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SETTING THE STAGE:
RESIDENT EXPERIENCES WITH ENFORCEMENT
RESCUE AND SPECTACLE IN LAMPEDUSA

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Patricia Ehrkamp, Professor of Geography

Lexington, Kentucky

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

SETTING THE STAGE: RESIDENT EXPERIENCES WITH ENFORCEMENT RESCUE AND SPECTACLE IN LAMPEDUSA

Located 127 miles from the shores of Sicily and only 70 from Tunisia, the island of Lampedusa is home to a population of 6000. Residents are largely reliant on a centuries-old fishing economy, a booming tourism industry and, most recently, the sustainment of a complex apparatus of border enforcement. Since the early 2000s, with the hardening of the southern border of Italy and the European Union, a multitude of actors have converged to Lampedusa: from migrants, to agents of enforcement, to NGO personnel, along with journalists, researchers and tourists. In this thesis, I center the experiences of island residents to analyze the daily, lived dimensions of Lampedusa becoming a key site for the externalization of enforcement and the production of a border spectacle depicting “migration crisis.” Employing ethnographic methods and drawing from literature in feminist geopolitics, critical border studies and spatial theory, this approach looks beyond the nation state to discuss the everyday construction of borders and geopolitics. In doing so, I focus on the contested and relational nature of bordering on the island, highlighting some of the contradictions and inconsistencies of discourses and policies rooted in the premise of sudden emergency in the Mediterranean.

Keywords: Mediterranean Migration, Italy, Bordering, Externalization, Islands

Elisa Sperandio
30 April 2019

SETTING THE STAGE:
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Chapter I: Introduction

"An island is for all seasons and for all tastes.

An island can be both paradise and prison, both heaven and hell.

An island is a contradiction between openness and closure,
between roots and routes, which islanders must continually negotiate"

(Baldacchino, 2007)

With its 7.8 square miles in total surface and a population of just over 6000, the island of Lampedusa is hardly imposing in size, and yet it has grown in symbolic magnitude over the years. The southernmost point in Italy and entry point into the European Union (EU), Lampedusa is located on the 35th parallel, approximately 127 miles off the southern shores of Sicily and only 70 miles from the north African nation of Tunisia [See Figure 1]. Lampedusa is the largest island in the Pelagie archipelago, which also includes Linosa and uninhabited Lampione. Over the past two decades, the island has been a recurring feature in media coverage, political speeches and public debates, a site that evokes a complex set of seemingly incompatible imaginaries; Lampedusa is at once a marine paradise nestled in the Mediterranean and a highly militarized setting that serves as a key asset in the regime of EU and Italian border enforcement. It is an island that has made headlines as a border deathscape, while also becoming commonly associated with solidarity and humanitarianism. As Italian legal scholar Paolo Cuttitta writes, starting in the early 2000s Lampedusa entered the collective imaginary as “quintessential embodiment of the Euro-African migration and border regime” (2014:199).

Until the 1980s, fishing was the island’s main source of revenue. Since then, marine diversity and natural beauty projected Lampedusa to the status of renowned destination of

mass tourism from all over Italy (Taranto 2017, Lampedusa Pelagie 2019). Lampedusa's Isle of Rabbits beach was even selected as the most beautiful in Europe in 2013 (Corrao, 2014), and in Italy in 2019 (Redazione Ansa, 2019). Between the 1990s and early 2000s, with the establishment of the European Community and the harmonization of laws regulating mobility and border enforcement among member-states, Lampedusa became a pivotal point of access into Fortress Europe and a strategic node for the monitoring of irregular migration through the EU's southern frontier.

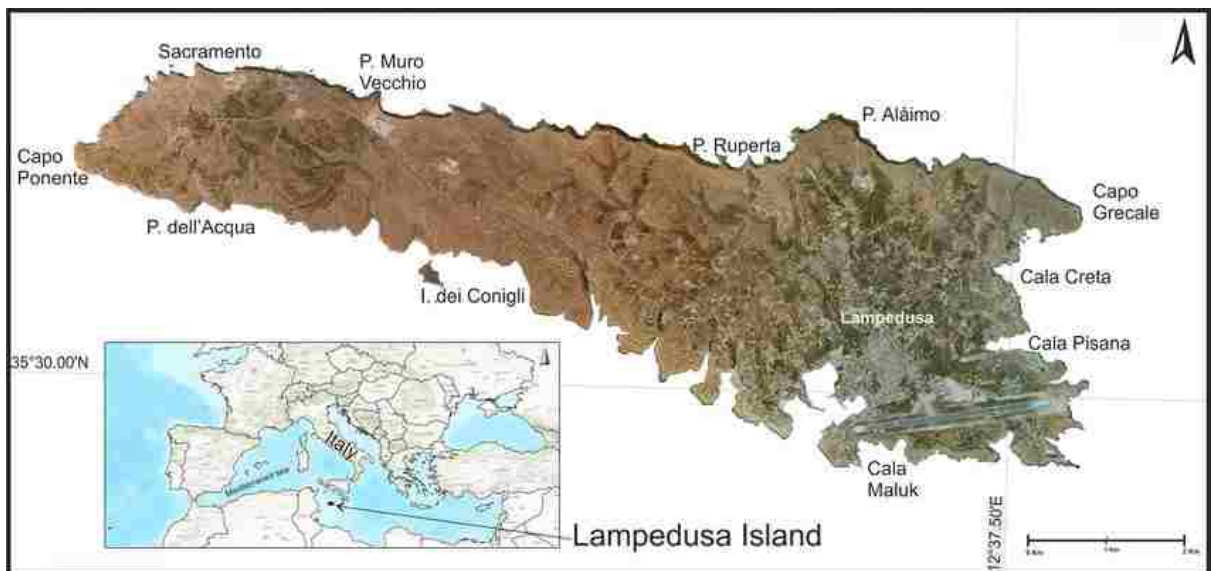


Figure 1: Map of Lampedusa. (Tonielli et al, 2016)

Ministry of the Interior data shows that if in 1999, 356 migrants reached the island's shores, by 2002 the number had increased to 9,669, with arrivals peaking in 2011 at a record 51,753 (Askavusa 2018, Cuttitta 2012). Though vessels *en route* for Lampedusa mainly depart from Tunisia and Libya, their passengers come from all over Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), from countries such as Tunisia, Eritrea, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Algeria, Iraq and Sudan (Askavusa 2018, UNHCR

2019b). Throughout this thesis, I refer to maritime arrivals using the term commonly employed by the people of Lampedusa: “sbarchi” (translates to disembarkation).

The use of the word “migrant” is in itself a generic simplification of the diverse statuses of those reaching Lampedusa; some are what the Italian legislative framework would categorize as “irregular migrants,” that is individuals that reached the country without an entry visa or that have since lost the necessarily requisites for a lawful stay. Irregular migrants identified at the point of entry can be turned away, while those who are found in violation inside the national territory are deported back to their country of origin (Ministry of the Interior, 2017b). Lampedusa also sees the arrival of asylum seekers, a category protected by both international law and the Italian constitution. Asylum seekers flee persecution because of race, religion, political affiliation, nationality, or membership to ethnic or social groups (UNHCR, 2010). It should be noted that these status determinations do not take place in Lampedusa, which serves as site of initial identification before migrants are transferred to the mainland, leaving travelers in a state of limbo. Here, I use “migrant” as an all-encompassing term, not to flatten the important differences between statuses, but for ease of discussion in the face of the complexity and intelligibility of migratory flows converging on the island.

In this thesis, I apply ethnographic methods to analyze the relational construction of bordering in Lampedusa across space and time. Here, I explore some of the ways in which the unique geopolitical context on the island impacts the experiences of a sample of local residents. In seeking to look beyond a God’s Eye view of bordering through state practices and official enforcement activities, this project centers Lampedusa’s residents as both agents of bordering and as individuals whose lives are importantly shaped by the

border. Analyzing how bordering is manifested and articulated through the perspective of participants offers a window into the continued production of difference between mobile citizens from the Global North and immobile migrants from the Global South, which shapes individual experiences and possibilities at the border and beyond. In examining the modes of reproduction and enactment of these hierarchies of difference through everyday interactions and events, this approach can highlight opportunities for disruption and resistance to seemingly mundane state practices of border enforcement, monitoring and representation.

Lampedusa, which in the past decade alone has received visits from Matteo Salvini (Lauria, 2017), the Pope (Carli, 2013), and high ranking officials from the European Union (EU) (Viviano 2013, European Commission 2017), is a highly visible geography in what De Genova and others refer to as “border spectacle,” that is the mass circulation of images and notions of borders that go on to create a “constant redundancy” to justify the exclusion and fetishizing of illegal migrants (De Genova 2013:2, 2002, Van Reekum 2016, Cuttitta 2012, 2014). As Cuttitta argues, the dramatic re-telling of the border staged in Lampedusa is ultimately intended for an audience of mobile citizens, powerful politicians and fearful migrants on the mainland, all turning their attention to the performance unfolding in the “scenic space” of the island (2012:95). For this reason, exploring inconsistencies, contradictions and the contested nature of bordering in Lampedusa where discourses about the border are staged, can contribute to challenging dehistoricized narratives of “migrant emergency” or “Mediterranean crisis,” to instead begin to show the daily, relational production of geopolitics at Italy’s and Europe’s southern border.

I. The Border

Since the 1980s, scholars have explored new theorizations of borders, challenging approaches that frame borders as sharp, fixed divisions between entirely coherent and wholly separate units. Balibar's influential contributions to the field of border studies problematize "reductions of complexity" which do not reflect the unstable nature of borders, divisions that the author explains to be continuously renegotiated and shifting (2002:76). While political borders may be fictional fault lines that obscure connectivity and inbetweenness, these normative conventions have life-changing and world-making consequences which render the continued study of bordering all the more salient (Jones and Johnson 2016). Scholars in the interdisciplinary fields of critical border studies and feminist geopolitics have advanced epistemologies and methodologies that look to the embodied dimensions of bordering and to how racialized and gendered social hierarchies are produced and reproduced in everyday life (Mountz and Hyndman 2006, Rumford 2012, Brun 2017, Jones and Johnson 2016). With the expanding definition of borders as processual and shifting, the understanding of who is engaged in borderwork has also broadened, going beyond the state, the military and official agents of enforcement to also include a wide array of actors including migrants, NGO personnel and people living in border communities.

For both Italy and the European Union, questions of management of the southern border have grown increasingly pressing and divisive (Amaro 2019, Dodman 2019, De Maio 2019). As of May 2019, Italy's XVIII Legislature led by technocrat Giuseppe Conte is holding together the fragile coalition between Luigi Di Maio's *Cinque Stelle* (Five Star) party and Matteo Salvini's *Lega* (League), the former serving as Minister of Labor and the latter as Minister of the Interior. Salvini, a vocal EU-skeptic and advocate for strict border

control, is only the latest national leader to espouse a “zero-tolerance” approach to migration. In his short tenure as Minister, he has openly challenged the principles of non-refoulment and initial processing as they are outlined by the Geneva Convention and the Dublin Regulation (Ruta 2019, Tondo 2018).

More importantly, the increasingly draconian and exclusionary regime of enforcement can have devastating and at times deadly effects on those engaged in the crossing. The Mediterranean, and especially the Central Mediterranean route in which Lampedusa is located, is amongst the world’s deadliest borders, what scholars and commentators have referred to as “warscape” (Shringarpure et al. 2018), “deathscape” (Suvendrini-Perera 2013, 2010, De Leon 2015), and humanitarian battlefield (Músaró 2016).

This thesis considers the unique historical, geopolitical and social context on the island to better comprehend the situated production of bordering and difference in Lampedusa, which also some provide insights into enforcement and representation of the Mediterranean border in Italy and beyond.

II. The Island

In analyzing bordering in Lampedusa, I align myself with scholarship in island studies that embraces relationality to break with a long tradition of the fetishization of island as discrete, sealed off containers of people and cultures. Romanticization of islands as exotic, frozen in time and neatly contained societies are as pervasive in the collective imagination as they are problematic. These neo-colonial discourses relegate islanders to the status of reference groups or research subjects for explorers, missionaries, military strategists and researchers (Baldacchino 2008, Hay 2006, McCall 1994). Instead, I draw from the relational and dynamic understanding of islands spaces advanced by scholars

including Mountz, who discusses the production of a global “enforcement archipelago” of detention and externalization (2011), and Farinelli, who explores how island discourses and representations are employed in the construction of mainland identities (2017).

The use of “islandness” instead of the more common “insularity” follows the conceptualization put forth by Godfrey Baldacchino, who argues that the latter term carries “a semantic baggage of separation and backwardness” (2004:272). Lampedusa’s islandness and its colonial history in relation to the mainland are at the root of many of the characteristics that make it a convenient geography for the externalization of migration management in the eyes of the state. As it is evidenced by the pivotal role played by islands such as Guantanamo, Nauru and Lesbos, at times of perceived emergency in the of the system of migration management islands become fundamental sites of struggle and the “persistent reconfigurations of sovereignty” (Loyd and Mountz, 2014:24). Lampedusa’s small size only complicates its position, as scientists and government projects alike have a history of framing minor islands as natural laboratories for the testing of new theories, practices and technologies (Baldacchino 2004, 2008).

Though bordering is the focus of this project, it cannot be understood in isolation from Lampedusa’s colonial history and islandness. Over the past two decades, Lampedusa and its residents have witnessed the construction of a regime of border enforcement that made the island a reticent headquarter for military operations, humanitarian missions, mission camps, and research studies. With the imposition of mainland interests also came the proliferation of materials, images, and discourse *about* Lampedusa, authored by outsiders who do not fully participate in island life. Mindful of this established pattern and my own positioning as mainlander, I seek to center the knowledge of island residents and

connect migration management and border enforcement to other island dynamics and local concerns.

III. Research Questions

Q1: Along with the resident population, what other groups/actors are involved in bordering on the island?

Q2: How do the participants see the intensification of bordering impacting economic activity and social interactions on the island?

Q3: How do Lampedusa's residents intervene in bordering by upholding, resisting, staffing or simply co-existing with the border?

Guided by these research questions and a framework that centers the knowledge and embodied experiences of the resident population, I conducted an ethnographic study and created an archive secondary sources such as legislative documents, government data, and news articles to further contextualize resident interventions alongside island representations and official enforcement practices. My research shows that though bordering is now an integral part of Lampedusa's economic, social and cultural life, it is highly contested, with multiple competing interests and commitments. The project also brings to light some of the contradictions and fundamental inaccuracies of spectacularized discourses about the island and Mediterranean migration.

IV. Overview of Thesis

In this research project, I investigate the engagement and experiences with bordering of a sample of sixteen of Lampedusa's residents. In Chapter II, I situate this project within a conceptual framework that draws on literature in feminist geopolitics, critical border studies, and spatial theory. After discussing the theoretical foundations for this project, I provide an overview of the interconnected migration management strategies

of securitization, externalization and humanitarianism, which importantly shape the approach to bordering in Lampedusa.

In Chapter III, I explain the methods employed in carrying out this research, which include the compiling of a digital archive of secondary sources about Lampedusa, in-depth semi-structured interviews with 16 island residents and participant observation. Here, I provide a brief summary of the demographic characteristics and occupations of interview participants. Finally, I conclude the chapter by discussing the importance of reflexivity and positionality.

Chapter IV gives a historical overview of bordering in Lampedusa to show how the progressive hardening of enforcement at Europe's Southern Frontier impacted daily life and economic activity on the island since 1986. The chapter's arc, from its starting point in 1986 to its focus on the way bordering intersected with the island's lucrative tourism industry, is the result of interviews in which the residents offered their interpretation of the construction of Lampedusa as a key geography of the "enforcement archipelago."

In Chapter V, I discuss examples of resident engagements with bordering in more detail. I begin by considering several forms of activism and borderwork, some oppositional and some supporting and upholding the border and its functions. Then, I turn to a number of sites across the island in an approach that looks to space as the product of interrelations by actors with disparate and divergent aims. In doing so, I highlight that ordinary life and everyday spaces in Lampedusa can provide a window into the construction of bordering, what it makes visible, and what it obscures. Crucially, understanding borders as processual and relational allows for possible disruptions to oppressive and neocolonial practices of migration management and border enforcement.

Finally, I conclude with Chapter VI, where I summarize my findings and revisit the limits and potentials of this research approach.

Chapter II: Conceptual Framework

As a geographer, I analyze bordering through a spatial lens, investigating how geopolitical developments are actualized in Lampedusa and how island people leverage their access to influence local, national and regional representations and decision-making. I begin by situating this project within the scholarship in feminist geopolitics and critical border studies, seeking to decenter territorialist epistemologies in favor of a broader understanding of geopolitics. I then provide an overview of the principles and enforcement practices driving migration management in the European Union with Lampedusa as an entry point into Italy and Europe. After providing a summary of the so-called “crisis” narratives centered on the EU southern border, I discuss the interconnected strategies of securitization, externalization and humanitarianism that have been central to bordering on the island of Lampedusa.

I. Decentering the nation state

Foundational in this research project is the argument that border spaces, practices, and experiences are the result of interactions between a multitude of actors (Jones and Johnson 2016, Rumford 2012, Scott et al 2018). This approach decenters the nation-state, while maintaining the importance of including legislation, official enforcement strategies, and conventional geopolitics in analyzing border dynamics. Though state-sponsored initiatives including military operations, sophisticated monitoring and limited paths to legal entry importantly shape the border, it is people who inform and enforce these governmental actions. Furthermore, those staffing, crossing, and living in spaces of bordering are also engaged in the production of “the border.” To advance this argument, I here consider critiques of methodological nationalism emerging in the interdisciplinary fields of feminist geopolitics, and critical border studies.

Since its emergence in the early 2000s, feminist geopolitics has advanced an understanding of “the political” as permeating all spheres of life. Intervening in this line of inquiry, I expand on the framing Lampedusa as a site of Italian and EU enforcement (Cuttitta 2007, 2012, Dines et al 2015) by contextualizing how geopolitics is co-constituted through everyday interactions on the island and how residents experience and participate in what are often identified as “global” processes, including the securitization of migration, externalization of enforcement, and the rise of humanitarianism.

Critiquing the top-down approach of traditional geopolitics (Dalby 1998), feminist geopolitics encouraged a paradigm shift away from the nation-state and what scholars in the discipline have referred to as a “God’s eye” view of geopolitics (Massaro and Williams 2013, Christian et al 2016), or the “God Trick” (Haraway 1998, Dowler and Sharp 2001). Objecting to the framing of state power as emanating from “somewhere” in what Dowler and Sharp call a “spectator” theory of knowledge (2001:168), feminist geopolitics investigates experiences at scales including the local, the household and the body to understand how geopolitical processes shape and are shaped by social life. This defies the conventional masculinist depiction of the state that centers an operational study of international relations, development and war. Feminist geopolitics highlights the femininization of everyday spaces and the erasure of women and marginalized populations from a geopolitics that has long centered soldiers in the battlefield and male leaders in the situation room (Massaro and Williams 2013), instead advancing an understanding of the “political” as permeating all spheres of life.

The aim of feminist geopolitics is to first map the production of difference and power relations through embodied experiences across space, to then importantly point to

the consequences of such arrangements and “galvanize engagement” (Hyndman, 2004:308). To this end, Lee and Pratt’s exploration of how state violence is manifested in the lives of Filipinos vying for citizenship in the US also showcases how Filipino migrants reclaim agency by building solidarity that problematizes and rejects the notion of citizenship as the ultimate mark of belonging and political engagement (2011). Similarly, in framing domestic violence as everyday terrorism, Pain argues that this paradigm shift can change how this type of violence is addressed, connecting suffering at different scales to prioritize strategies that tackle root, structural causes (2014). Here I strive to follow this approach to scholarship, one that in bringing to the foreground the embodied and visceral experiences of those implicated in geopolitical processes, advocates for a more accountable geopolitical future.

To understand how power and marginality are constructed and maintained in everyday life, it is essential to consider the interaction between interconnected systems of gender, race, class, sexuality, nationality, legal status... (Massaro and Williams 2013, Dowler and Sharp, 2001). Intersectionality, that is the study of the convergence of multiple forms of oppression, is a pivotal research paradigm in feminist epistemologies. Expanding on black feminist thought where intersectionality originates (Crenshaw 1991, Hill Collins 2000, King 1988), Dhamoon conceptualizes the project of “the mainstreaming of intersectionality.” Dhamoon argues that what gives intersectionality this potential for wide application is that it seeks to interpret social positions as relational and makes visible complex processes of differentiation (2011). In this project, I follow the author’s call for the incorporation of intersectional-type research paradigms in social inquiry across disciplines.

In applying an intersectional-type framework to the context of the island of Lampedusa, my analysis considers local categories of difference to avoid the facile replication of the “race-class-gender trinity” (Mounture 2007, Dahmoon, 2011:234), that is, a paradigm that while essential to intersectional inquiry, can miss important elements when incorporated uncritically. On the island, additional categories of difference deeply impact access to resources and quality of everyday life, for example, a) town of origin, as the Lampedusani are a protective and tight-knit community that firmly regards long-term residents born elsewhere as outsiders; this aspect is additionally complicated by island/mainland divides and by regional tensions prevalent across Italy, but especially pronounced in North/South dichotomies; b) legal status, as mobility is tightly controlled to contain irregular flows into Europe, with a resulting securitization of public spaces and points of departure; c) occupation, as the residents that own businesses in the tourism industry control a vital component of the economic life on the island, while other Lampedusani live in conditions of economic precarity and limited mobility.

Though it is true that these locally-specific divisions deserve attention in this inquiry, in Lampedusa much like anywhere else, gender, race and class decidedly shape experiences and mobility. The majority of migrants arriving to Lampedusa are men, which fuels the narratives on invasion based on the fetishization of men from the Global South and the MENA region as violent, culturally conservative and not likely to integrate into European societies (Kofman 2018, Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013, Mahler and Pessar 2006). Additionally, when women do reach the island on boats departing Tunisia or Libya, they are at increased risk for sexual exploitation and violence. Women in the resident population are also faced with important challenges; according to ISTAT data, the

rate of female employment in Lampedusa is 22.3%, 1.7% lower than regional average, and 13.8% lower than national average (2011). For residents, class massively impacts mobility, which in turn determines the ability to access important services that are not offered on the island, which include pre-natal care, chemotherapy and the driving exam to obtain a motorcycle license.

Finally, in Lampedusa like in the rest of Italy, the conversation around race is incredibly complex and in some ways evaded and obscured through the discussion of place of origin, culture and language (De Genova, 2013). For much of the country's history, popular discourses and government strategies have framed southern populations as racialized and orientalized others, falling behind national average in terms of education and development (Giglioli 2017). In Italy, the categories of "southern" and "northern" are embedded with racialized scripts, notions of economic dependence/superiority, and standards of cultural legitimacy. These internal divisions have been central points of tension in national debates, as the history of Salvini's League party shows. Though today the party goes by The League, up until 2017 its official name was *Lega Nord* (The North League), a party that outwardly campaigned for the independence of Northern Italy (Fatto Quotidiano 2017). It is telling that the League, in presenting itself as a "planetary" movement (Lega Nord, 2019), has moved away from its original separatist platform to focus on immigration from the Global South. The framing of Mediterranean migration dissimulates racism and racial discrimination through nativist narratives that discuss migrant difference in terms of culture and identity (De Genova, 2013). The categories of "migrant" and "foreigner" reproduce colonial divisions while muting the memory of Italian and European colonialism, ultimately reinforcing white, euro-centric hegemony.

In analyzing the interventions and experiences of the residents of Lampedusa with bordering and the daily construction of hierarchies of difference, I emphasize that individuals can simultaneously be oppressors and oppressed (Dahmoon 2011:235). The residents can both suffer the painful effects of the externalization of migration enforcement by mainland actors and potentially contribute to the detention, discrimination and marginalization of migrants and asylum seekers. In this sense, I seek to construct an approach that does not relegate the island residents to the status of victims or oppressors, but rather looks at the dynamic role of individuals in the multifaceted apparatus of enforcement.

Having discussed contributions in the field of feminist geopolitics, I now turn to critical border studies to situate my work within the discipline and explore emergent theoretical interventions on the study of borders. Here I ask: how can the study of political boundaries avoid engaging in what Agnew (1994) refers to as the “territorial trap?” This concept refers to the acceptance of the nation-state as a fixed, coherent, container of homogeneous culture, circumscribed by a hard border dividing domestic and foreign realms (Agnew 1994). Writings in critical border studies have problematized these romanticized notions of state boundaries as “lines in the sand.” Parker and Vaughan-Williams evoke this metaphor (2009, 2012) in advancing a study of borders that decenters the boundary itself (2012:798), to explore the “bordering” processes that are constantly remaking, shifting and reproducing borders.

This critique also posits that borders are increasingly diffused, with enforcement enacted far away from the edge of the state by a number of actors guided by complex rationales (Coleman 2008, Bigo 2004). Examples of this phenomenon range from boarding

checks in airports, where airline personnel perform the role of unofficial border agents, to the Secure Communities initiative in the USA which enables local and county jails to access federal immigration databases and report undocumented migrants to the immigration authorities (Coleman 2009). This expanding definition draws attention to borders as interfaces of connectivity and interaction found at multiple locations and sites.

In problematizing the territorialist epistemologies that narrowly examine borders through the viewpoint of states, Rumford suggests that scholars need to “see like the border” (Johnson et al, 2011:67). This methodology encourages the incorporation of the diverse perspectives of those located at the sites where bordering is enacted, introducing more dynamic understandings based on material practices. The approach to border epistemology known as the “vernacularization of borders” decouples the study of bordering from a narrow focus on the territory, securitization and state politics to instead think about these processes as political resources, mobilized in the production of fear but also by ordinary people in contesting or redefining boundaries (Cooper et al. 2014).

To examine these multiple and diverse engagements with borders, scholars including Jones, Johnson and Rumford have introduced the concept of “borderwork,” looking to actors crossing, staffing, monitoring, upholding, or resisting national boundaries (Rumford 2007, 2012, Jones and Johnson 2011, Johnson et al 2011). This line of inquiry has focused on ordinary people and groups including refugees, NGO workers and other humanitarian agents (Stierl 2015), and as it is the case with this thesis, on the experiences of those living at the border (Miggelbrink 2014, Norman 2014). Rather than understanding bordering on Lampedusa as uniquely determined by state control over national territory, the “borderwork” approach recognizes that the actions of both citizens and non-citizens are

not just driven by geopolitical preoccupations, but also by opportunism, activist aims, and goals of self-empowerment. Furthermore, this lens enables an analysis of both official and unofficial practices, introducing information about the material realities of bordering that might otherwise remain undetected.

II. A Spatial Approach: Relationality

In my thesis, I connect these processual understanding of borders and geopolitics to the conceptualization of space advanced by feminist geographer Doreen Massey (1994, 2005) to theorize the relational nature of borders across space and time. In *For Space* Massey deconstructs the persistent but artificial division between local place and global space, to instead argue for the relationality of space (2005:66-67). Massey explains that globalization as we know it is aspatial and in open contradiction with the nature of space itself. Massey explains that the neoliberal narrative of globalization that has taken the center stage since WWII emphasizes the creation of new and meaningful connections in the *global space* between *local places*, with the difference in scale between the global and the local constantly emphasized. The local is then misconstrued as a coherent, homogeneous unit, and the global is discussed as a newly established scale, opening up opportunities for exchange and interactions that were never possible before (66-67). Such an approach fails to recognize the fundamental relationality of space, a space that is cannot be neatly divided up into bounded units, but is rather alive, constantly shifting, the coming together of a “bundle of trajectories” (2005:199). In adopting this theoretical framework, I emphasize that not just the border itself, but also spaces and experiences of everyday life on the island of Lampedusa are very much alive, and constantly shifting and being redefined as the product of interactions between a myriad of actors.

Though the production of space has been the topic of lively philosophical inquiry sparked by Lefebvre (1977), in this project, the decision to incorporate the theorization of space put forth by Doreen Massey is largely related to her critical, feminist approach. Massey not only explains how space is systematically mischaracterized and rendered static, but she also reveals how artificial divisions between space/place and local/global ultimately embolden the Western neoliberal agenda. In her work, Massey also emphasizes the gendered and racialized nature of spaces, causing them to be read and experienced differently by actors depending of their position in hierarchies of difference (1994). It is this focus to spatial experiences across difference that I seek to incorporate in discussing mobility on the island of Lampedusa, at once a site of protracted detention for migrants and a popular tourist destination enthusiastically welcoming crowds of tourists in the summer months, where a number of different registers of mobility emerge.

I argue that Massey's framework is especially suited to this research, as the border is a fundamental feature in upholding the mischaracterizations of space and place because it represents "the inscription of a place in space" (Agier 2016:18). There are clear connections between what Massey identifies as a systematic and deliberate misconstruction of space that serves the interests of Western capitalist hegemony, and the territorialist epistemologies that uphold a conceptualization of the border as a static line of meaningful difference. If this is generally true of borders, this erroneous conceptualization of space is especially familiar in discussions about islands, as "at first glance, few geographic entities seem more distinct and uncontested than islands" (Steinberg, 2005:254).

In contributing to an expanding body of work that applies the lens of relationality to the study of borders (Raeymaekers 2014, Mountz 2011), I analyze border spaces and

practices as the product of social relations. This approach reframes the state as only one of multiple “intertwined open-ended trajectories,” (Massey, 2005:113), which is in itself influenced and shaped by interactions with other actors. Such a conceptualization of border spaces as always in-the-making destabilizes the inevitability and perceived immutability of these divisions, to bring to the forefront the multiplicity of space and the opportunity for transformative change.

III. Migration Management in Italy and Fortress Europe

In this section, I will first contextualize the management and representation of migration in Lampedusa within larger trends in the European Union and in Italy. Then, I explore three dynamics discussed in the literature on global migration management: securitization, externalization, and humanitarianism. I summarize these patterns at the national and supra-national level to further contextualize the “borderwork” carried out by the residents. In later chapters, I reflect on how the experiences and interventions of residents are both co-constituted by and co-constituting conventional geopolitics.

In the 1990s, the EU-member states agreed on the Schengen protocol with the aim of removing barriers to the internal flow of people and goods, guided by a cosmopolitan ethos. However, the increased inclusion of partners depended on the exclusion of non-member neighbors, including those located in the Southern Mediterranean and at the Eastern frontier. This exclusion is achieved through the establishment of strict visa requirements and the progressive shrinking of opportunities for legal entry for citizens of non-member states. The approach to extra-communitarian migration, that is all migration from outside the EU and its 28 member states, prioritizes deterrence and information-sharing, both facilitated by the application of new technologies (Mountz and Loyd 2014; Lopez-Sala 2015, Jones 2016).

As a result of the increasingly exclusionary standards for entry and due to a combination of natural geographic proximity and strategic externalization, a number of routes and border communities became increasingly associated with “clandestine migration.” At the Southern Frontier, these include the Spanish settlements of Ceuta and Melilla, the small island nation of Malta, the Greek island of Lesbos, and Lampedusa (De Genova 2017, Lutterback 2009, Scott et al 2018).

While concerns relating to migration date back to the inception of Schengen in 1985 (European Commission, 2019b), since the early 2010s, discussion of migratory flows has decidedly taken on the language and tone of “crisis.” In 2011, the revolutionary ripple of the Arab Spring, set off by the self-immolation of a fruit vendor in Tunisia, brought unrest to many countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Coupled with sustained economic inequality, high unemployment rates and limited freedom of expression, these circumstances led to human displacement, both regionally and internationally. In 2011, Lampedusa alone saw an estimated 51,753 arrivals (Cuttitta, 2012:26). As a result of a decade of “emergency” narratives focused on the Southern Frontier, tensions are growing between EU member states. In 2018 and early 2019, these tensions materialized in a series of standoffs when Matteo Salvini denied authorization to disembark to a number of rescue vessels, arguing that rest of Europe also had to do its part to contribute to migrant resettlement (Tondo 2018, France24 2019, Ruta 2019).

Scholars have importantly pointed to the political consequences of the adoption of a crisis narrative. Some have challenged the notion that there is an ongoing “emergency,” by highlighting that the overcrowding of reception facilities and the backlog of cases awaiting administrative evaluation is partially produced by the deliberate concentration of

bordering and detention and by a cumbersome bureaucratic process (Cuttitta, 2012). Others, including Mountz and Loyd (2018) have drawn attention to the crisis justification in arguing that it is at these moments that long-term legislative and enforcement changes are enacted and approved (De Genova 2017).

Additionally, scholars in critical border studies have examined the border spectacle that is generated to supply evidence of the crisis at the southern frontier (De Genova 2013, 2017; Musaró 2017; Cuttitta 2012, Van Reekum 2016). As a popular and highly-recognizable geography of border enforcement, Lampedusa has often been featured in literature on border spectacle, assessing how the representation of “obscene migrant inclusion” (De Genova, 2013:) at the nation’s edge goes on to produce “a constant redundancy” (2013:2) of images and ideas that shape public opinion and political action. Though the literature on spectacle has been critiqued for maintaining a Euro-centric and top-down view of border imaginaries (Scott et al. 2018), this line of scholarship importantly draws attention to EU and state politics of in/visibility.

Having provided an overview of the migratory phenomenon and debate around the Southern border of the European Union, I now turn to the three inter-connected strategies of migration management at play in Lampedusa: securitization, externalization and humanitarianism.

a) Securitization: Island of Militarization

The concept of securitization refers to the inclusion of migration and asylum policy in the framework of national security, a process that is often coupled with the criminalization of certain groups of migrants recognized by the state as “illegitimate” (Huysman 2006, Cacho 2012). This allows for the application of tactics and technologies associated with military operations to the governing of human mobility (Hyndman 2012).

While securitization caused a significant increase in border militarization and monitoring, such a shift is also connected to the increase in border policing away from the edge of the state, as a security response is triggered by the migrant body and deployed outside of traditional enforcement settings. As Mountz explains, these changes in political and popular discourses and legislation also produced exclusionary material geographies (Mountz, 2015:185), embedding the fear of detection and detention into an everyday life of surveillance.

European states have long based their approach to immigration in national defense, justifying tough policy responses on the basis of a crisis backdrop that has become the norm. The construction of the complex regime of securitization of “Fortress Europe” dates back to the 1970s and 1980s, when the issue of migration became the subject of “policy debates about the protection of public order and the preservation of domestic stability” (Huysman 2000). As migration was framed as an obstacle to cultural integration and the successful operation of the welfare state, policy became the instrument to address these security concerns, along with the strengthening of collaboration between agents of enforcement across member states (Benyon, 1994). In Europe as in the United States, the link between migration and national security became much more pronounced and transparent after the attack on the World Trade Center in 9/11 (Huysmans 2006).

At times of “emergency” the state mobilizes the threat to national security in justifying increased deployment of military resources, worsening human rights conditions, and reduced access to advocacy resources for migrants (Mountz 2011, Zaiotti 2016, Walters 2011). As Huysmans writes, “insecurity is a politically and socially constructed phenomenon” (2006:2). The association of migration to security concerns is

heterogeneous, varying in nature and magnitude from fear of loss of cultural identity and national tradition, to economic panic in the face of austerity and weakening welfare provisions, to anxiety over hypothetical terrorist threats. As theorist Didier Bigo explains, this heterogeneity contributes to management across different professions, creating a complex system of experts contributing to “regimes of truth” establishing what are the legitimate sources for unease (Bigo, 2008:8). In this sense, the state is reliant on specialized knowledge to assess potential threats, provide novel policing technologies, and aid in delineating new national security priorities.

In Italy, the first legislation towards the securitization of migration is the *Legge Martelli*, passed in 1990. The decree established limits on economic migration, and delineated penal procedures for expulsion of “socially dangerous and irregular migrants” (Casella, 2016). Since 1990, the legislation on the subject of immigration has taken an increasingly securitarian approach in dealing with undocumented migration: in 1998, the *Legge Turco-Napolitano* established Centers for Temporary Stay (CPT), which would be renamed Centers for Identification and Expulsion (CIE) in 2009. Additionally, between 2002 and 2009, the Italian government tested and expanded the “reato di clandestinità,” the crime of illegal entry and stay, along with establishing charges for those favoring clandestine migration by hiring undocumented migrants, and integrating biometric technologies (Casella, 2016). These migration management provisions came under the scrutiny of human rights advocates and legal experts due to long detention periods and violations of EU directives in applying harsh law enforcement responses to human mobility. The “police view” of immigration also significantly constraints the possibilities and areas of collaboration between states. In the case of Italy, controversial arrangements

with Libya are aimed at curtailing “illegal” immigration, rather than addressing the human rights abuses that people are fleeing from, in a framework that places culpability on the figures of the migrant and the smuggler.

The European Union as a whole began to pursue migration management through the lens of security. In 2004, the EU created Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (European Union, 2019). The new body, headquartered in Warsaw, was tasked with creating an integrated EU approach to border control. Since its creation, the agency has witnessed a continuous expansion of its powers and of the Schengen area itself, which now includes 44.000 km of sea borders. The most recent budget boost will bring Frontex’ workforce to 1000 by 2020 (DW 2018). According to Frontex’ official website, the agency collaborates with law enforcement, and focuses on preventing “smuggling, human trafficking and terrorism as well as many other cross-border crimes” (Frontex, 2019). However, Frontex also assists with humanitarian operations and asylum claims, a feature which locates the agency in both the security and humanitarian realm, blurring the line between the two. I will further explore the nexus between security and humanitarianism later on in this chapter, and at length throughout the thesis.

Literature in feminist geopolitics has challenged the very premise of policies of securitization by asking who, if anyone at all, is made safer by these measures and how (Massaro and Williams 2013, Hyndman 2001). Critiques of securitization in the discipline specifically address the “banal,” intimate dimensions of such approaches to migration and public life more broadly (Christian et al 2016, Coleman 2009). Cindi Katz examines the production of fear through the routinized performance of security, acting as a constant reminder of the looming threat in our midst in an exercise of “banal terrorism” (2007,

Christian et al 2016). In Lampedusa, groups of agents roaming the streets in riot gear and habitual visits by high-ranking government officials are forms of what Katz refers to as “spatial fetishism” (2007:352), an essential element of the performance of emergency, and of the “bunkering of the Fortress state” (Katz, 2007:355). In applying findings from feminist geopolitics and critical migration studies to the study of securitization in Lampedusa, I explore the everyday dimensions of insecurity, and its effects on the lives of those living in the border town.

I argue that Lampedusa, as growingly militarized border and stage of “obscene inclusion” of migrants (Di Genova 2013), is a key site in the production of insecurity at the national and international level. The residents of the island are importantly implicated in these processes; some outwardly reject media narratives of the island as “invaded” or “in chaos,” pushing back against the tale of perpetual emergency. Others rise in the ranks of specialized professionals, supplying descriptions of concerns and threats that come to shape securitization approaches. Having explained the strategy of securitization, I now look to the connected effort to externalize enforcement to a number of peripheral locations.

b) Externalization: Island of Detention

Though the push for securitization brought policing to public life across the European Union, the operations of initial processing and detention are routinely externalized to a number of strategically-positioned locations, able to filter access to EU territory and stop migrants before they reach their destination. With the intensification of crisis refrains, states and supranational agencies have justified extensions of enforcement powers outside of their sovereign territory and the creation of hybrid jurisdictions as means to address a growing emergency (Mountz 2011, Zaiotti 2016, Casas-Cortez et al 2015). Attempts at externalizing border and migration management are complex, often reliant on

collaboration between receiving and sending countries, the intervention of NGOs, and an increasingly complex technology apparatus. As Mountz argues, one of the effects of externalization is the progressive shrinking of the geographies of asylum, as economic migrants and asylum seekers alike are intercepted and detained in areas characterized by liminal sovereignty, far from administrative authorities, advocates, and media (2011). This creates a barrier to presenting asylum claims and requesting official hearings or status determination procedures and can leave detainees in a liminal state, neither here, nor there. These practices have been the subject of criticism in relation to the imposition of sovereign priorities on foreign and remote territories, and the association of externalization with human rights abuses and hybrid status.

Along with establishing Frontex to carry out enforcement operations at the border, the European Union externalization strategy materialized in the “Hotspot Approach.” The Hotspot approach is first introduced by the European Commission in 2015, as “a means of providing emergency assistance to frontline Member States that were faced with the arrival of disproportionate numbers of migrants” (Mentzelopoulou and Luyten, 2018:1). The proposal indicated facilities of first reception and identification, five in Italy and five in Greece, where EU officials would assist local authorities in coordinating aid and management. Lampedusa’s center is one of these facilities of externalized EU control. Six of the hotspots are located on minor islands, with three located on a major one (Sicily) and only one on the mainland (in Taranto, Italy).

It should be noted that in the context of EU policy, the country of Italy itself is a site of externalization, as one of the member-states at the southern frontier insulating the rest of the Union from arrivals (De Genova, 2017). The European Union governs asylum

through the Dublin Regulation, first signed in 1990; the current iteration, Dublin III (Regulation 604/2013), came into effect in 2014. The agreement establishes that the state of first entry in the EU is responsible for the processing of the asylum application (European Commission, 2019a). As a result, border states including Italy, Greece and Spain are responsible for the processing of the vast majority of maritime arrivals.

In Italy, externalization unfolds in three geographies: a) at the state's periphery, as it is the case with Lampedusa b) at high seas, through maritime monitoring (Musrò 2016, Garelli and Tazzioli 2018) c) in the sending country, through the funding of local coast guards and detention facilities (Bialasiewicz 2012). Though the three remain interconnected and it is common for all of these externalization strategies to be implemented contemporaneously, emphasis on individual approaches is largely determined by the position of the ruling party in immigration policy. Here, I focus on externalization on islands, a project that bears colonial roots and has been central to the Italian migration management strategy. While I recognize that island externalization is a part of the logic of the securitization, I argue that in analyzing this particular management strategy, scholarship should integrate findings in island studies and postcolonial critique in order to highlight a long history of problematic island/mainland relationships and link it to current practices.

In the field of island studies, scholars have examined the history of islands as “novelty sites” (Baldacchino, 2007), laboratories for testing of theories, practices and techniques often originating from the mainland. This phenomenon stems from romanticized and essentializing notions of islands as *tabula rasa* and as bounded spaces (Baldacchino 2007, Steinberg 2005, Nadarajah and Grydehøj 2016). These imaginaries

have informed a use of islands as quarantine sites, penal colonies, military compounds, tropical tourist paradises, and more, driven by mainland priorities. The field of nissology, described by McCall as the study of islands on their own terms (1996), proposes an approach that does not engage in familiar island tropes focusing on minute size and remoteness, but rather centers islanders and their unique perspectives (Baldacchino 2008). This research project focuses on the experiences and perspectives of the residents of Lampedusa in the discussion of externalization. Understanding that there is a history of imposition of mainland interests on islands, this project aligns with scholarship proposing a more nuanced and relational approach to island-mainland and archipelagic relations (Nadarajah and Grydehøj 2016, Mountz 2015).

This relational thinking is foundational to the concept of “enforcement archipelago,” introduced by Mountz to reflect on the role of islands such as Lampedusa in the regime of border enforcement (2011). This term refers to the global system of island detention that excludes both migrants and refugees from reaching sovereign territory, where they can make a claim (Mountz, 2011:128). Mountz suggests that by analyzing the history of islands as connected, it is possible to identify the spatial patterns that make island detention an established and systematic state tactic, far from an improvised emergency measure (2011:121). Factors that make island preferred sites of detention at the eyes of the state include physical geography, but also legal ambiguity and the “persistent reconfiguration of sovereignty” (Loyd and Mountz, 2014). An example of this is the Australian “power of excision,” which declared a specific territory to be outside of the bounds of national sovereignty for the purposes of immigration and asylum (Mountz, 2011:124). The approach of the Italian government to Lampedusa is somewhat similar, as

the border is there conceptualized as a zone rather than a line (Cuttitta, 2014:205). Migrants that arrive in Lampedusa are “refused entry” rather than expelled, even though they are already on Italian territory. Additionally, far removed from central governing bodies and administrative authorities, the migration control apparatus in Lampedusa represents a liminal legal space, where violations are rarely addressed, and migrants live in a state of exception (Dines et al. 2015). Here, I seek to investigate how this state of liminality shapes daily life in Lampedusa, as well as connections between the local population and mainland Italy.

I aim to further contextualize the “frontierization” (Cuttitta, 2012) of Lampedusa through the experiences of residents who have witnessed the d/evolution of the island as site of EU and Italian externalization of migration management. Lampedusa’s role as a site of externalization became pronounced in 1998, with the establishment of the first formal on-site facility for migrant detention, and it intensified into the early 2010s, with increases in arrivals and maritime interceptions. However, administrative inefficiency combined with insufficient capacity in the reception/detention center caused the island itself to become the space of detention. These moments are characterized by high tensions with the residents, who see their lives disrupted. In Chapter IV, I will discuss one such instance in the Spring of 2011, when the Italian government refused to authorize the transfer of an estimated 6000 migrants held on the island, turning the entirety of Lampedusa into a site of temporary detention and externalization.

c) Humanitarianism: Island of Welcome

Shrinking options for legal entry, the integration of defense strategies and technologies into migration management and the continued externalization of bordering to remote locations at the edge of the nation state all contributed to an increase in violence

and fatalities in border spaces. This is especially true in the case of the Mediterranean frontier and of the Central Mediterranean Route in which Lampedusa is inserted, widely considered to be among the deadliest in the world (Ferrer-Gallardo and Van Houtum 2014, Jones 2016, Heller and Pezzani 2014). According to the IOM's Missing Migrant Project, 33,761 people were reported to have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean between 2000 and June of 2017 (IOM, 2017). In 2018 alone, Italy saw a total of 23,370 sea arrivals, with 1,311 people were reported dead or missing in the crossing (UNHCR, 2019). In the face of growing criticism, liberal democracies across Europe have responded by deploying a number of humanitarian initiatives, intensifying an approach that has been applied in legitimizing hardening migration policies for decades (Mezzadra and Nielsen 2013, Vaughn-Williams 2015).

Humanitarianism, anchored in moral values and stated benevolence, prioritizes individual bodily health and integrity rather than longer-term and more transformative interventions to address the political and historical circumstances that produce the need for care. In examining the history of "humanitarian reason," Fassin explains that earlier expressions of this approach in the French context saw the state delineate "discretionary exemptions" to deportation proceedings and barriers to entry for migrants suffering from a serious illness, an indication of benevolence from a country that was contemporaneously working to restrict entry for those suffering from poverty and hunger (Fassin, 2012:88). In describing how this model is applied to the contemporary Mediterranean situation, van Reekum writes "migrants acquire the right to be saved once shipwrecked" (Van Reekum, 2016:338) Scholarship on humanitarianism (Ticktin 2011, 2016, Walters 2011, Hyndman 2000) has advanced a number of critiques of approaches to migrant suffering that are

exceptional and dehistoricized in nature and that combine emotional and biological registries to assess migrant deservingness.

The humanitarian mission depends on recognition through a system of experts including doctors and NGO operators, one that targets certain forms of suffering while disregarding others and demands an embodied performance of suffering readable by the state apparatus. This also frames specific bodies as chronically sick, wounded or violated, victims to be rescued. Ticktin argues that the regimes of care activated by “the morally legitimate suffering body” (2011:3) seek to provide “immediate, urgent, and temporary care [...] in the name of political neutrality” (2011:63). In doing so, rather than addressing the political and social conditions at the root of humanitarian emergencies, the focus is placed on the dehistoricized and feminized migrant body. As Ticktin goes on to explain, this type of humanitarianism is far from a depoliticized moral calling; instead, it is inherently political, framing the state as a benevolent actor and obscuring its hand in contributing to violence (2011, 2016).

Writing about the Mediterranean context, scholars have further problematized regimes of rescue by exploring the humanitarian-security nexus (Garelli et al 2018, Andersson 2017). Foundational to the critique is that the dual humanitarian/security “crisis” ongoing in the Mediterranean is the result of the production of the Mediterranean as the sole route for those seeking to enter Europe (Garelli et al. 2018). Beyond state involvement in the manufacturing and perpetuating of crisis, literature on the nexus points to the fact that humanitarian response itself has become increasingly connected to the military apparatus. An example of this is Operation Mare Nostrum, launched by the Italian Navy in October 2013. The military-humanitarian mission was a response to two deadly

shipwrecks, both associated with the island of Lampedusa. In the span of one week in the October of 2013 an estimated 636 lives were lost: 368 on October 3rd, just half a mile off the coast of Lampedusa, and 268 on October 11th, approximately 60 miles from the Italian island (Gatti 2013, Rubino 2013).

The strengthening of the humanitarian-security nexus has contributed to the framing of the Mediterranean as a “humanitarian battlefield” (Musaló, 2016:5), and to the routinized depiction of a number of essentialized key players including soldiers as “nurses with guns” (Musaló, 2016:9), smugglers as antagonized criminal actors (Musaló 2016, Garelli and Tazzioli 2018, Mountz 2011), suffering migrant as deserving victims. Migrants who do not meet the expectations for model victimhood are instead framed as “bogus refugees” or “bogus economic migrants” (Garelli and Tazzioli 2013, Heller and Pezzani 2016, Ashutosh and Mountz, 2012) to be apprehended and repatriated.

Humanitarianism is not independent from securitization; instead, the presence of human trafficking and the increase in fatalities become the justification to increase military presence and expand the power of enforcement personnel to face what is depicted as a short-term emergency, in spite of more long-term interventions addressing the conditions that cause mass displacement, and the lack of safe avenues for migration. As Tazzioli argues, the expansion of humanitarian logic also allowed the expansion of the sea as space of governmentality, normalizing routine intervention outside of territorial waters and into the high seas (2016). In doing so, humanitarianism also harbors new opportunities for externalization.

Lampedusa, along with being a site of externalization and securitization, is an indispensable site in the Italian and EU regime of humanitarianism. In the past two decades,

the island has served as an operating center for organizations including, but not limited to the UNHCR, IOM, Save the Children, Red Cross International, and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Beyond its strategic importance, Lampedusa also become a highly visible site for the representation of the Mediterranean as humanitarian battlefield. In inserting this project in the larger discussion on humanitarian politics in the Mediterranean, I do not intend to minimize the services and support provided, which have undoubtedly proven to be lifesaving for migrants in conditions of extreme suffering. Instead, I incorporate critiques of humanitarianism to assess how these operations are connected to wider enforcement strategies in the context of Lampedusa, and how humanitarianism may be involved in obscuring an increase in militarization. I align myself with Ticktin by rejecting a dehistoricized and depoliticized understanding of human suffering at the border. In chapter IV, I connect the rise of a humanitarian regime to a complex web of enforcement strategies, and to the colonial past and present of the island. In chapter V, I analyze the spectacularization of island spaces to highlight how island residents have interacted with the framing of Lampedusa as island of solidarity and site of humanitarian emergency.

IV. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have contextualized the aims and guiding epistemologies of this project within scholarship in feminist geopolitics, critical border studies, and spatial theory. Having explained how these approaches enable a dynamic and relational understanding of bordering on the island of Lampedusa, I have then provided an overview of the unfolding migratory phenomenon in Europe, connecting it with three interdependent strategies of border management: securitization, externalization, and humanitarianism. In upcoming chapters, I showcase how these processes are at work in Lampedusa, first by tracing their history through resident perspectives, and then by looking at how these diverse approaches

to bordering are manifested and contested in island spaces, highlighting their processual nature and continuous construction. Now that I have laid out the conceptual framework at the foundation of this project, in Chapter III I explain the methods employed in conducting this ethnographic study.

Chapter III: Methods

My research interest in the daily practices of bordering in Lampedusa informs the decision to carry out ethnographic work. In the field of geography, ethnography has become an established "intersubjective form of qualitative research" (Watson and Till, 2010) aiming at better understanding a group and its interactions with the environment through participant observation and interaction (Herbert, 2000). Ethnographic studies connect what participants *say* to what they *do*, and how they interpret and make sense of geopolitical processes shaping their everyday life. A popular approach in both feminist geopolitics and critical border studies, ethnography had for long remained an underexplored method in political geography which favored the analysis of elite practices and discourses (Megoran 2006, Herbert 2000, Crang 2002). With its immersive nature, ethnography can help create connections, on one hand familiarizing the researcher with lived experiences, while also giving research participants an opportunity to play a more active role in the representation of their narrative (McDowell, 1992, 2016). To this end, I spent 6 weeks in Lampedusa doing fieldwork, from May 20th to June 30th, 2018.

I combined an analysis of archival research with participant observation, and in-depth interviews. I explain how each method is suited to the analysis of borderwork by the residents of Lampedusa and begin to explore the limits of these approaches emergent from both academic literature and my own experience carrying out international fieldwork. Finally, I address my own positionality as researcher, as an Italian woman living in the United States and as a mainlander, to critically reflect on how these identities both inform my analysis and shape interactions in the field.

I. Archival Research

A Berlin Golden-Bear-winning documentary film, at least a dozen books and thousands of news articles across both international and Italian media platforms: the body of material written on or about Lampedusa has grown exponentially over the last decade, as the island became increasingly prominent in the collective imagination as quintessentially “border” (Cuttitta 2012, 2014). Because in this project I set out to investigate how bordering shapes daily life in Lampedusa through both material and symbolic processes, I compiled a digital archive of content from and about Lampedusa.

In analyzing this wide array of documents from disparate sources I consider the critique that secondary data emerges from the work of organizations and individuals with diverse ideologies and motivations for publishing content (Hodder 2003, White 2010). Therefore, I critically approach this material in order to form a more complex understanding of the research field, maintaining a focus on knowledge originating *from* the residents rather than *about* the island. Feminist geographer Linda McDowell explains that in conducting and analyzing interviews, social scientists can introduce visual artifacts, news articles, and secondary data to contextualize findings and conversations with participants (2010:158).

In collecting stories about the island, I intended to both map patterns and themes of representation and gather information about events unfolding there, which would inform interview questions and research design. The tools that enabled this method of data collection include Google Trends, showing interest over time and topics related to a given search, the database LexisNexis, through which I searched and organized documents, and the online historical archive of the Italian newspaper *il Corriere della Sera*, collecting all articles published by the source since 1876. Lastly, I draw from official data on island

demography and economics, and on Mediterranean migration. Sources include the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), the Italian Ministry of the Interior, the National Authority for Civil Aviation (ENAC) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Lampedusa, a rapidly growing tourist economy with a history of emigration, was featured in news coverage in international outlets including (but not limited to) the *BBC*, the *Guardian*, the *New York Times*, *der Spiegel* and *le Monde*. Across the Italian media landscape, pieces on the island are ubiquitous, from references and full features in famous newspapers like *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera*, to independent media and blogs. If international interest in Lampedusa was overwhelmingly connected to the migratory phenomenon, Google Trend data about searches within Italy evidences that interest follows a cyclical pattern peaking in the summer months, with many tourism-related queries. After an initial spike in international and domestic interest in the March of 2011 during the Arab Spring, coverage reaches an all-time high in the weeks following the fall 2013 shipwrecks. This analysis of media pieces also highlighted a number of players amongst residents, recurring as sources and authors; these include former-mayor Giusi Nicolini and current mayor Totó Martello, Pietro Bartolo, also known as “the migrant doctor” and author of international bestseller *Tears of Salt*, and outspoken activist Giacomo Sferlazzo and the Askavusa Collective. Content analysis of secondary sources also aided me in discussion with island resident, who are keenly aware of the growing interest in the island and frequently reference specific pieces or claims in their critiques and/or endorsements.

II. Participant Observation

Participant observation is a qualitative research method that consists in the researcher visiting the research field to "experience and observe at first hand a range of

dimensions in and of that setting" (Mason, 2002). Participant observation proves useful in both forming networks in the field and exploring the interaction between people and the environment (Watson and Till 2010, Lauriel 2010). In selecting and applying this method, I am not suggesting that the experiences of those living at the border can be understood or captured by an outsider simply through observation and brief engagement. However, in conjunction with interviews, participant observation provides insights on daily life and interactions as they are routinely enacted across space.

While planning my stay on the island, I decided against connecting with humanitarian organizations or other outside groups to limit affiliations that might hinder or affect interactions with island residents. Instead, I stayed in a residence just outside of town, in the Cala Creta area. The family managing the residence became gracious and friendly hosts as well as important gatekeepers. During my stay on Lampedusa, I sought out opportunities to connect with residents and be engaged in public life by attending events including the reopening of the Archeologic Museum of the Pelagie, the unveiling of the “Mosaic of Humanity” Cross and participating in spiritual life on the island. Additionally, I conducted participant observation in via Roma, the center of Lampedusa’s economic activity and social life.

I selected two sites along via Roma, one in Garibaldi Square and one on the Belvedere, and dedicated a minimum of two hours a day to participant observation [See Figure 2]. The *Belvedere* overlooks the harbor, where most public enforcement operations converge. Garibaldi Square, in front of Lampedusa’s Church of *San Gerlando*, is the largest in town and is a lively center of social encounter and conversation, drawing retirees chasing the shade and chatting on benches, children playing soccer, migrants and tourists alike in

search of Wi-Fi and street vendors who every summer populate the town center from 6 pm well into the night.

Participant observation proved especially valuable in the recording of routine manifestations of the securitization of public spaces. These manifestations included the presence of patrols and specialized law enforcement vehicles and technologies, examples of the intimate and mundane dimension of international relations and politics that feminist geopolitics seeks to investigate. Additionally, through participant observation I aimed to build awareness and knowledge of the local context that informs a more grounded analysis, mindful of cultural specificity.

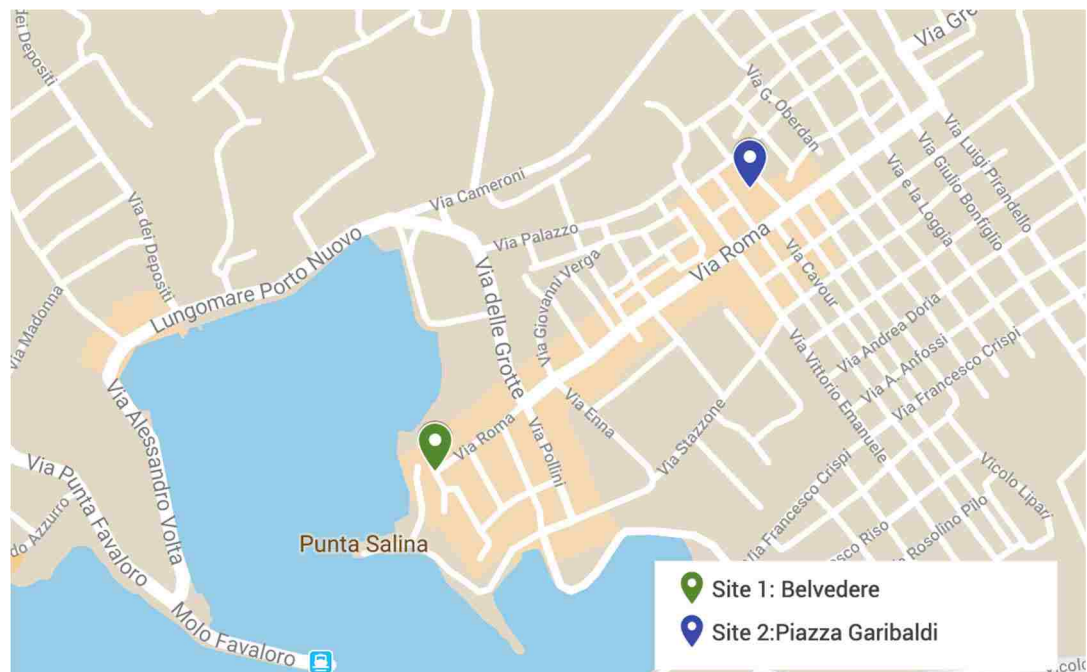


Figure 2: Map of participant observation sites

Furthermore, it is through participant observation that I was repeatedly confronted with the contrast between the images and representations of Lampedusa that I had collected prior to reaching the field, and the experience of daily life on the island that I was recording. Though the compiling of a news and media archive of Lampedusa show an enduring connection between images and representations of the Mediterranean island and the

migrant “crisis”, these were in many ways dissonant with what many participants referred to as Lampedusa’s trademark “tranquility.” This contradiction between the national imagination of Lampedusa and lived experiences is one that commonly played out in reaction and comments made by tourists confused by how “ordinary” Lampedusa seems, and that later became a focal point of interviews with island residents.

III. In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews

Qualitative interviews are central to the aim of understanding how island residents both experience bordering and are themselves implicated in geopolitical processes. Though there is a sustained production of content and literature about Lampedusa as evidenced by the expansive media and government sources here considered, the role of the residents in the narrative is often as witnesses of geopolitics rather than actors implicated in geopolitical processes. As McDowell writes, the aim of qualitative interviews “is to explore and understand actions within specific settings, to examine human relationships and discover as much as possible about why people feel or act in the ways they do” (in DeLyser et al 2010:158). Semi-structured interviews are conversational and informal in character (Longhurst 2010) and aimed at capturing a wide array of experiences and perspectives.

I conducted 16 in-depth semi-structured interviews with island residents, seven women and nine men, ranging in age between 27 and 69. All but one of the respondents are Italian citizens, the exception being Andrea, a young man originally from Sub-Saharan Africa who returns to Lampedusa yearly for seasonal employment. The eligibility requirements set for the study are the following:

- i. Participants must spend at least 6 months out of the year in Lampedusa.
- ii. Participants must have lived on the island for a period of at least 3 years.

These sampling choices were intended to ensure that the participants can be considered “residents” and that their experience of daily life on the island has developed over a prolonged period of time. Defining what I mean by “resident” is especially relevant to the context of Lampedusa, an island with a strong sense of community where most economic activity takes place between May and October, and where the winter months can be characterized by limited interaction with outsiders and access to resources from the mainland. I define three categories of residency status: 1) Native Resident, who claim the islander identity on the basis of family lineage, though they often were not born on the island due to the lack of a maternity ward; 2) Resident Outsiders, who relocated from elsewhere in Italy and live on island year-round, long-term, without claiming islander identity; 3) Transient Residents, who live on the island for a period of 6 months each year, leaving at the end of the tourist season and promptly returning when Lampedusa awakens in early May [Table 1].

Initial recruitment took place on site through the distribution of flyers, leading to snowball sampling as interviewees connected me to eligible and interested residents. Prior to entering the field, I set out to create a diverse sample, intended to capture and represent a number of backgrounds, identities and life experiences on the island. This informs the participation of individuals with a diverse array of residence statuses, ideologies, ages and places of origin, within what is limited demographic diversity on the island. The sample size was limited by both the duration of the study and its timing, which coincided with the busiest time of the years for residents, when the island wakes up from its winter rest and prepares for long hours and a 7-day work week to serve the tourist crowds.

Table 1: Presentation of Interviewees

<i>Name</i>	Gender	Age	Resident Status	Occupation
<i>Giovanni</i>	M	27	Native Resident	Store cashier/manager
<i>Anna</i>	F	Est. 40	Resident Outsider	Store co-owner
<i>Cristina</i>	F	43	Resident Outsider	Fruit stand employee (seasonal)
<i>Ruben</i>	M	42	Transient Residents	Server
<i>Alecos</i>	M	67	Resident Outsider	Retiree
<i>Sara</i>	F	56	Resident Outsider	Store owner
<i>Andrea</i>	M	28	Transient Residents	Server
<i>Marco</i>	M	34	Transient Residents	Artisan street vendor
<i>Giacomo</i>	M	42	Native Resident	Restaurant owner
<i>Assunta</i>	F	47	Native Resident	Store owner/artist
<i>Leonardo</i>	M	29	Native Resident	Waiter/tourism operator
<i>Stefania</i>	F	53	Native Resident	Restaurant owner
<i>Angelo</i>	M	69	Resident Outsider	Store owner
<i>Sofia</i>	F	55	Resident Outsider	Store owner
<i>Elena</i>	F	27	Native Resident	Store cashier (seasonal)
<i>Carlo</i>	M	63	Native Resident	Boat owner/operator

I conducted the in-depth semi-structured interviews in Italian, audio-recorded them with the permission of the participants and then transcribed them. Conversations ranged in duration from 35 to 75 minutes. Interview participants selected the time and location, with most interviews taking place in cafes, restaurants and stores. Asking the interviewee to pick a “familiar” location was motivated by two considerations: on one hand, participants may feel more comfortable and inclined to openly discuss experiences (Longhurst, 2010:110, Valentine 2005). On the other hand, the act of picking a place can itself reveal more about the relationship of the respondents with social spaces on the island.

Participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their anonymity, and foster openness by limiting the potential for what Baldacchino refers to as “crab in the barrel

syndrome” (2008:45). This is a phenomenon that sees islanders who engage in disclosure with outsiders attacked or ridiculed by their peers for disclosing what are seen as internal matters. As Baldacchino explains, a common response to the fear of reprisal is that islanders can tend to engage in “soft-thematic” that are less likely to become sources of tension. Though pseudonyms do provide some level of protection, it is also true that in the close-knit island community where the presence and actions of outsiders are closely monitored, these might not suffice in creating participant anonymity, or in providing a comfortable environment for the disclosure of personal or controversial information. An additional consideration is that many island residents have experience with interviews, both with media outlets and researchers, which has not always been positive. I was confronted with this reality in one instance during the recruitment phase, when one individual told me that they were not interested in participating in any more interviews after their words were manipulated by a reporter.

The interview was based on a standard set of questions on topics ranging from one’s daily routine and engagements within the island community, to media coverage of Lampedusa and the temporary closing of the migrant reception center. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews also allowed the participants to guide the conversation, often in unexpected ways. Three of the participants shared their own intimate experience with the Oct 3rd, 2013 shipwreck; Angelo and Sofia were two of eight people on the first boat to reach the wreckage and initiate rescue. Marco is the son of one of the other first responders. Carlo explains his role in the early days of tourism in Lampedusa in 1986, immediately after Libyan colonel Ghedaffi directed two missiles towards the NATO base that was then located on the island. It is this interactive potential that makes interviewing a foundational

methodology in the field of feminist geopolitics and that enables a more dynamic and situated understanding of bordering.

IV. Positionality

As Angrosino and Mays de Pérez write about ethnographic fieldwork, “interaction is always a tentative process that involves the continuous testing by all participants of the conceptions they have of the roles of others” (in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003:124). In approaching ethnographic studies, feminist researchers in the social sciences have highlighted the role of reflexivity and positionality, aimed at critically considering how the perspective and insider/outsider status of the researcher shape interactions in the field and become embedded in analysis and representation (DeLyser 2001, Cope 2002, Dreby 2015, Staeheli and Lawson 1995). In occupying a multitude of shifting positions and identities, researchers are both insiders and outsiders, observing and being observed. To further complicate this notion, I consider the critique leveraged by Gillian Rose, highlighting the methodological impossibility of transparent reflexivity, of squarely situating oneself within structures of power and oppression (1997:313). In this section, mindful of this limit to what is knowable, I begin to situate my position in the field and reflect how it shapes my approach to this project and participant interactions.

As a researcher from an industrial, urban area in North Eastern Italy, I emphasize that shared nationality does not serve as the ground for the baseless assumption of shared cultural practices. In addition to regional differences which remain pronounced across Italy and are a product of diverse histories in a country of recent political invention, there is a painful history of internal colonialism and discrimination of Southern populations (Giglioli 2017, Palumbo 2003). Additionally, my home region is well represented in the tourist crowds reaching Lampedusa each year; this pattern creates unique local dynamics and

connections and establishes a set of assumptions and expectations that I was often confronted with during my time in the field. People often believed that I was a tourist, recognizing the familiar accent. Others joked about the sense of superiority of northern Italians, asking me if I felt the same way and wondering why I would do research in Lampedusa.

As a mainlander visiting and writing about an island, I also consider the problematic history of islands as the subject of the fetishized gaze of academics and governmental officials on the mainland (McGall 1996, Baldacchino 2004, Steinberg 2005). As a point of departure, nissologists advocate for island studies that are for, with and by the islanders, reclaiming the right to narrate life and events on islands for the locals (McGall 1996, Baldacchino 2008), an argument that motivates a research design centered around the individual experiences of the residents, and mindful of the often-problematic history of exploitation and asymmetrical power relationships between island and mainland.

Not less importantly, the island of Lampedusa has been the subject of international media coverage, intensifying as the number of migrant arrivals rose. In this sense, it is pivotal to recognize that the heightened humanitarian, governmental, and academic presence on the island has both proven to be an economic asset and a source of frustration for the local population. As a researcher affiliated with a faraway foreign university, I was at times confronted with the exasperation harbored by some residents who are weary of observers and cameras, but most importantly of Lampedusa being narrowly portrayed as a site of “migrant emergency.” Frequently, the reservations gave way to enthusiastic collaboration and enriching dialogue when I explained the nature of my project, though others maintained that they had given their fair share of interviews.

V. Conclusion

A conceptual framework centering the experiences and interventions of those living at the border informs the decision to carry out an ethnographic study. Ethnography is a method that allows for the analysis of processes and meanings as they are constructed through mundane interactions by those who experience the everyday dimensions of geopolitics. Though ethnography is a participatory and immersive methodology, I stress that in selecting this method I am not suggesting that the experiences of those living at the borders can be understood or captured by an outsider, simply through observation and brief engagement. Instead, interviews in conjunction with participant observation can provide insight on both the narratives of the locals and their actions in daily life across space. Having reviewed the epistemological and methodological foundations of this project, I now present empirical findings in two chapters, first providing historical context and resident perspectives on the hardening of the Mediterranean border to then look to space as an archive that showcases the multiple and contested nature of bordering.

Chapter IV: A Grassroot Genealogy of Bordering

In *Lo Spettacolo del Confine* (the Spectacle of the Border), Cuttitta chronologically details national policies, practices and discourses contributing to what he defines as the “frontierization” of the island of Lampedusa (2012:73). Cuttitta explains that the common association of Lampedusa with bordering in public debates is not entirely based on a cliché; instead, it does reflect the fact that the island is “more a border” than any other frontier town in Italy. Cuttitta argues that to explain the role of the island in border spectacle, it is not enough to look to geography alone. Instead, we must look to the processes that constituted Lampedusa as the quintessential border over the last few decades, from relations between Italy and Mediterranean states including Tunisia and Libya, to the externalization of detention and increase in maritime monitoring.

By including the perspectives of a sample of island residents on these processes, this project seeks to go beyond “the panoptic gaze implicit in border spectacles” (Scott et al., 2018:175), to see how discourses and practices are constructed through social interaction. In this chapter, I expand on Cuttitta’s argument by incorporating approaches in feminist geopolitics to contextualize and explore the intimate and mundane dimension of the “frontierization of Lampedusa.” Along with interview data, I heavily draw from “A Short History of Lampedusa” by island archivist Nino Taranto (2017) and the document “Lampedusa Istruzioni per l’uso” (Lampedusa Instructions for use) published by the Askavusa collective in 2018. I prioritize these sources center knowledge originating from the residents of Lampedusa. To document changes in migrant arrivals in Lampedusa over the last two decades, I compiled and summarized data published by the Department of the Interior [see Table 1].

In crafting a genealogy of bordering through the perspective of island residents, I follow the critique of border studies advanced by Walters (2011, 2017) who advocates for an approach that goes beyond the immediacy of border crisis to instead look to the historical context from which it originates. To explore the connections between current island-mainland relationships and their problematic past, I turn to literature in island studies and postcolonial theory. I organize the discussion in four sections to capture different phases in Lampedusa's recent history, following residents' depictions of change during interviews.

Table 2: Data documenting "sbarchi" (disembarkations) in Lampedusa, and total number of arrivals by sea to Italy.

Irregular migrants stopped at the maritime frontiers of Italy			
Year	Lampedusa	Italy	%Lampedusa out of IT total
1999	356	49,999	0.71%
2000	447	26,817	1.67%
2001	923	20,143	4.58%
2002	9,669	23,719	40.76%
2003	8,819	14,331	61.54%
2004	10,497	13,635	76.99%
2005	14,855	22,939	64.76%
2006	18,096	22,016	82.19%
2007	11,749	20,445	57.44%
2008	30,657	36,952	82.96%
2009	2,947	9,573	30.78%
2010	459	4,406	10.42%
2011	51,753	62,692	82.55%
2012	5,202	13,267	39.21%
2013	14,753	42,925	34.37%
2014	4,194	170,100	2.47%
2015	21,160	153,842	13.75%
2016	11,399	181,436	6.28%
2017	9,057	119,369	7.59%
2018	3,468	23,370	14.84%

I. 1986-1998: The Rise to Prominence

A small fishing town with a history of emigration, Lampedusa made its debut on international media and in the collective imagination on April 15th, 1986. Libyan Colonel Gaddafi ordered two missiles to be fired in the direction of the island, which at the time was host to a U.S. Coast Guard LORAN base (Taranto, 2017). This action was in retaliation for the US bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi earlier in April. The two missiles did not hit Lampedusa, falling short of the island and landing in the water. In 1986, the mayor of Lampedusa was professor Giovanni Fragapane, a former member of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) who would go on to serve two terms. In the aftermath of the event, Fragapane advocated for a peaceful dialogue with Libya in a move that would cause some controversy for what was perceived as an overly-benevolent take (LaRepubblica 1987, Hoelzgen 1986).

As the residents recall it, the 1986 missiles sparked unprecedented interest in the Pelagie, with the event taking over national debates and making headlines in the New York Times (Dionne, 1986). Carlo, a 63-year-old resident who was among the first in Lampedusa to offer boat tours of the island explains this phenomenon, and his own unique professional ties to the geopolitical event. He says,

“In Lampedusa the tour started... well, it wasn't like there were that many tourists! They only came from Milan, Bergamo, and some from Rome, just to do underwater fishing. Free diving and underwater fishing. Tourism in Lampedusa was discovered when the Gaddafi missiles happened... with the missiles in '86, the curiosity tourism arrived in Lampedusa.” He goes on to explain, “the boat tour, how did the boat tour happen... the tourists wanted to know where the missiles had blown up, in what area... but the missiles blew up south of Lampedusa, so they were not on the island. So, they needed someone to take them.”

This once novel occupation is one of the most popular sources of revenue, with most vessels in the new harbor advertising all-day tours of the island complete with turtle and

dolphin sightings and local delicacies on board. Since those first transactions in '86, boat tours have reliably provided income to Carlo and much of his extended family, with his son and son-in-law setting up their own businesses right next to his vessel in the old harbor. This testimony is one of many highlighting how island residents were able to harness the visibility obtained in connection to this unsettling geopolitical development to build an increasingly competitive tourism industry. Participants consistently identified curiosity as a key element of Lampedusa's tourism offering from the inception of the industry before the increase in migrant arrivals which once again catapulted the island to the front pages.

As evidenced by the presence of the LORAN base, Lampedusa was already a militarized space in the 1980s, pre-dating the wave of securitization of migration in the 1990s contemporaneous with the establishment of Schengen and the EU zone. As Mountz explains, the colonial history of islands as strategic sites for defense and detention results in "residual material landscapes" (2011:118) often used to accommodate modern infrastructure of enforcement. In this sense, Lampedusa was primed for its modern role as a site in the "enforcement archipelago" by its history as a penal colony in the late 1800s and as strategic outpost during World War II, when the Italian government sponsored the construction of forts, barracks, and bases (Taranto, 2017). By 1986, Lampedusa already housed an Italian air force station first established in 1958, and the LORAN facility, which was designated as a NATO base and eventually decommissioned in 1994 (Askavusa, 2018a).

It is through the 1990s that the EU and Italy move towards securitization, linking the system of defense and that of border enforcement. For most of the 1990s, irregular migration into Italy had concentrated along the Adriatic Coast, as people fled violence and

turmoil in the Balkans, and especially Albania. Between the late 1990s and early 2000s, as international agreements between Italy and Albania and the solidification of the EU zone occurred, the Adriatic route became less viable, and the Mediterranean saw an increase in crossings (Lutterback, 2009). In Rome, two key pieces of legislation governing the subject of mobility and border enforcement are passed: law n.39 of 1990, informally known as *Legge Martelli*, and law n.40 of 1998, or *Legge Turco-Napolitano*. It is the latter that importantly shifts the reality of border enforcement on the island of Lampedusa by establishing the first formal facilities of administrative detention, termed *Centri di Permanenza Temporanea* (CPT) (Centers of Temporary Stay). At this time, the facility in use for this purpose was a small building on the airport property, next to the runway.

As participants Sofia, Carlo, Marco, and Stefania explain, prior to the establishment of formal detention facilities, arrivals were on a much smaller scale, featuring little formality and more involvement of the residents. Most of the migrants who reached the island's shores left from nearby Tunisia. Recalling what the management of arrivals was like at the end of the 1990s, business-owner and long-time resident Sofia says,

“Well at the time... and I am talking about 20 years ago. Here we had three carabinieri (policemen), a priest, three people from the Coast Guard, because we have a harbor. We could have never imagined that 20 years later we would have lived what we have.”

A similar testimony emerged during my interview with Marco. He is 34 years old and though he spent many of his formative years on the island where his parents own a business, he is now a transient resident who returns every summer from Naples to sell his artisanal wares. He recalls,

“Since the Schengen border entered into force, everything changed. Immigrants have always arrived in Lampedusa. Before, they used to arrive alone on inflatable rafts. There just wasn't all this... no hotspot, no military, it was simple. The island managed it.”

As these testimonies contend, migration to Lampedusa is nothing new and is not in itself conducive to a state of “crisis.” In fact, many participants explain the strong connections between the island and a history of connectivity, migration and multiculturalism. In doing so, they often refer back to earlier periods in the island history, and especially to the origins of the Sanctuary of the *Madonna di Porto Salvo*, the patron Saint and protector of Lampedusa. Legend says that a hermit lived in the caves where the Sanctuary is now located, where he had set up two altars, one in the tradition of Christianity, and the other in that of Islam. When travelers reached the island in search of shelter and sustenance, the hermit would worship one or the other based on the visitors’ sails (Taranto, 2017). This popular and closely-held story is one of the ways in which the local population links the identity and history of the island to values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Crucially, this local parable is also about adaptability and the sly leveraging of opportunity when dealing with outsiders.

This phase characterized by informal management, sparse arrivals and minimal enforcement gradually came to a close, ushering in a decade of rapid change for Lampedusa and its residents, as the island becomes a pivotal site of externalization.

II. 1998-2007: Towards Professionalization in Rescue and Reception

Though the CTP became operational in 1998, it is in the early 2000s that the mission of administrative detention was more clearly outlined and actualized. In 2002, the right-wing coalition in power¹ passed law n. 189 of 2002, known as *Bossi-Fini*, which hardened penalties for irregular entries and for traffickers, and broadened the role of CPTs. In Lampedusa, arrivals jumped from 923 in 2001, to 9,669 in 2002 [see table 2], motivating

¹ Between May 30th 2001 and April 27th 2006, Italy was governed by the XIV legislature, under the leadership of right-wing politician Silvio Berlusconi.

an expansion in detention capacity which in 2004 would translate in the construction of the facility in Contrada Imbriacola, still (partially) in use today.

Throughout its history, the facility took on an array of nomenclatures; for ease of this discussion I will simply refer to it as “the Center.” The Center is located just outside of town, one of the few structures located in the hinterland and away from the shoreline. It is nestled between two barren hills and enclosed by barbed wire fencing, making very little of the facility visible to onlookers at the entry gate. It is a 10 to 15-minute walk from the Center to via Roma. Capacity fluctuates between 300 and 800 people, currently reported at 500 by the EU Hotspot briefings (Mentzelopoulou and Luyten, 2018). At several points throughout the island’s history starting in the mid 2000s, arrivals outpaced transfers to the mainland, causing overcrowding and the repurposing of other structures to the mission of “reception,” including the *Area Marina Protetta* Building on the harbor.

For the people of Lampedusa, the opening of the Contrada Imbriacola facility presented and still presents both an economic opportunity and a challenge. Many island residents rely on six months of earnings for their yearly expenses, only rarely counting on intermittent work in the winter. With the intensification of bordering that first unfolds in the early 2000s, the island finds itself sustaining a year-round reception/detention activity. According to most participants, 20-30 families residing on the island directly depend on the Center for employment today, a number that has fluctuated along with volume of arrivals. *Sbarchi* remain in the 9,000-18,000 range between 2002 and 2007 [see table 2].

The Center also brought more international controversy due to frequent human rights abuses and episodes of civil unrest. Amongst the most visible condemnations of the facility is the article penned by Fabrizio Gatti, on the cover of the popular magazine

Espresso in the October of 2005. The journalist had spent a week in the center after going undercover as an immigrant (Gatti, 2005). His story includes detailed descriptions of physical and verbal abuse perpetrated by the law enforcement personnel staffing the Center, and of lack of privacy and unsanitary conditions that all residents are subjected to while in detention. This was not an isolated case, as Lampedusa became a recurring feature of media coverage, often in relation to the migratory phenomenon more broadly and the growing number of shipwrecks and people reported dead or missing during the crossings (Nedge 2006, LaRepubblica 2006).

The externalization of detention, the increase in migrant arrivals and the progressive securitization of migration caused military presence on the island not only to intensify, but also to become more visible and intertwined with the tourism industry. Military personnel are unusual in that they linger in Lampedusa beyond the regular tourist season and into the winter months. The increase in the staff brought forth the question of housing, as the island struggles to accommodate tourist demand every year and rental housing remains expensive and limited. Along with Italian military forces, agents from the newly established Frontex reached the island.

As participants including Giacomo, Elena and Alecos explain, military personnel have come to occupy the island's best hotels, with a premium harbor-view that puts them closer to their workplaces. Giacomo is especially cognizant of this phenomenon; as a restaurateur, he forged agreements with a number of leading hotels to grant guests discounted rates to dine at his establishment. These business affiliations have delivered an increase in the number of patrons, while also providing Giacomo with an enhanced understanding of the population served by the exclusive hotels. According to Giacomo, the

military presence in harbor-adjacent hotels remained pronounced in the summer of 2018 when I was conducting fieldwork, even though arrivals had slowed down. On one hand, hotels and restaurants got a large new client base that allows them to continue working year-round. At the same time, the industry has become reliant on the continued presence of the military, creating an incentive for local support of militarization among hoteliers and entrepreneurs.

It is in the early 2000s that in the narrow streets of Lampedusa, populated by carts of artisanal products and crowds of tourists, large police vans equipped with riot shields become a common sight. At the *Giutgia*, the closest beach to the town center, it is not unusual to witness law enforcement engaged in scuba diving training in preparations of rescues and recoveries, while groups of sunbathing tourists stare nearby. Giacomo explains,

“when we were at peak for about 10 years in a row, everywhere you went there was military. You found yourself with the hotel full of military, beaches full of military, bars full of military, everywhere you looked, and rightfully so. In a way they had to be here, it was a time of arrival and it is their job... so we cohabitated. But I can tell you that it weighed on us.”

Not less importantly, the image of militarized carceral island is not entirely compatible with the image of idyllic tourist destination what the island had spent decades cultivating. Scholars in feminist geopolitics have dissected state narratives and practices of securitization, arguing that performances of patrolling and bunkering as protection against a threat ultimately result in the production of fear and categories of people to be feared (Katz 2007, Hyndman 2012). Quoting Cindi Katz, “why would dressing for Desert Storm in the midst of New York City reassure residents and visitors of their safety?” (2007:349). In Lampedusa, the concept of “banal terrorism” introduced by Katz (2007:349) is seen at work through spatial manifestation of an escalating regime of military enforcement and the

experiences of the island residents. As Katz argues, the repetitive and highly visible staging of performances of security works as a constant reminder of the unidentified, ever-present and never-resolved threat among us (2007). In the case of Lampedusa, this staging of security and threat is not simply intended to be viewed and interpreted by the local residents. The media coverage and public attention devoted to the island enable the reproduction of these images and notions on a much larger scale.

As Mediterranean crossings took the center role in public debate and the border grows more militarized and violent, residents saw a shift in the care provided to migrants. From solidarity at the local level through religious and informal institution, the Center provided infrastructure for a system of alternating NGOs, government agencies and initiatives appropriate for a “humanitarian battlefield” (Musaró, 2016:5). Along with the article penned by Gatti (2005), especially significant in these developments was the changing political tide at the end of Berlusconi’s 3rd terms as Prime Minister, which only lasted from 2005 to early 2006. The entering left-wing administration passed an administrative order that turned the CPT into a Center of Welcome and Temporary Rescue (CPSA), stipulating a maximum 48 hour administrative “stay” before migrants are transferred.

In 2006, Project Praesidium also kicked off. This is an initiative initially financed by the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs and enlisting organizations including the Italian Red Cross, UNHCR, Save the Children and OIM to provide assistance to migrants and oversight in the Center (Croce Rossa Italiana, 2019). It should be noted that this approach, first tested in Lampedusa, served as basis for the creation of what Italian non-profit Caritas refers to as “the Lampedusa Model” of humanitarian reception, which was later expanded

to Southern Italy more broadly (Caritas). Scholars in feminist geopolitics have critically analyzed the role of NGOs as expedient alternatives to state-provided services and contributing to what Nagel and Staeheli, citing Jeffrey, refer to as the “gentrification of civil society” (2015: 227). Central to these criticisms is the notion that while NGOs promote narratives of rescue and non-violence, the violence at the border is depoliticized, removed from its context. Additionally, international NGOs can take over important governing and administrative roles which were previously in the hand of local actors, shrinking the role of residents in management and decision-making.

At the end of this second phase, externalization, humanitarianism and securitization are all clearly at play in Lampedusa, which by end of 2007 is becoming an increasingly common sight in national and international news media and an important laboratory for bordering. As NGOs, military and specialized personnel take charge of the management of international mobility and the border, the island witnesses the rise of a complex and profitable regime of bordering along with the professionalization of care.

III. 2008-2013: The Height of Frontierization

2008 marks a turning point in Lampedusa’s history. That year, 30,657 migrants arrived on the island, 82% of all sea arrivals in Italy [see Table 2]. Additionally, it is on June 28th, 2008 that “the Door to Europe,” one of Lampedusa’s most recognizable monuments is unveiled. The five-meter-tall sculpture by Mimmo Paladino looks to Tunisia from Lampedusa’s Southern shores. The impetus for the project comes from the national NGO *Amani*, supported by the local organization *Alternativa Giovani*. The monument was intended to be both a memorial to the lives lost in the crossing, and a message of welcoming and openness (VisitLampedusa 2019, Bolzoni 2008).

By 2008, the left-wing government of Romano Prodi faltered, ushering the return of Berlusconi as PM, with Maroni as Minister of the Interior. In early 2009, the Center designation was temporarily changed from CPSA to Center of Identification and Expulsion (CIE). This move is about more than nomenclature, as it configures the island of Lampedusa as wholly frontier rather than part of the national territory. At this phase of externalization, all of those who reach Lampedusa are treated as if they had yet to reach Italy, still in transit. This framing recognizes the island as extraterritorial and further complicates the residents' relationship with mainland actors by adding to the island's legislative peripheralization and solidifying its role as a site of externalization.

During interviews, many participants strongly maintained that life on the island continues to suffer the effect of what is more than just geographic or legislative distance from Italy's core. 14 out of 16 participants explained that while the people in Lampedusa pay taxes and are expected to abide by the laws of the state, their basic expectations for government services and assurances are not met. Examples of significant gaps in institutional support are many, affecting infrastructure, education, resident mobility and access to healthcare among others. Born and raised in Lampedusa, 27-year-old Elena is not among the local youth who left the island to attend school on the mainland or in Sicily. Having attended elementary school, middle school and high school classes in the local facilities, Elena recounted instances of widespread flooding and the common occurrence of teacher absenteeism. According to the participant, disruptions to educational continuity are especially common in high school classes because most of the assigned teachers are not from Lampedusa and often leave their families at home, prompting frequent travels. The elementary school is in such a state of disrepair that Elena recalls several instances in

which the local administration had to close it down, holding classes in the high school during afternoon shifts after the older students left.

On the mobility front, Lampedusa faces additional challenges. The vessels that make the daily crossing from Lampedusa to Porto Empedocle are obsolete and faulty, making the nine-hour journey to Sicily unpredictable and uncomfortable. Weather permitting, the island airport maintains year-round daily flights to Palermo, with additional direct flights to other Italian cities including Rome, Bologna and Verona scheduled in the summer months. Though the local hospital does not perform many important medical tests or procedures, the residents only get a minor discount on tickets to reach better-equipped facilities, creating massive costs for those with chronic conditions. In the summer of 2018, the price of a roundtrip resident airplane ticket from Lampedusa to Palermo amounted to €111.33, as advertised on site by travel agency *Agenzia “Le Pelagie.”* The cost of the same flight for a non-resident was €137.91.

In the face of long-standing infrastructural inadequacies and what 15 out of 16 residents identified as issues of chronic “mismanagement” of enforcement and migration, tensions between the local residents and agents of border enforcement intensified during the 2000s. Even as Lampedusa was becoming a central and increasingly visible geography of enforcement, many old challenges remained unmitigated, and new ones emerged.

In January 2009, 4000 residents of Lampedusa took to the streets in protest, blocking buses of migrants destined for deportation and giving interviews denouncing intensifying militarization (Repubblica, January 24th 2009). In February 2009, the forced repatriation of 107 Tunisians sparked violent clashes in the center, which culminated in a fire that destroyed one of the buildings and caused significant damage to others. 24 were

injured. The fire also produced toxic smoke, which motivated a temporary ban on the use of water from the municipal storm water cistern. At this time, the mayor of Lampedusa was Bernadino De Rubeis² (Comune di Lampedusa e Linosa, 2017). He served in this position until 2012. He is quoted in *La Repubblica*, saying

“Thanks to the work of minister Maroni we have risked a carnage in Lampedusa, affecting both migrants and the people who work inside the center and the population. He has transformed the center in a *lager* [concentration camp], the immigrants are exasperated.” (February 18th, 2009)

For the rest of 2009 and early 2010, the Italian government continued with the line of preventative expulsions, a practice repeatedly condemned by international watchdogs and government bodies, including the UNHCR. Touting two years of diminished arrivals thanks to the hardline approach, the Center was even temporarily closed in 2010.

Tensions reached a peak in 2011, in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. In 2011 alone, 51.753 people arrived to the Pelagie [see Table 2]. At this point, the Center had a maximum capacity of 800. By the end of March, the estimated number of migrants on the island surpassed 6000. Though arrivals had significantly increased, it was the refusal of the government to organize large scale transfers to the mainland that precipitated the “emergency.” All interview participants unanimously identified the events that transpired in 2011 as peak “crisis” in Lampedusa, some like Sara and Leonardo saying that it was the only real emergency the island has seen. Others, including Giovanni and Alecos, refer to these times as the days of “invasion,” when outsiders starkly outnumbered residents.

² In 2018, De Rubeis was sentenced to six years and nine months in prison in connection to a corruption and bribery scheme. Investigations found that De Rubeis and a number of his council members had demanded kickbacks from entrepreneurs and service providers (Russello 2013, LaRepubblica, 2018).

As interview participants explained, for most of Lampedusa's recent history the management of migration unfolded within the Center, with migrants outside the facility mostly presenting little concern for the local population. In early 2011, the whole island became a site of detention, one that the public eye becomes fixated on. Giacomo explains,

“The Italian government and Europe had decided that they [the migrants] had to be on this rock, but they forgot about the 6000 residents of Lampedusa”

The soccer field, the *Area Marina Protetta* center, the hill above the commercial harbor, and the town center and squares were packed with people, often without access to proper shelter, public bathrooms, and food. The state of chaos that ensued was such that Cristina, a participant who has lived in Lampedusa for over 15 years after moving there from Sicily, decided to leave the island along with her husband and her son to go back home. She says,

“I think it was 2010 or 2011 that I left. I am telling you, my husband turned in his resignation notice. One could not live here. The harbor was full of police... everybody was... people relieving themselves on the streets... how can keep your son here.”

After a short stint, Cristina and her family returned to Lampedusa as they were not able to find equally profitable work elsewhere. It should be noted that this period of complete disruption of daily life and activities on the island lasted for several months and represented itself to a diminished degree several times throughout the year. During this time, the island residents mobilized to fill in the massive gaps in organization and reception. Assunta, an artist and business owner who was working in the municipal administration at the time, took on advocacy roles to demand intervention and aid from the Italian government. Other participants, like Elena, Giacomo and Giovanni recalled islanders providing food, shelter and clothing when the institutions like NGOS, the Center and emergency government personnel were unable to do so.

A partial resolution came at the end of March, when then-Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi made a formal visit to the island with the promise of rapid migrant transfers to the mainland in what media outlets and participants alike refer to as a “show” (La Repubblica, March 30th, 2011). Seven interviewees were especially critical of this political visit, during which the former Prime Minister also announced that he would buy a beachfront home in Lampedusa³ and spoke about commitment to turning the island into a modern and highly successful tourism destination. Despite the highly publicized governmental intervention, the islanders remained outspoken about the role that mismanagement played in creating the difficult circumstances. Municipal council member Vincenzo D’Ancona famously launched a petition to rename the hill where many migrants had waited and lived as “Collina della Vergogna” (Hill of Shame) to emphasize how the situation that played out on the island represents a scar on the dignity of Italy and the international community (Rai, March 30th 2011).

The feeling that the residents had been left alone during the Winter and Spring of 2011 would only intensify with the coming of the summer season, and a revenue drop across Lampedusa’s tourism industry as a result of diminishing tourist arrivals [see Table 3].

³ Silvio Berlusconi still owns the house that he purchased in 2011 and went on to remodel. The residence is located in Cala Francese.

Table 3: Data on airline passenger arrivals to the airport of Lampedusa between 2005 and 2017 (ENAC)

Passenger Arrivals on Commercial Flights (both scheduled and charter)	
Year	Number of Passengers
2007	89,476
2008	95,246
2009	91,494
2010	95,010
2011	85,552
2012	83,851
2013	96,430
2014	86,651
2015	90,886
2016	111,409
2017	124,222

Angelo, who moved to Lampedusa in 2000 from northern Italy and owns a thriving ice-cream shop on the island, recalls,

“At one point in 2011 there was no tourism. If you would sit at the beginning of via Roma, you could see all the way to the end counting 10 people and no more. This is when the Lampedusani rebelled. Not much, but they rebelled... not that they did not want to welcome, or that the migrants were a nuisance. It was how the matter was treated. We organized, put on demonstrations.”

Assunta echoes Angelo’s concerns from the perspective of somebody who was very actively involved in the municipal administration at this time of unprecedented economic crisis. She says,

“There was a time that in Lampedusa, we did not work. We have spent roughly four years... we have risked... four years of true economic crisis. In 2010, 2011, 2012 tourists did not come to Lampedusa, because they were afraid. At the time I worked at townhall and I requested a line of credit for entrepreneurs because we were all on the verge of bankruptcy, and here there was no work.”

On September 21st, 2011, during what usually is a time of celebration when the island comes together to honor the patron saint, the people of Lampedusa took to the streets again, this time armed with baseball bats and tire irons. Migrants who demanded to be

transferred to the mainland had taken three gas tanks from a nearby restaurants and threatened to set them on fire in front of the fuel station in the harbor. The locals led a violent charge, throwing stones and attacking not just the migrants, but also law enforcement and journalists, who they accused of contributing to the situation. That same afternoon, Minister of the Interior Maroni promised to organize rapid transfers (Ziniti, 2011).

Over the following two years, and to some degree to this day, Lampedusa became hugely symbolic and omnipresent site of bordering, a small municipality turned into a political stage for a myriad of visiting public figures, from Marine le Pen (Perrault, 2011) to Pope Francis (Carli, 2013). In 2012, former vice-mayor and environmentalist Giusi Nicolini won the local elections. The next critical and path-changing event in the island's history would unfold on October 3rd, 2013.

It was early morning when eight friends out at sea for a fishing trip followed what they believed to be the screaming of seagulls to reach the site of one of the deadliest shipwrecks in recent history. The vessel had left Libya a day earlier, carrying approximately 540 people. The ship had reached Lampedusa in the middle of the night and stopped just half a mile off the coast of the Isle of Rabbits beach, selected by TripAdvisor as Europe's most beautiful earlier that same year (Corrao, 2014). Sofia and Angelo were both on the fishing boat that day. The following reconstruction of the events from that night is based on their interviews, contextualized through the inclusion of news coverage and reports.

The migrant boat had reached Lampedusa at night, and the darkness along with some faulty equipment made it impossible to approach. One of the shipwreck's survivors

who Angelo keeps in contact with says that the vessel was circumnavigated several times by two grey vessels. The description provided by the witness matches the appearance of the vessels in use by the Italian Revenue Police in Lampedusa. At this point, the speed boats left without providing any information about an upcoming rescue mission or giving instructions. With the overcrowded boat now alone at sea after a difficult journey, the smuggler lit a blanket on fire to the attention of the authorities. This is when a piece fell creating a blaze that spread quickly through the decrepit vessel, quickly sinking it. It is estimated that the boat began to sink around 4:30 am.

While it is impossible to produce evidence of these developments outside of individual testimonies of survivors, one thing that is documented is that upon receiving the emergency call it took the law enforcement one hour to reach the scene, during which many more lives were lost. The 8 friends arrived on the scene around 6:30 am. On a small boat meant for leisure and matriculated to carry up to ten people, the eight friends were able to take 47 migrants back to the harbor. Angelo says that they launched the initial SOS call as soon as they understood what was happening. He says,

“I called them at 6:30 am... and they have tried to wring a signature out of me... they called me at the port authority after 7 or 8 days because I continued to declare that we had let them know between 6:30 and 20 to 7. But they arrived out at sea at 7:25 am. Do you know how many died in that window? Because they had their internal issues, but we do not care about their internal issues”

Only 155 people survived, with 368 confirmed casualties and 20 missing, their bodies never recovered.

This event received media coverage through much of Europe: from shock, to horror, to calls for unity in mourning (IlPost 2013, il Fatto Quotidiano 2013). The

shipwreck created an emotional response that can be better understood by looking to Tickin's writing about the use of humanitarian narratives in France:

“[...]while humanitarianism is often understood as driven by emotions—compassion, empathy, benevolence, pity—in fact, it relies on a very narrow emotional constellation, and this in turn constrains our responses. Humanitarianism provides little room to feel and recognize the value of particular lives (versus life in general), or to mourn particular deaths (versus suffering in general); and little impetus to animate political change.” (2016:256)

In the wake of the shipwreck, the local population saw the signs and heard the stories of neglect on the part of official agents of enforcement, including the coast guard. All the same, they found themselves faced with national coverage of a humanitarian tragedy. The shipwreck and its casualties as my research participants witnessed them, reveal that mismanagement and delayed action exacerbated the situation⁴.

Many individuals and groups on the island remained vocal about the unanswered questions and disturbing allegations against the port authority. The Askavusa collective produced and circulated online a report and video called “Lampedusa, Oct. 3rd, 2013, The shipwreck of truth” (Askavusa, 2018b). Additionally, Lampedusa's eye doctor and member of that first rescue team had his story captured in a book, written with the collaboration of BBC journalist Emma Kirby. *L'Ottico di Lampedusa* (Lampedusa's Eye Doctor) describes the dramatic rescue, as well as the man's experience coming up against a wall of disinformation and secrecy and being target of intimidatory and forceful behavior by law enforcement in the days after the shipwreck (Kirby and Calza, 2017). Angelo and Sofia both maintain connections with a number of the survivors that they helped to safety.

⁴ Arguably, even if law enforcement had followed protocol in the morning of October 3rd, the conditions that make the Mediterranean crossing so dangerous have very little about them that is “natural.” Asylum seekers as well as migrants are forced to pay exorbitant fees to secure illegal passage with smugglers traveling on unreliable vessels, in inhumane conditions.

They also continue to discuss their experience and the circumstances around the shipwreck with tourists, researchers and other outsiders to disrupt the notion that the event was unavoidable or that increased military enforcement is a fit solution in preventing more casualties.

The October 3rd shipwreck was closely followed by another deadly incident, on October 11th. This time, 268 perished; at least 60 of the victims were children and many were fleeing from Syria. Though this took place approximately 75 miles from Lampedusa, the island was commonly associated with the event. This time too, institutional neglect was at the root of the high death toll, with the Italian navy refusing to answer repeated calls for help over the course of five hours. On October 18th, a mere two weeks after the first shipwreck, the events in Lampedusa were declared as the impetus for the creation of a new maritime monitoring operation by the Italian Navy.

The new military initiative was named “Mare Nostrum” – a security response to what was presented as a humanitarian need. The central aims of the operation were “safeguarding lives out at sea and bringing human traffickers to justice” (Senato della Repubblica, 2019). Operation Mare Nostrum combined national security and humanitarian rescue, further blurring the boundary between the two and intensifying what scholars refer to as “the humanitarian-security nexus” (Garelli et al 2018, Andersson 2017). In analyzing the visual politics of the operation, Musaró explains the humanitarian character of the highly-publicized monitoring effort, one that could be followed by far away audiences through an official Twitter account (Musarò, 2016:8). Ultimately, the “emergency” declared by the national government allows for an expansion of the space of “rescue” beyond national waters. With the start of *Mare Nostrum* came a move towards maritime

enforcement carried out by vessels too large to enter Lampedusa's harbor, shifting the island's role as a geography of enforcement and ushering in a new phase.

IV. 2013-Present: The End?

When I arrived in Lampedusa in the early summer of 2018, the Center had been declared temporarily closed by newly-elected mayor Salvatore Martello, who campaigned on the promise of making the change permanent. The internationally popular former-Mayor Giusi Nicolini who held the leadership role from 2012 to 2017 on a message of solidarity came in third, surpassed by two candidates who had promoted hardline approaches to the migration phenomenon. Countless times during my stay, participants and casual interlocutors alike told me that arrivals in Lampedusa and the island's role as a site of border enforcement were in fact "over." Others maintained a much more skeptical outlook, emphasizing that because the crisis and the arrivals were always organized, there is no certainty that Lampedusa's role as port of mass arrival is over. How did enforcement on the island take such a turn? Are the days of mass arrival and dramatic staging of bordering really over for Lampedusa?

After 2013 and with renewed intensity after a shipwreck in April 2015 claimed 800 victims just off the coast of Libya, Italy and the European Union pursued externalization to the high seas and to the sender countries. They did so by cracking down on smuggling and investing in maritime military enforcement and rescue. When Mare Nostrum ended in 2014, EU-partners launch Operation Triton followed by Operation Themis in 2018, both run by Frontex. In April 2015 the European Commission also announced a new "hotspot" strategy; this designated a number of first reception facilities across Italy and Greece "that were faced with the arrival of disproportionate numbers of migrants" (Mentzelopoulou and

Luyten, 2018:2). As of October 2015, Lampedusa's Center is a hotspot with an official capacity of 500⁵.

In the March of 2018 when I was preparing for fieldwork, the Ministry of the Interior announced that the facility would close for renovations after being set ablaze by a group of migrants earlier that winter. The news came on the heels of the suicide of a Tunisian man named Ali earlier in January (Camilli, 2018) and followed additional reports of human rights abuses by humanitarian associations. When I arrived in Lampedusa in late May, the status of the hotspot remained unclear, somewhere between the official news of a temporary shutdown, and the unofficial reporting that activities were carrying on. My question to participants during each interview I asked whether the migrant reception center was open or closed at that moment, yielded a multitude of answers including “no,” “who knows, it is only closed if nobody shows up,” “yes, temporarily because they set it on fire,” and “it’s a mystery.”

Nevertheless, the Center proved to be a popular topic of discussions in interviews in which residents widely disagreed about whether or not the Center should and/or will reopen. Aligning himself with the starkest of condemnations of the facility, Marco says:

“I believe that a center such as this should not exist in Lampedusa. Period. One can manage the migration situation, the phenomenon, in an intelligent manner. Also, with the safeguarding of the human rights of these people in mind. The reception center is a *Lager*. It is nothing but a prison.”

Later in the interview, Marco also referred to the facility as a “Guantanamo.” The disturbing association of the reception center with a “Lager” or a concentration camp was

⁵ The island's Center was the first EU hotspot to become fully operational in Italy. This arrangement is intended to provide EU support to the personnel in the identification and reception stages, as well as oversight in channeling applicants into the appropriate protocols for asylum and ensuring compliance with the principle of non-refoulement.

also evoked by Anna and Stefania. Leonardo also picked up that same language to refute it, as part of his denial of the reports about the facility:

“If the reception center was a concentration camp, which it has never been, then I would be opposed to the re-opening. [...] The center, yes... it is managed by an external body which is not from the island, and deals with accepting these migrants, giving them food, clothing, and if they have health problems help them. But that’s it, everything is very organized, everything really good as a service”

Though the future of the facility long-term remains unknown, during my time on the island and since then, the facility has remained operational, with authorities directing the occasional arrivals to the hotspot Contrada Imbriacola. The emphasis on maritime interception and large operations has redirected the focus from Lampedusa’s small harbor, to the better-equipped Pozzallo, Trapani and Taranto, among others.

Starting in 2015, the residents also began to see an increase in tourism that some participants including Sara and Elena call “a boom.” What might seem counterintuitive is that it is the migration phenomenon that is in some way credited for renewed growth of the tourism industry, in a development that evokes the sensationalism of 1986. During interviews, residents showed a high level of awareness of how geopolitical processes go on to impact tourist and migrant arrivals. For instance, long-time transient resident Ruben, who as restaurant host and promoter spends much of his day interacting with tourists, points to growing fears of terrorist attacks and instability in the MENA region as a fundamental factor driving up tourist presences in Lampedusa, a safer alternative. Though residents had a variety of opinions about the push/pull factors of incoming migrants and the way the Italian government and European Community should manage the migratory phenomenon in Lampedusa and beyond, they consistently identified the “managed” or “organized” nature of arrivals, and their consequences on the island.

As participants point out, a majority of the *sbarchi* (disembarkation) were not spontaneous; instead, often times the Coast Guard intercepts migrants during the crossing, sometimes much closer to Tunisia or Libya than to Lampedusa itself, to then return to the island. As participants repeatedly argue, migration to Lampedusa is nothing new and does not present an emergency at times of efficient management. Arrivals are a part of the past, present, and likely future of the island. Additionally, the migration patterns were only deeply disruptive to daily life on the island in instances when transfers to the mainland were halted. According to my research participants, the narrative of invasion is in contrast with the reality of a concerted effort to externalize detention to the island.

In presenting this argument, island residents provide a window into the geopolitics of mobility through their own perspectives and experiences. Scholarship in feminist geopolitics has argued for an analysis of the mundane and embodied dimensions of mobility, to both contextualize its space-making ability and to reveal its political character (Hyndman, 2012:248). In this sense, the movement of migrants, refugees, and tourists on Lampedusa is not simply impacted by individual choices and impetus for traveling. The chosen route, mode of travel, media discourses, and political attitudes towards a given group or location all importantly impact one's mobility in ways that are obscured by an analysis of the phenomenon centering the role of the disembodied and dehistoricized nation-state (Ashutosh and Mountz, 2012). The resident population of Lampedusa, in pushing back on media narratives, interacting with migrant populations, tourists, humanitarian organizations, researchers and political actors, observes and contributes to the production of new geopolitics of mobility at a highly symbolic site.

Though some believe that Lampedusa's role in the spectacle of bordering has reached its curtain call, they also recognize that the years of persistent coverage, political speeches, and real conditions of humanitarian emergency have deeply influenced outsiders' perceptions of the island. Giacomo reflects on his personal experience with these representations, saying,

“For 10 years, all the media publicity was negative, and we have been very affected by it. This has developed a psychological fear that is part of public opinion. What do I want to say... when I used to go visit my uncle in Milan 15 years ago, there were people at the cafés, Milanese who would tell me ‘oh you are from Lampedusa? How beautiful, the sea, the *Caretta Caretta* [turtles]...’ so I had an identity. Now, if I go to Milan but even Palermo itself, they tell you ‘You are from Lampedusa? Ah I am sorry, the island of *sbarchi* [disembarkation]’ so... under this aspect they really have altered our identity... they recognize Lampedusa as the island of *sbarchi* and that is not right.”

While it is difficult to assess how this change in identity goes on to impact interactions with outsiders, it is clear the enforcement agenda put forth by Italy and EU has deeply affected the way the island sees itself and its relationship with outsiders. The administrative excision from the national territory, and the use of Lampedusa as a convenient site of externalization have in ways emboldened island connections and narratives, calling into question the bonds to the mainland and sovereign authorities. Both during interviews and more informal interactions, residents invoked the idea of Lampedusa as non-Europe, non-Italy, Africa, or as only considered and remembered by political actors in fashioning deeply exploitative plans, who do not consider the fact that there is a resident population. As Giglioli recognizes, the claims that Lampedusa and its residents are not fully part of Italy importantly reveal the fiction of the border as a sharp line of division. She writes,

“These claims contrast starkly with the binary media representations of the Mediterranean as a ‘civilisational fault-line’ between migrants hailing from a ‘dysfunctional south,’ and a rich and democratic north that must figure out how to ‘absorb’ them” (2017:408)

This feeble sense of belonging to the Italian state has strongly reemerged in the past two decades, but it ultimately harkens back to the colonial history of the island and of Italy itself. Throughout Lampedusa's history, the island has been exploited as a site for the remote detention of undesirable populations, its resources extracted to the point of almost total depletion, and its people forced to emigrate in the face of isolation and lack of government accountability.

Collective amnesia, or as Stoler calls it "colonial aphasia" (2011) isolates current patterns of injustice from their historical roots, also obscuring the origins of the modern migratory phenomenon in European imperialism and colonialism. In Italy, this is further complicated by a history of internal colonialism that framed the southern part of the country as backwards and liminal in comparison to the industrialized north. This conceptualization resulted in systematic government disinvestment from the southern regions, south-to-north migration, and discriminatory representations of the "Meridione" (Southern Italy). (Giglioli 2017, del Boca 2003).

In this sense, I argue that the current role of Lampedusa as laboratory for spectacular narratives and enforcement tactics should be conceptualized as the continued iteration of colonial registries. These should frame not only the discussion of island exploitation, but also that of the migration phenomenon itself. Connecting the present relationship between Lampedusa and mainland actors and recognizing a pattern of abuse, I argue that it is all the more crucial to give a platform to island perspectives to look beyond hegemonic discourses and address the material construction of emergency and difference, and the way it shapes the lives of those living at and crossing the border.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented an overview of bordering on the island of Lampedusa, integrating elements of conventional geopolitics such as legislative action and changes in enforcement with the embodied experiences of a sample of island residents. In doing so, I have both contributed to further contextualizing the human dimension of processes of securitization, externalization and humanitarianism, and showcased how the resident population is far from a passive subject of international relations as its members question, resist, and at times contribute to the reconfiguring of the geopolitics of mobility. By providing a historical account of the role of Lampedusa as border, I insert the current patterns into a framework that considers colonial ties between island and mainland, Europe and North Africa, and the North and South of Italy, to transcend the narratives of crisis and emergency and look to the systematic and intentional changes in enforcement that form the circumstances for this particular political moment.

In order to further detail how island residents are implicated in the national narrative of bordering and in the production of border spaces, practices and representations, I begin the next chapter by discussing how different agents engage in borderwork, looking to interventions at the individual and organizational level. Then, I turn to sites of bordering on the island to further the argument that spaces of bordering are relational and contested and that through an analysis of these spaces, it is possible to shed more light on the production of difference and grassroots strategies of disruption.

Chapter V: Agents and Spaces of Bordering in Lampedusa

Having provided a broad overview of bordering and some of its effects on the island of Lampedusa and its people over the years, I now examine more in-depth some of the ways in which participants and other residents have engaged in what Rumford terms “borderwork” (2012, 2016). Additionally, I look to a number of island sites as examples reflecting the relationality of bordering in Lampedusa. I argue that this lens enriches the discussion and analysis of the Mediterranean border by showing the highly-contested nature of processes of securitization, externalization and humanitarianism on the island, one that is often not captured by media narratives and political speeches centering “emergency.”

The focus on spatial manifestations of bordering across a number of sites is rooted in the recognition of the political importance of space. Massey’s theorization of space as a product of interrelations (2005) enables my approach to these sites as constantly-shifting archives which make visible the contested nature of bordering, and the divergent interpretations of “crisis” in Lampedusa. In approaching space as a vehicle for storytelling, I incorporate insights from authors including Le Espiritu (2014) and Gade (2010), who look to “scriptural landscapes” to conceptualize how traumatic events, political aims and identity narratives are memorialized through space.

In this chapter, I seek to center the interventions and acts of resistance of the residents to highlight how they revendicated their agency in the face of government exploitation, lack of assistance, and the island’s rise to international fame. I only begin to explore the complexity of the resident population, made up of just over 6000 individuals

motivated by widely divergent ideologies, economic ties, and personal aims; As Rumford explains,

“seeing like the border does not necessarily mean identifying with the subaltern, the dispossessed, the downtrodden, the marginal. The border may be the project of those seeking to gain further advantage in society: entrepreneurs or affluent citizens for examples.” (2012:897)

It is certainly the case that engagement with bordering in Lampedusa is motivated by a number of factors. This consideration is further complicated by Lampedusa “islandness” and its pronounced reliance on the mainland for services, funds, enforcement personnel and tourist revenue. Here, I look at how ordinary people shape the border, and how bordering as a cultural encounter shapes local spaces and activism.

To begin my discussion, I turn once again to the spectacular retellings of bordering on Lampedusa and discuss the representation of the resident population under the trope of the “good Lampedusano.” I look to diverse forms of engagement to highlight what is a much more complex snapshot of resident interventions and motivations for engaging with bordering. Then, I discuss a number of island sites to showcase how residents have intervened in spaces of enforcement, symbolism and memory to complicate or critique the practices and representations of bordering offered by official personnel, humanitarian agents, and media organizations.

I. Lampedusa’s Residents as Agents of Bordering

With the progressive intensification of Lampedusa’s role as border, the island itself became a symbol of solidarity, with the resident population playing a supportive role as “Lampedusani buoni,” the benevolent locals. The attribution of “the island of welcome” moniker is recurring in news media and commentary, with articles especially highlighting the efforts of the locals in making food, keeping the town clean, opening their doors to

those in need of shelter (Scavo 2018, Sannino 2019, MeltingPot 2011, Benelli 2016). Even at times of protest, as in the case of the September 2011 violent clashes, this familiar trope figures prominently. In *LaRepubblica*, Zinniti writes

“The women who were at the dock with a plate of hot soup and clothes for the tiny migrants earlier this summer, now walk around the streets with stones in the pockets of their kitchen aprons. The men organize in patrols to uncover ‘those criminal pieces of shit.’” (September 21st, 2011).

Though the island became an important node of solidarity, this framing of the “good Lampedusano” draws attention to humanitarian interventions aimed at tending to the migrants’ most basic needs rather than to forms of activism aimed at long-term change and critiques of state practices that are also taking place on the island.

The trope of Lampedusa as an island of solidarity is best exemplified by the campaign for the Nobel Peace Prize, taken up after the October 3rd, 2013 shipwreck that claimed 368 lives just half a mile off the coast. Once again showing the importance of the media in crafting and upholding spectacular narratives of Lampedusa, the candidacy was proposed by director Gianfranco Rosi and supported by magazine *L’Espresso*. Ultimately, an impressive 55,909 signatures were collected, including that of German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (Gatti, 2016). Gatti, the journalist who had authored the report on human rights abuses unfolding within the reception center also published a piece to support the campaign, in which he wrote:

“A symbolic gesture for the fishermen, the women, and the children of Lampedusa and Lesbos to see recognized their heroic diversity in the new rampant culture of the barbed wire” (Gatti, 2016).

The existence of the figure of the “good Lampedusano” is one that the residents are aware of, though some are more critical of it than others, who recognize themselves in the idealized citizen helper. The most popular criticism is one articulated by Giovanni, who says that while the people of Lampedusa are expected to collect prizes for welcome and

solidarity, they still do not have access to basic services, including a maternity ward or a reliable vessel connecting them to Porto Empedocle. This interpretation sees the trope as a way of obscuring the reality of what is like to live in Lampedusa by emphasizing a flattering reputation of welcome. In talking about media representations of Lampedusa, Sofia says:

“The news that have come out of Lampedusa were false, and they have created a mythology, because of course... there are those that bring to the maximum level the “Welcoming Lampedusano,” and there are those who take us for prehistoric beings.”

The spectacularized stories of local solidarity and rescue are also in open contradiction with the other images coming out of the island, of detention and violence. This image of a community of care serves a pivotal role in silencing reports the abuses of power and state-sanctioned violence that were contemporaneously taking place on the island, instead drawing attention to the lack of assistance. This framing also associates the Lampedusani with unquestioned “goodness,” a move that is both unrealistic and potentially damaging as interventions by locals to expand the powers of detention and enforcement are under-reported or misinterpreted.

The humanitarian framing of Lampedusa and its people importantly leaves out is all the ways in which the state has criminalized solidarity at the local level and enlisted island residents in unofficial enforcement. This dynamic is not uncommon. Scholars including Huysman and Coleman (2006, 2009) have explained that the securitization of migration happens not only through formal acts of enforcement, but also through interactions at all levels of social organizations. In the case of Lampedusa, the securitization of public life is partially concealed by the spectacle of Lampedusa Island of Welcome, one that creates a dichotomy of military enforcement and civilian care and obscure the ways in which local efforts contribute to official operations. An example of the

mundane ways in which residents are asked to police migrant behavior is that merchants and restaurant owners were mandated to refuse them the sale of alcohol and tobacco products. While the municipal ordinance is presented as rooted in concerns for public safety, it is a clear attempt at governing behavior perceived “immoral” and performances that do not abide to the standards of migrant deference and victimhood.

Island residents also advanced their own dichotomies and descriptions of good versus bad migrants that can be contextualized alongside of the analysis of moral geographies of asylum seekers in Italy by Garelli and Tazzioli (2013). Participants consistently differentiated between bogus cellphone-wielding economic migrants from Tunisia and respectable refugees from countries such as Eritrea, Somalia, and Syria. The port of departure was another factor in determining deservingness in the eyes of some participants, with those leaving torture in Libya higher in the hierarchy than those departing nearby Tunisia aware of the “weak spots” in Italy’s borders.

In the unfolding of a media spectacle that alternated the depiction of horrors and the images of benevolent rescue, a number of local residents have become main actors. Former mayor Giusi Nicolini was at the center of dramatized coverage, becoming a face of Lampedusa in news media and tv panels. In one instance, she is defined as a “Rising Star,” while an article on AGI calls her a “Lioness committed to peace” (Palet 2016, AGI 2017). Nicolini was mayor from 2012 to 2017. Amongst her most famous engagements are a 2016 state dinner with President Obama and then-Prime-Minister Matteo Renzi and winning the Stuttgart Peace Prize in 2015. Nicolini has repeatedly advocated for a strategy of migration management that is long term and not focused on a moment of emergency, while also repeatedly speaking in favor of NGOs and the system of humanitarianism,

recording an ad for *Mediterranea* in 2018 (Seminara, 2018). Her media campaign to make Lampedusa synonymous with welcoming did not yield positive electoral results. She was voted out in 2017, coming in third in an election that favored hardliner Totó Martello. She has received additional awards since leaving office, including most recently the Martinetto Prize by the Academy of the Sciences in Turin.

Besides Nicolini, one of the most recognizable faces from Lampedusa is that of Pietro Bartolo, also known as the “migrant doctor.” Bartolo has gained international fame for his advocacy for migrant rights, and his interviews about Lampedusa and the humanitarian devastation he has witnessed (BBC 2016, Barbiroglio 2017, Bartolo 2018). He was famously involved in the filming and promotion of the “Fuocoammare,” documentary awarded the Golden-Bear at the 2016 Berlin Film Festival. In 2016, Bartolo published his first book with the collaboration of journalist Lidia Tillotta, titled *Lacrime di Sale* (Tears of Salt). The short memoir, also available in English, is introduced by the publisher Norton & Company with the following statement: “The internationally best-selling personal story of “the doctor on the front lines of the migrant crisis (CNN).”

The book intertwines the re-telling of harrowing migrant journeys featuring detailed descriptions of injuries and abuse, with flash-backs from Bartolo’s childhood in the poor fishing community of a pre-tourism Lampedusa. Through first-person narration, Bartolo reconstructs his sleepless nights and the pressure that his career and dedication put on his family. The cover is a picture of Bartolo standing on a cliff, with a grave expression on his face. He is depicted in black and white, in sharp contrast with the stormy and colorful sea in the background. At the top, right above the title, is printed: “my quotidian story as doctor of Lampedusa, between pain and suffering” (Bartolo and Tillotta, 2016). While the

book undoubtedly tells the stories of migrants, *the* story is that of Bartolo, a hero that was made by the weathering of the humanitarian crisis. The migrant stories are subordinate to that of Bartolo, as they serve as windows into the “quotidian” trauma that he is exposed to, the means of his emotional journey, his becoming the renowned “migrant doctor.”

Though Bartolo is a ubiquitous spokesperson of Lampedusa as an island of welcome, his profession positions him as a fundamental agent of bordering, one that is also inserted in the national framework of enforcement. Health professionals, from nurses, to doctors, to medical examiners, play an especially important role in assessing and quantifying the trauma and abuse suffered by incoming migrants. It is on the basis of their expert opinions that asylum decisions are made, and the grueling evidence of a humanitarian emergency is circulated. As argued by Fassin, being able to provide proof of illness or visible signs of atrocities may be the only, or the most viable gateway to being given access on “humanitarian grounds” (2012: 86). According to Miriam Ticktin, the system of asylum and migration management more broadly requires specific performances, one of victimhood by the migrant and one of authority by the medical official.

The bureaucracy of asylum dictates standards and creates expectations for asylum seekers, who must make their suffering readable to an enforcement apparatus that is foreign to them (Ticktin, 2011:61). Medical experts including Pietro Bartolo are given the *de facto* status of immigration officials that find themselves reproducing images and notions of compassion and decide what qualifies as humanitarian need. Because of the biopolitical nature of the asylum system based on medical assessment of human suffering, and because of the high-visibility platform that he claimed in the media border spectacle, Bartolo has become a powerful player. While he has capitalized on this, often through the disclosure

of intimate patient details, he is an example of an island resident that has influenced the national conversation by inserting his “daily” personal experiences in the spectacularized coverage and using them to advocate for change, as limited and illusory as that may be if the response is a purely humanitarian one aimed at addressing the “here and now” of the so-called crisis, and not the conditions which produce it.

Having reviewed some of the factors and interventions contributing to Lampedusa’s framing as Island of Welcome in the face of emergency, I now look to different forms of engagement in the resident population, from the formation of networks to continue supporting migrants from afar, to acts of resistance that address the political conditions that produce the current migratory phenomenon and border violence. There are many examples of such engagements and they surfaced regularly during interviews. These interventions are especially transformative when they go beyond the immediate “emergency” created by spectacular politics and aesthetics of the humanitarian battlefield, to envision more long-term connections that address trauma and violence that is not only physical.

One form of such engagement is the unusual Italian course ran by Nino, the archivist of Lampedusa. Nino, who is originally from Naples, built connections with migrants upon their arrival on the island as he offered them access to the computer in the office to reach out to relatives and made available the tv for soccer matches. During the migrants’ protracted stay, Nino began teaching them introductory Italian, realizing the importance of language skills in state determinations of who stays and who is sent back. Because the material that the class could realistically cover in weeks or even months was not enough, Nino continues to teach remotely. He developed a course-book, with pictures

and exercises, his own language class built specifically for migrants. The Archive's Facebook page has become a hub for Nino's "sons," as he calls them, to form connections and inquire about the state of things on the island, which some express a desire to return to. When I stopped by the archive at the end of the day, it was common to find Nino video calling a young man in Turin, in Rome, in Paris, a unique Lampedusa diaspora that he still follows and tries to help from the island. Though Nino is not one of the interview participants, he was a helpful point of contact and knowledgeable guide during my time in the field. Before I left, he gave me a copy of his alternative textbook.

Through the stories of interview participants, I saw many other ways in which individual residents were inspired to act. After what she describes as the "shock" of 2011, Assunta adopted a boy from Mali that arrived in Italy as an unaccompanied minor. Interestingly, her adopted son first arrived in Italy through Pozzallo and not Lampedusa. Since the 2013 shipwreck that caused 366 fatalities, Angelo along with others who have maintained connections with the survivors, ensure that those who made it safe to Lampedusa after that terrible night can return for one or more of the yearly celebrations October 3rd if they wish to do so, to commemorate the lives lost half a mile off the coast of one of the most militarized islands in the Mediterranean. The residents also mobilize their tourist acquaintances to link migrants to potential employers, legal professionals, and supportive figures on the mainland, extending connections formed in Lampedusa far beyond the Central Mediterranean.

II. Contested Spaces of Bordering

I now examine a number of sites to showcase how residents have intervened on island spaces to reclaim agency over the territory and point to the contradictions in the enforcement and spectacularization of the Mediterranean border.

a) Molo Favalaro

Molo Favalaro is a dock that stands at the entrance of the harbor and the designated landing area of all migrant vessels. While the dock is highly militarized, and access is only granted to authorized personnel, the events that unfold there are clearly visible from the *belvedere* (panoramic viewpoint), overlooking the harbor. Recent arrivals are evidenced by a new dingy, or the frenetic setting up of dark grey tents. This is where many scenes of “the spectacle of enforcement” are captured by the media (De Genova, 2013). Here, migrant illegality is rendered hypervisible and the newcomers are framed as “excludable.” As De Genova explains, the “greatest theatres” for this type of production are sites where massive migrant inclusion takes place (2013:11). Such is the case with Molo Favalaro, functioning as the secured, fenced entry point into Italy for incoming migrants.

Here, military personnel direct the arrival stages and start the bureaucratic process of identification, along with a time of detention in an administrative state of in-betweenness in Lampedusa. While Molo Favalaro is undoubtedly a space that serves as backdrop for scenes of arrest, it is also true that government and military personnel are often depicted as “saviors” as they receive crowds suffering after days at sea. Musarò refers to these common figures in the iconography of spectacle as “nurses with guns” (2016:9). The nature of maritime monitoring operations combined with fine-tuned media strategies, have produced a system of enforcement that markets itself as also providing rescue to legitimate its actions.

Having taken stock of the symbolic importance and high visibility of Molo Favalaro, a group of island residents has intervened by posting an unmissable message on



Figure 3: The banner affixed by *Alternativa Giovani* and mural, pictured in part.

the gate, facing the busy street along the old harbor. The local organization *Alternativa Giovani* hung a large banner titled “A Smile for the Press” [see Figure 3]. It reads:

“While the rescue efforts continue, Lampedusa risks to suffer the effects of anxiety-producing language and information that is hasty, garbled, reductive, and at times even false – with the media presenting the arrival of migrants as an aggression, a siege and a menace to fear, without any respect for those who arrive in conditions of suffering, and undermining the economic results reached by the community of Lampedusa after years of strenuous work in tourism. STOP THE REALITY SHOW.”

Under the banner is a faded mural, painted on the outer wall of the dock, reading “Protect People, not Borders.” Taking advantage of the visibility afforded to Molo Favaloro by the press, the Lampedusani involved in this initiative condemn and refute the narratives of invasion and aggression that are centered around the dock. In inserting themselves in the spectacle and its performance spaces, the residents revendicate their agency in constructing

the image of their territory. This “scriptoral landscape” produced by the people of Lampedusa expresses their proclamation through a spatial intervention that is “bound, durable, formal, succinct, and planned” (Gade, 2003:430).

The message is a form of grass-root geopolitics in a highly visible location, making it hard to ignore for the media gathered at Molo Favalaro, but also the tourists walking by headed to the nearby beach. In referencing “the reality show,” the authors recognize the spectacular nature of a televised display that is artificial and intended to stir negative emotional responses by using fear and anxiety. Pointedly, the banner employs language that is customarily used to refer to entertainment, not journalism. The criticism is in part directed at the disrespectful nature of media coverage of human suffering, but it also features concerns for the wellbeing of the tourism industry, drawing attention to the fact that there is more to Lampedusa than a stage of border spectacle.

b) The Door to Europe

Another symbolic site, one that is as evocative as controversial amongst island residents, is the Door to Europe. If Molo Favalaro stands as an emblematic site of militarized enforcement, the Door is an ever-present image in the coverage of Lampedusa as Island of Welcome since its unveiling in 2008. For many in Lampedusa, the Door to Europe became a symbol of anti-EU sentiment, material evidence of the effort to ascribe the mission of humanitarian rescue of the neoliberal West to the local landscape and delegate the role of welcome committee to the island residents.

On May 20th, 2018, on my first day on the island, I made a point to walk to the Door to Europe right away and see the monument that I had been reading about for some time. When I arrived, I was surprised to find that the landmark is located on a cliff, not far from the wire fence of the airport and just feet away from the failed infrastructural project that is the island water purifier. The sanitation facility was funded and partially built, but as it often happens on the island, the money ran out before it could be completed. It was only when I found myself right in front of the sculpture that I noticed two spray-painted sheets, anchored with rocks right next to the Door to Europe. The message was the same, written in Italian on one sheet, and in Arabic on the other. As soon as I laid eyes on the quote, I immediately recognized it from years of schooling in Italy: “Lasciate Ogni Speranza, Voi ch’Entrate.” “Abandon all hope, ye who enter,” the iconic warning placed by Dante at the entrance of the Inferno (Alighieri, 1320) [see Figures 4, 5].



Figure 4: View of the Door to Europe and the banner in Arabic.

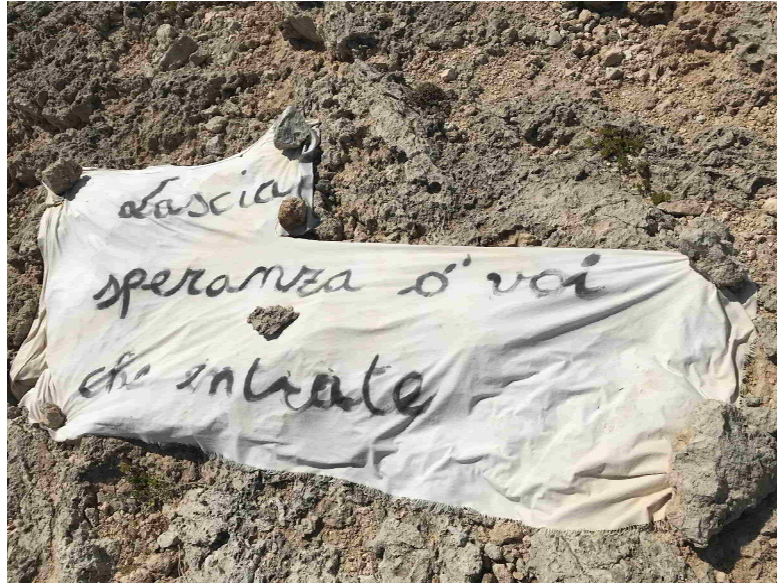


Figure 5: Banner in Italian, reporting the lines from Dante's Divine Comedy.

This intervention on the otherwise hopeful message of the Door to Europe was not permanent and it had been promptly removed when I returned to the spot a few days later. The anonymous author created a counternarrative of the symbol of open doors: Lampedusa is not the heaven, the port after the storm, the end of the journey. In fact, it is after seeing that quote that Dante's journey into the underworld of human suffering actually starts. The admonishment is translated, both critique and warning, made readable for both the islanders and the migrants.

Like the banner near Porto Favalaro, the Door is an example of how highly visible and symbolic sites in the media spectacle do not simply "exist," and are constantly being re-made, challenged, and re-negotiated by a number of traditional and non-traditional actors. Though this oppositional display was temporary in nature, this use of the symbolic meaning of the Door to Europe as a site of grassroots activism is not unprecedented or uncommon. On March 18th, 2019, a rescue vessel carrying 49 migrants reached Lampedusa's waters, to be refused entry by Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini. A

group of residents affixed a large red banner, reading “Aprite i Porti” (open the harbors), along with a hashtag #apriteiporti to facilitate and amplify a social media conversation about the standstill (Ruta, 2019). The “Mare Jonio” was eventually allowed to enter Lampedusa’s harbor, though the vessel was immediately seized by the authorities which also launched an investigation for aiding and abetting illegal immigration.

Despite the fact that several participants have voiced their disillusioned skepticism of the Door to Europe and its message, the symbol has made its way into the tourist offering and marketing on the island, perpetuating the association of the landmark with Lampedusa. The sculpture is on magnets, t-shirts and plates, even becoming the namesake for a store selling souvenirs on the belvedere. Tourist gift shops on the bustling via Roma sell a small nativity scene, representing a black family, a husband and wife with their child [see Figure 6]. The family stands with a turtle and seagull in front of the Door to Europe. Instead of a cradle, the baby is asleep in a small boat. This translation of the migration phenomenon through the use of local references and familiar religious iconography further emphasizes a message of compassion through the Christian re-telling of a refugee story.



Figure 6: Souvenir of the nativity scene

So far, I have explored how residents have intervened on highly symbolic sites to problematize the media representation of bordering and to critique the system of migration management and border enforcement. Now, I look to sites of memory, to discuss how members of Lampedusa's population have sought to intervene in the construction and portrayal of difference by humanizing migrant stories and by creating spaces to grieve the lives lost in the Central Mediterranean crossing.

c) *The Boat Cemetery, Porto M and the Museum of Migration*

Just a few hundred meters away from Molo Favalaro is the Boat Cemetery, a large plot of arid land located along the boardwalk in the new harbor. The lot is where most arriving migrant vessels are temporarily stored, awaiting destruction. Just to the right of the Boat Cemetery is the new soccer field, the center of the lively sport community in Lampedusa. On the other side, a large fruit stand and a few restaurants offering happy hour deals – known on the island as “apericena.” In June 2018, the lot was occupied by no more than a dozen vessels, spatial evidence of the slowing of migrant flows in Lampedusa as there has been a shift to large maritime enforcement operations that rely on better equipped ports in Sicily as operational centers.

While it is now mostly empty, the Boat Cemetery was a popular subject of news coverage for many years (Shah 2011, Wall Street Journal 2015, Mills 2015) The images of innumerable piled up boats in the overflowing lot served as evocative representation of continued arrivals coming so fast that the space, that carved out plot of land, could not contain them. The display of the vessels also serves to reinforce racialized representations and understandings of migration connected to the familiar figures of “boat people” (Ashtoush and Mountz 2012, Loyd and Mountz 2018). The decrepit and derelict vessels are often featured in media pieces as symbolic testimony to the poverty that the migrants

escaped by reaching Lampedusa, that has now entered the national territory. They lay broken and fenced-in, just feet away from the kiosk renting white, shining motorboats to the tourists.

For the locals, the existence and overcrowding of the boat cemetery created a concern in more than one way. Not only was the unkept space breeding grounds for ticks and a haven for the local stray dog population, it was also yet another space to become highly militarized. Angelo recalls periods of constant surveillance, and he says:

“Can I remind you that next to the new stadium... there used to be the boat cemetery. There used to be armed forces 24 hours a day, with the trucks, the military, to look at what? What was going to happen?”

Some residents also objected to the mandated destruction of all those vessels, arguing that the administration was wiping away traces of the island’s history.

The Askavusa collective took initiative to memorialize artifacts from the Central Mediterranean Crossing by creating a museum doubling as performance space, known as *Porto M*. Askavusa is a small but fiercely lively group formed in 2009, involved in an array of activist pursuits on the island. Askavusa and his members address concerns including increased militarization and health risks connected to the proliferation of antennas and high-potency radars, to the rampant corruption that afflicts public projects on the island and the survival and reproduction of the unique and variegated cultural identity of Lampedusa.

The small but functional *Porto M* is elevated, overlooking the harbor, seemingly carved out of the coastal cliffs of Lampedusa. The path from the belvedere to the colorful doorway of *Porto M* takes you through the “I choose life Stairs,” each step painted with the slogan translated in a different language. Inside are exposed artifacts recovered in Lampedusa, some in the boat cemetery, many in official and unofficial landfills around the

island where the vessels are disposed of after destruction. On the Askavusa website, Giacomo Sferlazzo recalls recovering the first artifacts while making his way through a heap of trash, in 2009. He says,

“in an area, they had piled up the boats used by those arriving in Lampedusa, predominantly from Africa. There were large loads of ground up hulls, they looked like massive waves of wood. It was in one of these that I found a package carefully sealed with adhesive tape. When I opened it, I saw that in my hands I had pictures, letters, sacred texts” (Askavusa, 2019)

Sferlazzo brought his findings to the other members of the collective, who began to aid him in recovering a wide array of items, from personal belongings, to kitchen utensils, to diaries. He looks back on the experience by saying,

“In the landfill, ghosts wondered, energies of every time, the chorus of the last who emerged from the gut of the earth looking for bodies through which they can speak, mouths with which to scream, fists with which to fight, eyes to cry, eyes to laugh” (Askavusa, 2019)

These objects, relics from human journeys of suffering who were swallowed by the chaotic piling and discarding of vessels, found a home inside *Porto M*. The space was inaugurated in February 2014. As the website explains, the displays rarely center individuals, rather letting the objects speak for themselves without imposed identifications or captions. The collection includes clothes, hanging on the wall above the desk, tattered shoes hanging from the ceiling, cans and empty plastic bottles, once sustenance for migrants out at sea [see Figures 7, 8]. Additionally, the grassroot exhibition contains a number of art pieces crafted by Sferlazzo using discarded materials.



Figure 7: Kitchenware found in the piles of discarded vessels, in display at Porto M



Figure 8: Lifejackets recovered by the Askavusa collective, on display at Porto M

This alternative museum also emphasizes connections with the reality of migration outside Lampedusa, rejecting a view of the Mediterranean dynamics in isolation. Occupying their own shelf, there are a number of objects from other famously violent border landscapes such as the one between the US and Mexico and the Balkan region. This juxtaposition draws attention away from the individual or even regional histories of suffering, to emphasize the systemic factors behind migrant deaths, whether it be in a

shipwreck in the Mediterranean, or in while crossing the Sonoran Desert. Askavusa draws connections between different experiences of intimate geopolitics, to highlight the overarching global systems that produce “ontological insecurity” and violence at a variety of different scales (Katz 2007:360). Their activism, combined with media and academic interest in Lampedusa, has contributed to pictures of the museum and its artifacts being featured in a number of mediums, giving a larger platform to the collective’s advocacy and their critique of the regime of enforcement and its dehumanizing treatment of migrants (Shringarpure et al. 2018, Scott et al. 2018).

In the years prior to the official opening of *Porto M*, the work of the Askavusa collective and the growing reputation of Lampedusa as Island of Welcome, fostered at least in part by former mayor Giusi Nicolini, resulted in a demand for a municipal museum commemorating and documenting the migratory phenomenon. For a time, Askavusa entertained the possibility of contributing artifacts to the official facility before a rift with the mayor caused the project to fall through and motivated the organization to establish a facility independent of political pressures and the mediation of NGOs and media organizations with disparate aim (Askavusa, 2019). Nevertheless, the efforts to open the Museum of Trust and Dialogue for the Mediterranean went on, coordinated by the local administration and with the substantial support of actors on the mainland.

The inauguration of the municipal museum on June 3rd, 2016 featured speeches by President Sergio Mattarella and Minister of Culture Dario Franceschini on the official day of “Memory and Welcome.” Though the island currently does not have a public library for adult readers or a movie theatre, the small museum secured a prestigious loan from none other than the *Galleria degli Uffizi* in Florence. For one year, tourists and locals could see

“Amorino” by Caravaggio, a gesture in memory of a small Syrian child that perished after the crossing, becoming a symbol of the current moment in Mediterranean migration (Corriere del Mezzogiorno, 2016). Just feet away from the museum entrance is a large mural, signed in the bottom right corner by the “Amnesty International Camp 2016.” After its first season, the museum closed due to lack of funding, only to reopen on June 20th, 2018 after receiving a contribution by “Snapshots from the Borders,” a new EU-sponsored initiative.

Though the second floor of the museum is dedicated in its entirety to migration and temporary exhibitions, on the first floor are exposed artifacts dating back to the Roman empire recovered on the island and in the surrounding waters. Albeit small, the collection is an important archive of the history of the island that can only be accessed by both tourists and locals when the museum is open thanks to a cash infusion granted by faraway donors in connection to the migration phenomenon. While mismanagement and corruption at the municipal level are partially to blame for the lack and unreliability of cultural initiatives on the island, it is also true that the local administration has to supplement for the insufficient government resources and services allocated by Rome and the regional government in Palermo. This means that cultural initiatives such as running the museum, the public screening of a documentary in the town square, or the opening of a children’s library for both locals and migrants are largely dependent on Lampedusa’s reputation and continued visibility as Island of Welcome and symbol of Mediterranean migration.

d) Municipal Cemetery and Other Sites of Memory

Along with these two museums displaying artifacts from the Central Mediterranean Crossings in an effort to document and humanize the migratory phenomenon, Lampedusa has also seen the proliferation of sites of memory that center the loss of life at the border

which has undoubtedly left a mark on the island. Many of the bodies recovered around the island have found their final resting place in the municipal cemetery, located in the Cala Pisana area. At the entrance is a sign titled “For a stranger, strangers do not cry,” a line from an Emily Dickinson poem. The placard reads,

“In this cemetery rest an unknown number of women and men who died in the attempt to reach Europe through the Mediterranean Sea, in pursuit of a better future. Most of these graves do not bear a name, and the only news that we were able to recover about these individuals concern the circumstances around their death or the retrieval of their bodies. But all of them have lived. They have rejoiced and suffered, they have hoped and fought, and somebody has waited for them and cried their death. With the awareness that every fragment of history is capable of producing a crack in the wall that divides us from them, and in the hope that the memory of these lives is not lost, we must continue to tell so that we may reach a multiplicity of voices, such that they are deafening”

At irregular intervals inside the graveyard, between the names and pictures of departed islanders, appear barren white signs with the seal of the municipal government. Sometimes, all that is reported is “here rests an unidentified migrant,” with a death date. In other instances, the sign includes some information about the family that the deceased had hoped to be reunited with somewhere in Europe or the life they had left behind on the African continent. Across the island there are other sites of memory, such as “Garden of Memory” located in the natural reserve of the Isle of Rabbits, where 366 plants were planted in memory of the lives lost in the October 2013 shipwreck. These interventions all reaffirm the individuality and humanity of deceased migrants with the aim of destabilizing us versus them dichotomies.

Crucially, interventions aimed at memorializing the loss of life are often hypervisible in the spectacular retelling of migration, serving to establish benevolence and reinforcing the trope of the good Lampedusano. This too is part of a system of humanitarianism that privileges caring over curing, alleviating immediate pain and loss

rather than addressing the enduring conditions that produced the suffering (Ticktin, 2016:62).

As it starts to become apparent through this limited exploration of diverse spaces of bordering and approaches to borderwork across the local population, the engagements of Lampedusa's residents with the border defy the narrow scope of humanitarianism, pushing back on the need for securitization and drawing attention to the damaging consequences of externalization. The residents who witness, contribute to and resist the daily production of bordering provide a much more complex interpretation of the system of enforcement and the political and historical circumstances at the root of the current migratory phenomenon. Their critiques do not follow the apolitical and dehistoricized re-telling of border violence. Instead, some residents call out the construction of emergency by inserting their interventions in highly symbolic spaces, and pushing back on the hegemonic narratives of tragedy, welcome and Western egalitarianism.

By bringing to the forefront the multiple experiences of those living at the border who are positioned to see the production of bordering over space and time, it is possible to identify some of the ways in which local perspectives contradict or importantly complicate the limited and dehistoricized representations recurring in border spectacle. Additionally, by looking at what the spectacularized narratives make visible and what they obscure, we can connect discursive framings and enforcement practices to larger political projects and trends. The frontierization of Lampedusa is far from a natural process resulting from geographic proximity: by designating the island as strategic node for bordering, detention, and rescue the Italian government and the European Union have justified the continuous expansion of enforcement powers and exclusionary legislation.

III. Conclusion

Images and stories about Lampedusa commonly frame the island and its population in passive roles or at best as reacting to the interventions of official actors or the arrival of migrants. When residents are featured in coverage, they are often interpellated as witnesses of tragedy or as welcoming helpers, “good Lampedusani.” What these superficial engagements with the island miss is that the residents of Lampedusa play an active role in bordering and migration management, one that goes far beyond the immediacy of *sbarchi* and the limiting scope of humanitarianism. Outspoken actors like the internationally famous “migrant doctor” Pietro Bartolo stepped into administrative roles that are central to migrant processing and status determination, in a system that prioritizes bodily harm and suffering to poverty, conditions of prolonged instability, and violence that does not leave easily identifiable marks. Individual residents and local groups have gone on to become staunch critics of the regime of border enforcement for its treatment of migrants and its exploitation of the island without regard for the local population. Others, such as archivist Nino Taranto have leveraged the island’s position, simultaneously at the entry point into Europe and a destination of mass tourism, to provide long-term assistance to migrants. Through the incorporation of resident perspectives and the exploration of space as an archive of social interaction, I have considered a number of examples showcasing the relationality of bordering on the island.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

In this thesis, I have begun to explore processes of bordering and space-making through the interactions and experiences of the resident population of Lampedusa. I argue that analyzing the perspectives of a sample of island residents and their engagement in what Rumford terms “borderwork,” can enable a critique of border spectacle that addresses the everyday construction of hierarchies of difference and of crisis narratives across space and time. This lens looks to both what is made hypervisible as Lampedusa as become a key site in the “enforcement archipelago” (Mountz, 2011) and what is more-or-less-deliberately obscured, to highlight the contradictions embedded in the EU and Italian regime of border control. I have identified a number of moments of resistance, including the countering of the hopeful message of the Door to Europe with a far-less-optimistic welcome and the creation of a community museum housing and displaying artifacts from the crossing to show the human dimension of Mediterranean migration. I have also considered some of the ways in which the island population has taken on an auxiliary role in bordering, with residents employed in the system of detention/reception and the local economy becoming more closely tied to the regime of border enforcement.

I situate this project within an agenda for a “multiperspectival study of borders” (Rumford, 2012), contributing to the study of a highly scrutinized site through the introduction of an underappreciated point of view. This approach, which centers the knowledge of the residents and looks to space as archive of social interaction, offers a different angle from which to analyze the making of new geopolitics of mobility and enforcement practices, connecting them to a colonial history of island exploitation.

The central aim of this study is not only to make visible some of the dynamics that are muted by hegemonic discourses, but also to highlight opportunities for disruption. For instance, by analyzing the public engagement and harrowing stories recounted by residents in the aftermath of the October 3rd 2013 shipwreck, it becomes apparent that simply increasing military maritime enforcement fails to address the underlying structural causes that produced the event, as do calls for humanitarian responses that do not go beyond the most basic expectations for migrant welfare. Operation *Mare Nostrum* did not create a safer path to those departing or fleeing from North Africa; it did not investigate the allegations of slow or lacking assistance delivered by the Coast Guard; it did not provide mental health services for the people who saw carnage unfold before their eyes, who helped recover the bodies, who tried to rescue lives and sometimes failed. This is but one case in which the inclusion of voices from the island could help shape more accountable policies and more effective management strategies.

Nevertheless, I recognize limits in my methodological and epistemological approach. Lampedusa is the coveted destination of a myriad of actors, from journalists, to researchers, to strategists, to artists, who seek to capture island happenings and landscapes. I found that the six weeks I spent in Lampedusa at a time of intense activity give but a glimpse into life on the island and the unique experiences of the residents with migrants and Italian mainlanders. As it became apparent through interviews, residents who have lived in Lampedusa for several decades, like Anna, Alecos, Cristina and Sofia remain outsiders in the tight-knit community. Additionally, in presenting my findings I remain mindful of what I should and should not discuss, aware that the local population must evade laws and regulations to provide care to incoming migrants and deploy their strategies of

resistance. Ultimately, I seek to highlight the relational nature of bordering without revealing too much information that might prove damaging. Though these are important considerations that will inform and shape my future research, I maintain that inclusion of the perspectives of those living at the border enables an analysis of bordering as a process enlisting a diverse array of actors beyond the state.

Here I have just begun to explore the symbolic importance and evocative power of the island, which goes far beyond a corner of the central Mediterranean. Examples of Lampedusa's international fame and influence are wide-ranging: the Cross of Lampedusa made from fragments from the 2013 shipwreck was blessed by Pope Francis himself before taking off on a world tour (Avvenire, 2017); in the northern German city of Hamburg, dozens of refugees founded the FC Lampedusa St Pauli soccer team (Videmsek, 2017); across Europe, thousands of migrants that left the island continue to connect through networks named after their port of arrival, finding community in their shared experience and organizing through social media platforms such as Facebook (Lampedusa in Hamburg) and Twitter (@lampedusa-hannover, @Lampedusa_HH). The residents themselves have been able to mobilize their position to gain access to conferences and public events all over Italy and Europe, gaining a platform. Others, like Nino from the historical archive, Angelo and Andrea maintain important relationships with the migrants that passed through the port. Also recognizing Lampedusa as redolent of history and meaning are government officials including Silvio Berlusconi, Marine Le Pen, Matteo Renzi, Luigi di Maio, Matteo Salvini, Sergio Mattarella and Enrico Letta, who have converged on the site in the last decade alone. Ultimately, it is evident that the island, or as some residents call it "the Rock," is far from isolated or a bounded place. Lampedusa is a geography of connectivity, a space that shapes

faraway action, a complex site of resistance, militarized enforcement, tourism, and tranquil island life which stubbornly endures in the midst of two decades of rapid change.

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Vita

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EDUCATION

- 2019 Graduate Certificate in Gender and Women Studies
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- 2013 - 2017 Bachelor of Arts
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Majors: Geography with concentration in GIS,
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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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University of Kentucky – Department of Geography
- 2017-2019 Graduate Teaching Assistant.
University of Kentucky – Department of Geography
- 2015-2017 Undergraduate Teaching Assistant.
Concord University - Department of Geography, Department of Political
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- 2014 Academic Tutor
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AWARDS

- 2018 Barnhart-Withington Fund Research Grant
University of Kentucky – Department of Geography
- 2017 Teaching Assistantship for MA (stipend + tuition)
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- 2016 Wilma Toothman Scholarship
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