many other incidents, are slowly erased and forgotten. Thus, the *borderphobia* characterising the local attitudes towards the presence of the migration apparatus for years, has turned into forms of *borderphilia*.[125] The attractions and rituals of the Lampedusa border have finally become a source of new possibilities and income.

5.3.2 'Quale Lampedusa?' The limits of the 'welcoming Lampedusa' trope

Given the record numbers of tourists visiting the island during recent summers, and the concurrent and enduring presence of deadly incidents in the water surrounding the island, the moral and ethical questions posed by the touristic opportunities created around the representations of Lampedusa's relationship with migration should not be ignored.[126]

Are there any ethical and moral premises in promoting migration-themed tourism to Lampedusa through narratives of welcoming and tolerance while people are still dying in attempting to reach Europe by boat? Are there 'responsible' ways to invite students from across Europe to mourn the victims and meet the survivors of the 3rd of October 2013 in compliance with the moral codes of the relatives and friends of the victims? Typical of many dark tourism sites, these questions all seem to arise from the challenges posed by the ongoing struggle for the cultural representation of the island.

While the commercialisation of the complex relationship between the island and the migrant presence (and its potential trivialisation and commodification) appears to be in

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[125] See Daniele Salerno and Lynda Mannik, 'Memorializing Boat Tragedies in the Mediterranean. The Case of the Katër i Radës', in *Discourses of Trauma, Exclusion, and Survival* (Berghahn Books, 2016), pp. 135–53.

[126] 'Record Di Passeggeri Nell'aeroporto Di Lampedusa: +40% in Tre Anni', *Giornale Di Sicilia* <http://agrigento.gds.it/2017/09/03/record-di-passeggeri-nellaeroporto-di-lampedusa-40-in-tre-anni_719711/> [accessed 18 November 2017].

its preliminary stages, the main question still lies in the affirmation of a representation of Lampedusa capable of showing all the contradiction taking place on the island.[127]

As in the case of 'thanatourism', migration-themed tourism on Lampedusa is a form of tourism that wishes to represent the perspective of various actors. The stakeholders are several: the locals, NGOs practitioners, institutional actors, and, above all, the migrants themselves. The construction of a narrative capable of including all the stakeholders' often overlapping and intertwined interests and sensitivities is a very difficult, if not an impossible, process. It is evident that attitudes towards migration of a local fisherman, hotel manager, tourist promoter, or of a local working in the reception/detention centre are very different. The construction of a master narrative entails the choice of potential heroes and villains, and the prioritisation of certain perspectives over others.

The examples of *Porto M* and the *Museo della Fiducia e del Dialogo* have shown an almost total absence of the migrant point of view. Both in curatorial terms (i.e. deciding how the objects, images or oral testimonies are used), and in terms of available space to actively reverse the in-group's perspective (e.g. how the migrants see Lampedusa and the Lampedusans, or Italy more generally). The figure of the migrant is physically and narratively ubiquitous, but is always framed in a context defined by someone else. The camera's gaze it is always pointed at them, and when a microphone is given, translation becomes a tool of control.

A significant example of these dynamics is given by the role assigned to the survivors in the annual commemorations of the 3rd of October. As the following photo illustrates, the survivors found themselves in an uneven setting that exposed them to curious and unfiltered questions of teenagers from all around Europe.

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[127] The first migration themed souvenirs have appeared around the work of the Cross of Lampedusa's author Francesco Tuccio: 'Con un piccolo contributo, quindi, si potrà ricevere direttamente a casa un oggetto da portare come segno della risurrezione che nasce dal dolore e aiutare coloro che approdano sulle nostre coste in cerca di una vita migliore.' 'Vuoi Una Croce Dal Cimitero Delle Barche Di Lampedusa?', *Ai.Bi. Amici Dei Bambini*, 2014 <https://www.aibi.it/ita/vuoi-una-croce-dal-cimitero-delle-barche-di-lampedusa/> [accessed 18 November 2017]; 'Dettagli' <http://www.alberofelice.it/index_file/Page4423.htm> [accessed 18 November 2017].

Figure 31 The survivors answer the students' questions (Lampedusa, 1 October 2016)

The inappropriateness of this one-way exchange, in which the students ask personal questions on the forms of violence endured by the survivors during their journey, is very significant in exemplifying the power dynamics and minimum space given to migrant actors within the hegemonic representation of Lampedusa. When the survivors turn around the uneven structure of the encounter by refusing to answer to such questions – asking those present why the Italian government, after three years, has not yet proceeded in the recognition and return of the victims' remains to their family – the translation from English to Italian is used by the organisers to silence the potentially disruptive power of this act. Thus, the survivors are turned into silent witnesses: as with the objects exhibited in the museums, their presence speaks for itself. They become a mere tool for creating the authenticity of Lampedusa.

Therefore, the main question is whether it is possible to adopt an approach capable of 'managing' or interpreting Lampedusa as a migration-themed tourist site, which takes the migrant perspective into account without creating forms of dissonance. Creating a 'universal heritage' with which all the actors active on the island may identify is an almost impossible task. A site such as Lampedusa is always open to multiple 'truths' and interpretations. Even deciding on which of the actors involved has the clearest claim to

'own' the memory and interpretation of the 3rd of October 2013 is not a straightforward task.

However, this does not mean that the island should not deal with the historical relevance of these events and their memorialisation. Forms of negotiated writing or re-writing of the relationship between the island and the migratory phenomenon should undoubtedly create more spaces in which migrant subjectivity can be affirmed and heard. The writing should not be seen as a definitive interpretation of the Lampedusa's symbolism in discussing migration, but it should be seen as an ongoing dialogue in which new elements and readings can emerge according to the political context.

Following Landsberg, mass-mediated memories should not be 'premised on any claim of authenticity or "natural" ownership', but:

> One's engagement with them begins from a position of difference, with the recognition that these images and narratives concerning the past are not one's "heritage" in any simple sense.[128]

The objects, testimonies, and other mediums present in these exhibitions do not only belong to one group (migrants, 'Lampedusani', or Italians in general), as the means of prosthetic memory create 'the conditions for ethical thinking precisely by encouraging people to feel connected to, while recognizing the alterity of, the "other"'.[129] This inclusive approach, totally lacking in the *Museo della Fiducia* and in other institutional practices, has also progressively lost relevance in *Askavusa's* work.

Conclusion

In the long term, *Askavusa's* decision to abandon any explicit interpretative take on the objects gathered in *Porto M*, and their reluctance to establish new collaborations, has led to a loss of significance of these objects. The spaces of 'visibility' provided by

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[128] Landsberg, p. 9.
[129] Ibid.

Askavusa to the migrants during their passage on the island, in which, according to Mazzara, the 'aesthetic of subversion' could take place, have been progressively lost.

In contrast to the institutional promotion of the image of Lampedusa as an island of migration, *Askavusa* has shifted towards a nostalgic narrative of a pre-border and, more accurately, a pre-tourist Lampedusa. Alongside other local actors such as the *Archivio Storico Lampedusa*, the group has shifted the focus towards the recovery and preservation of local historical sites and oral traditions.[130]

Is this attention to a more sustainable, ecologic and historically-informed tourism compatible with the involvement of a migrant perspective in their work? Are the preservation and exhibition of the migrant objects within *Porto M* compatible with this localist turn? It is in the oscillation between these two aspects, and in the ability to find a synthesis between them, that the future of *Askavusa's* relevance in the critique of hegemonic representations of the island stands.

In conclusion, Lampedusa is not a straightforward dark tourism destination. Despite comprising many of the aspects, processes, and practices characterising dark tourism, the island was a touristic site even before the shipwreck of the 3rd of October. More than promoting or attracting tourist curiosity towards the theme of migrant death, these processes appear driven by a necessity to encourage an image of the island which is still desirable to tourists attracted by its natural beauties and amenities. Migration-themed attractions are still mostly seen as a plus; a chance to top up the revenues of the commercial tourism season. Furthermore, the museums and commemorations are seen as a tool to mitigate the dark images of death and suffering often attached to the island in mainstream media.

On the one hand, this formula appears to have worked both for the local institutions and tourist promoters. It might be argued that the theme of migration has become a vital aspect of the 'authenticity' of Lampedusa's experience. The 'authenticity' craved by the emergence in Lampedusa of forms of 'alternative tourism' ('turismo solidale'), can be easily delivered through the exhibition of migrant objects, images, and

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[130] See for instance the promotion of the 'opera dei pupi'. Askavusa, 'Opera Dei Pupi e "Cuntu" a Lampedusa.', *Askavusa*, 2017 <https://askavusa.wordpress.com/2017/09/15/opera-dei-pupi-e-cuntu-a-lampedusa/> [accessed 18 November 2017].

commemorations. Nevertheless, doubts persist surrounding the lack of the migrants' active involvement in these practices, and around the possibility for visitors to gain a genuine appreciation or understanding of the complex processes taking place on the island. On the other hand, the process of memorialisation taking place on the island has played and is still playing an essential role in the narrative of the nation in justifying militarised border control.

While having played a fundamental role in uncovering and criticising these processes, *Askavusa* is still caught between two conflicting instances: the possibility of seizing the opportunities offered by the 'borderisation' of Lampedusa, promoting forms of 'alternative tourism' and capitalising on the visibility that international attention towards the island gave to the members' initiatives, and the desire (still shared by many of their fellow 'Lampedusani') of deconstructing the nexus between the island's name and migration.

After the long and, sometimes controversial, self-reflection that has led to the constitution of the *Collettivo Askavusa*, the members face the challenge of restoring that openness to dialogue which initially made the collective's fortune. Opening towards new partnerships involving the people that are still passing through Lampedusa, for instance, could prompt new, unexplored ways to use the migrant objects and, perhaps, to overcome the issue of property and appropriation raised by group's actual stance. Such a step would restore the 'prosthetic' potential of the memories promoted by *Askavusa*, re-opening the possibility of these testimonies to produce 'empathy and social responsibility as well as political alliances that transcend race, class, and gender'.[131]

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[131] Landsberg, p. 21.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the 'transnationalization' of the Lampedusa symbol. In doing so, it has sought to make a number of contributions. Not only has it presented novel empirical data on the cases of the *Archivio delle Memorie Migranti*, the self-organised refugee group *Lampedusa in Hamburg* and the *Collettivo Askavusa* – including a series of oral testimonies on the histories of these initiatives – but it has also made a number of theoretical and methodological contributions to the field of Italian cultural studies. In particular, I have outlined an approach to the study of Lampedusa that is capable of combining the 'postcolonial' and 'transnational' trends currently characterising the field, without conflating them.

The thesis started from two fundamental premises: first, the idea that the relevance of the Lampedusa symbol can and needs to be understood outside the limits of the Italian 'national' paradigm. Importantly, each chapter has used the transnational significance of Lampedusa as a starting point to address key theoretical issues within the field. Second, the understanding that analyses of the role of culture in affecting hegemonic representations of migration should pay attention to the 'moment of production', rather than examining only the final outputs of cultural actors focusing on Lampedusa. Here, direct engagement with those cultural actors was key: the forms of participant observation and the conversations recorded during my multi-sited ethnographic work allowed me to highlight difficult questions of race, identity, and positionality embedded in the cultural practices carried out by the initiatives investigated in this thesis.

In this conclusion, I will review the research questions guiding this project, summarise the main findings and arguments in relation to the individual cases, and offer some final, general remarks.

The 'Lampedusa transnational constellation'

Chapters one and two highlighted the nuances offered by considering the name Lampedusa as a floating signifier on a transnational level. The discussion of the

discursive formations composing the hegemonic symbol introduced a series of empirical examples that have contributed to what I defined, drawing on Benjamin, as the 'Lampedusa transnational constellation'. Following Hall, the adoption of a contextualist and anti-reductionist approach has allowed for paying particular attention to the historical conjuncture in which certain representations were produced, circulated, and received.

In addition, the chapters reaffirmed the importance of cultural practices as sites of social change. Considering representation as a site of struggle, I highlighted the role of specific actors (such as mainstream media and politicians) in setting the dominant connotative codes to discuss migration, whilst other subjects, in particular migrant protagonists, face difficulties in producing representations of the island that go beyond the limits of this hegemonic paradigm. Using Hall's concept of 'articulation', I further complicated the relationship between subjectivity and structural constraints, arguing that all actors affected by the Lampedusa symbol retain some form of agency (however limited) in influencing how the symbol has developed over the years.

Lastly, I proposed an analysis of the flexibility of the Lampedusa symbol in adapting to and absorbing potentially challenging discursive formations, and the progressive institutionalisation of cultural representations of the island, as starting points to address the role played by the three initiatives at the heart of this research.

Challenging the *Archivio*'s aspirations

In Chapter three, I discussed some of the limits, as well as the important contributions to the public debate on migration in Italy, of the *Archivio Memorie Migranti,* in direct conversation with its members. The first part of the chapter focused on issues of accessibility, participation and representation faced by *Archivio* members in co-producing and collecting 'migrant memories', connecting the initiative to a general discussion on the role of archives and museums in a globalised context. The last part examined the role of the AMM's production in the Lampedusa constellation.

The critical analysis of the audio-visual materials on Mahamed Aman, Zakaria Mohamed Ali, and Dagmawi Yimer's 'return to Lampedusa' not only recognises their capability to offer a more complex representation of the island's relationship with

migrant presence, but also accounts for the risks of placing the 'burden' to speak for the diverse migrant communities present in Italy on a few individual artists and/or witnesses. Having offered a number of critical perspectives of Lampedusa and, at the same time, having contributed to the discursive formations constituting the hegemonic symbolism, the *Archivio* now faces the challenge of moving beyond the limits of this emblematic place.

Five years 'in the wake of Lampedusa'

Perhaps the most challenging case examined in this thesis, chapter four offered a complex but practical example of the transnational significance of Lampedusa. First of all, studying the five-year history of *Lampedusa in Hamburg* and of related initiatives such as *FC Lampedusa* has meant 'entering the field' in the first person. The construction of a series of personal relationships with LiH members, and the forms of 'circumstantial activism' carried out while being in Hamburg, were fundamental in grasping the reality of living 'in the wake of Lampedusa'.

The stories and activities of LiH members can be considered as a 'polyphonic' alternative to the 'individualised' stories shared by the AMM, asserting the centrality of a migrant and refugee subjectivity that attempts to go beyond the 'colonial calcifications' rooted in the national and cultural paradigms carried by these men's passports. For LiH members, the name Lampedusa symbolises not only political resistance, but also a diasporic identity that may transcend the limits of the racialised roles imposed by society. Although *Lampedusa in Hamburg*'s struggle is still ongoing, the visibility, recognition, and widespread support gained by the group can be considered as an essential example of the fruitfulness and necessity of establishing and supporting spaces for migrant self-organisation and the construction of new transversal solidarities.

An island caught between memory and amnesia

Finally, underlining the almost circular relationship between the 'transnational', the 'national', and the 'local' reflected by the three case studies, chapter five scrutinised the

relationship between the 'Lampedusani' and the symbolic value of their island. Building on the theoretical work of Arjun Appadurai, the activities of the *Collettivo Askavusa* were first used to address the ways in which the locals negotiate their subjectivity and 'sense of locality' within the globalised limits of the Lampedusa symbol. Moreover, the cultural initiatives of Giacomo Sferlazzo and the other *Askavusa* members were seen as tools for questioning the trope of the 'welcoming Lampedusa'.

The Lampedusans are a collectivity that has reacted to the presence of the migration apparatus in diverse, often ambiguous ways. Indeed, many locals appear still caught between the wish to come to terms with the migratory phenomenon (and its economic advantages) and the re-emerging, sometimes violent ambition to cut the ties between migration and the island.

Furthermore, through the concept of 'dark tourism', the discussion of the exhibitions offered by *Askavusa's Porto M* and the institutionally-driven *Museo della Fiducia e del Dialogo per il Mediterraneo* have offered a critique of the 'prosthetic' memorial role played by the objects recovered on the island's 'boat cemetery'. Beyond the issues of ownership and representation connected to these objects, in particular the *Collettivo Askavusa's* (hopefully temporary) closure towards any new re-signification of these materials, the progressive 'institutional take-over' of cultural initiatives on the island is symptomatic of a controversial process of memorialisation-historicisation of events such as the 3rd of October 2013. Importantly, I have argued that, despite the humanitarian and multicultural undertones of the various initiatives and commemorations of migrant deaths taking place on Lampedusa, these practices can be seen as promoting forms of 'selective amnesia' that closely resemble a conscious political act of erasure of Italian and European responsibilities for the death of thousands of people attempting the crossing to Lampedusa.

Final Remarks

Having secured the support of the Italian Department of the University of St Andrews, and of the TML project, I began the co-production of a 'memorial-touristic map' charting the main locations and events of the five-year history of *Lampedusa in Hamburg*, together with the group in May 2018. When embarking on this project, I did not expect

to soon face a series of difficult decisions and compromises. Perhaps naively, I thought that the close relationships and friendships with many LiH members and activists collaborating with them, and the experiences of co-production I had learned about from the *Archivio's* members, would 'shelter' me from eventual criticism. Experiencing the many compromises required by the process of memorialising the heterogenous subjectivities and episodes constituting the history of the group in person, gave me further motivation to highlight the importance of the cultural and political work of the AMM, LiH and *Askavusa*.

Instead of enquiring what sort of image of migration the name Lampedusa *should* convey, this thesis has examined the transnational and almost twenty-years long history of this symbol. The connection between this name and a constellation of 'negative' or 'positive' representations or interpretations of the impact of a continued migrant presence in Europe cannot be undone, and should be recognised. The real challenge is to continue considering the name 'Lampedusa' as a floating signifier, persisting in its re-signification according to new contexts, places, and political necessities.

The fact that the cultural activities of the three case studies have actually created the premise for recent institutional attention to cultural representations of migration, shows that 'culture and popular beliefs' are a fundamental arena of struggle.[1] It can be argued that 'dominant actors' reacted to initiatives that could undermine the 'official' representation of the 'Lampedusa issue', i.e. a representation that underlines 'our' humanitarian stance and 'innocence' in the continuous deaths in the Mediterranean Sea.

This thesis recognises that the general marginalisation of migrant and refugee voices in the public debate on migration is also partially reflected in the cultural projects that attempt to restore the agency of these individuals. The production and collections of new films, exhibitions, memories focusing on migrant deaths, passage and presence on Lampedusa and beyond, from the perspective of migrants themselves, are therefore a necessary starting point, but not a straightforward solution. The lack of human capital and financial support faced by all the three initiatives discussed in this thesis are not the

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[1] Hall, 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity', p. 21.

only factors hindering the development of new initiatives, but they are symptomatic of the challenges of producing culture at this historical conjuncture.

Although facing the difficulties of producing the 'Lampedusa in Hamburg map' and facing the 'afterlife' of my own 'archive' of memories collected in four years of research, I want to conclude on a more hopeful note. Following Stuart Hall's re-elaboration of Gramsci, I want to reiterate the importance of culture in engaging in social struggles such as anti-colonial and anti-racist movements.[2] Despite the capability of hegemonic discourses and actors to adapt and sometimes to appropriate the symbol of these struggles, the (partial) success stories of the AMM, *Lampedusa in Hamburg* and the *Colletivo Askavusa* call for renewed alliances and continued efforts in counter-representations. And despite all difficulties, I am confident that the members of the AMM, *Lampedusa in Hamburg* and the *Collettivo Askavusa* will keep experimenting, acknowledging the different needs and ideologic premises underpinning their initiatives, recognising issues of proximity and positionality, but avoiding the trap of 'ethnic insiderism', to find new forms of working in diversity but in solidarity.

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[2] Ibid.

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