European University Institute

ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

EUI WORKING PAPERS

Plastic hospitality: The empty signifier of the EU's first reception system in the Mediterranean

Daniela DeBono

European University Institute

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

Global Governance Programme

Plastic hospitality: The empty signifier of the EU's first reception system in the Mediterranean

Daniela DeBono

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS), created in 1992 and directed by Professor Brigid Laffan, aims to develop inter-disciplinary and comparative research and to promote work on the major issues facing the process of integration and European society.

The Centre is home to a large post-doctoral programme and hosts major research programmes and projects, and a range of working groups and *ad hoc* initiatives. The research agenda is organised around a set of core themes and is continuously evolving, reflecting the changing agenda of European integration and the expanding membership of the European Union.

Details of the research of the Centre can be found on:
http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Research/

Research publications take the form of Working Papers, Policy Papers, Policy Briefs, Distinguished Lectures, Research Project Reports and Books.

Most of these are also available on the RSCAS website:
http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/

The EUI and the RSCAS are not responsible for the opinion expressed by the author(s).

The Global Governance Programme at the EUI

The Global Governance Programme is one of the flagship programmes of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute (EUI). It aims to: build a community of outstanding professors and scholars, produce high quality research and, engage with the world of practice through policy dialogue. At the Global Governance Programme, established and early career scholars research, write on and discuss, within and beyond academia, issues of global governance, focussing on four broad and interdisciplinary areas: European, Transnational and Global Governance; Global Economics; Europe in the World; and Cultural Pluralism.

The Programme also aims to contribute to the fostering of present and future generations of policy and decision makers through its unique executive training programme, the Academy of Global Governance, where theory and "real world" experience meet. At the Academy, executives, policy makers, diplomats, officials, private sector professionals and academics, have the opportunity to meet, share views and debate with leading academics, top-level officials, heads of international organisations and senior executives, on topical issues relating to governance.

For more information: http://globalgovernanceprogramme.eui.eu

Abstract

Hospitality and hospitality-laden language feature highly amongst people working in or around structures of first reception in Italy and Malta at the European Union external border. This is peculiar because hospitality rarely features at first reception which is part of the state's border system. Characteristically security issues are prioritised, and the first reception system is managed by security agents of the state, in collaboration with EU and international security agents. In practice, first reception refers to the processes of identification, registration and classification that irregular migrants go through for having crossed the border without authorisation, and often, without identification. Drawing on long term and multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in Italy and Malta, this paper examines some of the uses of hospitality language by a spectrum of territorial borderworkers operating with state, non-state, security, humanitarian and activist entities in these two countries. Discourse analysis yields interesting insights into how the use of the hospitality paradigm and hospitality terminology in first reception is less about hospitality practices and more about power. It proposes that the hospitality paradigm be conceptualised as a Laclauian empty signifier, and therefore a locus of power which is what should be targeted by political groups seeking change

Keywords

1. Introduction[*]

> But what kind of hospitality is this? Where I come from, guests are treated well, they are given the best seats at table. But look at us – I have to beg for closed shoes because I feel cold with these flip flops. Our 'hosts' are many police outside and some people in here [the centre]. Even them, [pointing towards the cultural mediators], they are very good to us, but they are paid to do their work and they are only two. And Italy is a civilised country you know, they save us its true and *alhamdulillah*…we are here today because of them. But look where they host us, in the desert. Not because this is a desert, but it is like a desert, because there is no people nowhere. My friend, he escape and he told me that it took him more than four hours to arrive to the first city [Agrigento]. He escape because here you know we are in prison when we do not give the fingerprint, but I give my fingerprint and still I am in prison because I get too little money to travel to the city and I cannot work or do something. I am not a guest, I am like a prisoner. Hospitality, guest…these are all plastic words, like human rights, gender equality, … (Ahmed, Sudanese migrant, early 30s, Siculiana, Agrigento Province, April 2016)

At first reception migrants are quiet, observant and do not voice criticism, apart from key issues such as the refusal to be fingerprinted which was common among Eritrean migrants. Although this is not typical approach of a migrant going through the first reception system, I have chosen to start the article with this quotation because it mirrors my impressions of the first reception systems. The aim of first reception system (which in some other settings is referred to as part of the border regime) is to identify, register and classify migrants. In Italy it runs from the disembarkation of migrants from a ship to the migrant detention centre where the EU's hotspot approach kicks in (generally located close to the port), and the process can also extend to the 'Regional hub' or to a Centre of Extraordinary Reception (*Centro di Accoglienza Straordinaria* popularly known by its acronym CAS). The primary actors implementing first reception policies and therefore a constitutive element of the border, are territorial borderworkers. Broadly speaking, territorial borderworkers[1], a term I use to refer to the heterogeneous group of people who are active or work on the territorial border and whose activity involves regular contact with incoming migrants. Territorial borderworkers constitute a very diverse group and include state officials, migrant centre workers, health workers, international, national and local non-state organizations workers, volunteers and activists, intergovernmental organization officials and EU agency workers. One can already glean from this brief definition and description of operations that such a system has little to do with hospitality. Contemporary discussions on the concept have shown that hospitality goes beyond 'the classic ground of gift exchange' and touches on issues such as 'identity, alterity, and belonging; sovereignty, politics and inequality; the relation between the individual and the collective; commensality, consubstantiality, and kinship' (Candea and De Col 2012: S2). However this paper will not deal with debates surrounding conceptual understandings of hospitality. By hospitality I am referring to a relationship between a host and a guest, which generally involves the reception, and at times entertainment, of such guest. Hospitality is a relationship which can embody a strong power imbalance and is not necessarily based on principles of equality or justice. By no stretch of the imagination can one speak of hospitality within the first reception system – which consists of a series of impersonal, bureaucratic and securitised procedures framed in a crisis and/or emergency culture. This statement does not exclude singular acts of solidarity

---

[1] The term 'borderworkers' has occasionally been used by border scholars, generally to draw attention to the bordering practices that take place in everyday life. Chris Rumford, for example, uses the term 'citizen borderworkers' to refer generally to anyone engaged in borderwork, bordering and debordering practices. 'Citizen borderworkers' is not a category that was intended to be limited to a territorial space, which is why in this paper the term 'territorial borderworkers' is used to indicate that these are frontline fieldworkers involved in borderwork on or near the territorial state border. Apart from the spatial element, 'territorial borderworkers' are understood as a loosely bounded group who share a similar view of first reception, immigration and embody similar attitudes, norms and behaviour.

and hospitality by individuals within the system conducted spontaneously or out of rebellion, but the system in itself is not constructed to be hospitable or to allow acts of hospitality by others (DeBono forthcoming).

The reality of the first reception system is in sharp contrast with the manner in which territorial borderworkers working with different entities in the first reception processes portrayed their job and peppered their descriptions in hospitality terminology. When people were explaining the system to me, those working at the hotspots referred to migrants as *ospiti*/guests, and a cultural mediator got carried away and very eloquently described *prima accoglienza*/first reception as "the period when the *ragazzi*/boys (referring to the migrants) are introduced to the Italian state and when hospitality is enacted in practice" (fieldnotes, Trapani, 29 March 2017). By and large, the police and security services tended to be more flippant in their use of language, but even they used the terminology: "we have a few guests here who need some care" (fieldnotes, Agrigento, 9 April 2016), one of the police officers told the manager of the centre as they were getting off the coach from disembarkation. Certainly they used it when explaining the system to me. Territorial borderworkers employed with inter-governmental organisations used the terminology regularly. Their work was concentrated in the centres and their interactions were mostly with the territorial borderworkers in the hotspot centres. Non-governmental organisations as well as humanitarian organisations regularly used the terminology. On the surface, it appeared to be an effort made to refer to migrants with respect.

Clearly this phenomenon reflects a similar process taking place in the secondary reception system where the use of hospitality language is also noticeable. Indeed there are several points of contact between the two processes and some crossover of employees which partly explains the influence. Secondary reception is different to first reception. The secondary reception process is much longer (first reception can be anything from a few hours to three months long[2]; whereas secondary reception from a year up to even four years). In addition amongst the main aims of secondary reception are accommodation in migrant centres including contact with the host community. Finally secondary reception is where integration processes should start. The analysis made in this paper focuses on first reception, but it is indicative of similar processes at play in secondary reception too.

I got a sense that territorial borderworkers genuinely believed they were engaging in hospitality practices to some degree or another. This is the strength of this discursive praxis. Few stopped to question whether this was the case. Conversations with me provided an opportunity for some to come to terms with the imprecise use of hospitality, or a realisation and an ensuing disillusion that they were not in fact part of a hospitality machine.

This paper is based on a long term, multi-sited ethnographic study exploring first reception in Western Sicily (primarily in the provinces of Agrigento, Palermo and Trapani, in particular the main cities, ports where migrants were disembarked and towns where hotspots or first reception centres were located, that is, Porto Empedocle, Siculiana, Milo and in the island of Lampedusa) and in Malta (Floriana, Ħal Far) between 2015 and 2017. Both Sicily and Malta are part of the EU's external border. Care was taken to spend time with different workers belonging to stakeholder groups such as immigration police departments, to health authorities, to NGOs offering special services and activists. Observations and participant observation were carried out, as well as a series of indepth interviews ranging from one hour to six hours. Fieldnotes were regularly updated. For conversations which were not recorded, notes were taken as soon after as possible and where possible near-verbatim quotes were noted. Indepth interviews were recorded and selectively transcribed. Although not the focus of this paper, it is important to register that for the purposes of the larger study, contact was established with various groups of migrants. Access was often limited due to the securitised nature of the areas of

---

[2] For example the following refers to unaccompanied minors: "Ai sensi del D.lgs. 142/2015, art. 19, i minori non accompagnati sono accolti in strutture governative di prima accoglienza il tempo strettamente necessario, comunque non superiore a 60 giorni."/ "According to D.lgs 142/2005, art. 19, unaccompanied minors are received in government structures of first reception for the time strictly necessary, however not exceeding 60 days."

operation in question. This notwithstanding, I was able to spend time with new migrants at various ports of disembarkations and in two migrants centres. Interactions were limited by the fact that many newly arriving migrants in first reception spheres of activity in Sicily are often vulnerable and/or have had traumatic experiences. Contact was limited to observation, and conversation was limited to topics brought up by the migrants in line with the least-harm principle in research. The researcher had in the past conducted ethnographic work with migrants in similar migrant reception and detention centres. In addition, in order to ensure that migrants' perspective were taken into account longer conversations and in-depth interviews were conducted with migrants of different nationalities who had arrived in Malta and Sicily a few years before.

By drawing on this long term fieldwork, this paper uses elements of discourse analysis to examine the different uses of hospitality by territorial borderworkers in Italy and Malta. It challenges the simplistic explanation that hospitality is used because it is appears as a more humane, politically correct framework, but delves more into the socio-cultural and political processes taking place in the larger society that serve to explain how and why hospitality has become entrenched within the EU migration lexicon. The paper concludes that a particular convergence of factors takes place that conditions the language use. Hospitality language irrespective of the manner in which it is used appears to uphold a system which prioritises state interests, over and above the person-centred/humane characteristic that it's conceptual definition and its popular conception indicates.

2. Signs, signifiers and plastic words

'Plastic words' is the title of an insightful book by Uwe Poerksen. A linguist by profession, Poerksen describes how some words which have international currency, appear repeatedly in political speeches, government reports and academic conferences give the perception of a new utopian reality. These plastic words might begin or have been present as scientific words with specialized meanings but are (re-)imported to the vernacular stripped of their specialized meanings. Hugely reminiscent of George Orwell's epic Nineteen Eight-Four, he shows that when plastic words infiltrate reality, they reorder it in their own image but instead of helping to construct a utopian reality, through ambiguous meanings, common language is disabled and the world is actually impoverished (Poerksen 2004). Plasticity itself is an interesting concept which is widely used in philosophy of language. One of the most influential theorists who launched plasticity was Charles Sanders Peirce who refers to plasticity as the ability of language to express meaning. He proposed a model of the self as a constantly emerging dialogic self: "When one reasons, it is that critical self that one is trying to persuade and all thought is whatever is a sign, and is mostly in the nature of language" (Peirce 1932: 3.421). In Peirce's model, the individual can maintain a sense of subjectivity, whether this is considered illusory or real, and change and evolve constantly. Plasticity, for him, is an outcome of the individual's 'blundering rational mind' (Peirce 1932: 3.421), and cultures reflect the plasticity of signs and these signs in turn reflect the plasticity of human selves (Denzin 2008:17).

Poerksen's work also follows in the tradition developed in semantics where signifiers without referents are called 'floating signifiers'. Initially coined by Lévi-Strauss (1950: 63), it was further elaborated by Barthes, Hall and Laclau amongst others. For this paper I will be using Laclau's work. A 'floating signifier' is a symbol or concept loose enough to mean many things to many people. The signifier is therefore 'equivocal', where as a result of the arbitrariness of the sign, the same signifier can be attached to different signifieds in different contexts (Laclau 1996: 36). It could also be 'ambiguous': ''that either an overdetermination of signifieds prevents it from being fully fixed' (Laclau 1996: 36). In brief therefore the floating signifier refers either to a signified that is not fixed, or has multiple referents, and as a result different political groups compete to assign their desired signified. A floating signifier is distinct to an empty signifier (sometimes referred to in the literature as a master or central signifier). Laclau defines it as such:

> An empty signifier is, strictly speaking, a signifier without a signified. This definition is also, however, the enunciation of a problem. For how would it be possible that a signifier is not attached to any signified and remains, nevertheless, an integral part of a system of signification? An empty signifier would be a sequence of sounds and if the latter are deprived of any signifying function the term 'signifier' itself would become excessive. The only possibility for a stream of sounds beign detached from any particular signified whilst still remaining a signifier is if, through the subversion of the sign which the possibility of an empty signifier involves, something is achieved which is internal to significations as such. What is the possibility? (Laclau 1996: 36)

An empty signifier is the hegemonic representative of a collection of various demands, constituting a chain of equivalence whose members are distinguished through a differential logic (as in elements exist only in their differences to one another) but combine through an equivalential one. This chain of unsatisfied demands create an unfulfilled totality, inside of which one signifier subordinates the rest and assumes representation of the rest via a hegemonic process (Laclau 1996).

The use of the hospitality paradigm, terminology and metaphor with its vague, malleable meanings provides an opportunity for groups seeking power, dominance and hegemony over societies. In Gramscian terms, the impoverishment of language through the insertion of plastic words, results in the disempowerment of groups whose worldview is an imposition by a dominant group to meet their own interests. Ironically therefore, territorial borderworkers, the people socially constituting the first reception process at the border, hold a perception of first reception (and a worldview) which does not meet the reality that they themselves construct through their daily activities and which is designed to meet the interests of those in a position of power. The rampant use of hospitality, and its subsequent adoption even by territorial borderworkers who know (first hand!) that it does not match the reality they themselves are (re-)producing, smacks of blatant manipulation. Hospitality has become the accepted cultural norm in first reception in the EU, and this should lead us to question who is imposing this worldview and for what reason.

In this article I build on three strands of investigation and empirical data. First, and this is really our starting point, is the real, lived experience of a lack of hospitality as captured by Ahmed in the quote above. Second, are my observations and documentation of the myriad use of hospitality language by actors with different interests some of which I will present in this article. Drawing on the conceptual tools of discourse analysis helps us to construct a picture of the political processes at play through cultural forms. It also allows us to link the processes by which hospitality gets used, super-used and extinguished in first reception and the larger reception systems in Italy and to a lesser degree in Malta and EUrope[3] to other areas of life in modern societies. A discourse analysis allows us to address the question: what does the differential/inconsistent use of hospitality and hospitality language amongst territorial borderworkers tell us? This paper concludes with a discussion raising several points that arise from this analysis. Overall these cautiously indicate that hospitality language and discourse play the role of retaining existing hegemonic structures of dominance.

3. On the ground: the reality of an inhospitable first reception in the EU/Italy and Malta

Migrants who undertake the Central Mediterranean Route often arrive exhausted and in a dire psychological and/or physical state. Libya has always been a dangerous country but the situation became dire after the fall of Gaddafi and the war in 2011. The very high risks of extreme violence and abuse that migrants face in Libya are well documented and include detention, rape, torture and kidnapping (UNSML & OHCHR 2016). Apart from Libya, migrants also undertake the sea crossing – known to be the most deadly in the world. This is important to bear in mind when discussing first reception in Italy as it hugely impinges on the physical and psychological state of the migrants. Let us

---

[3] Following Stierl (2016), EUrope is intentionally used to refer to European Union members and European Union policy in recognition of other 'European' state groups such as the Council of Europe, the European OECD group and so on.

take Ahmed. Ahmed is from Sudan. He spent almost a year in Libya before taking the decision to leave. He got on a boat that left from Zuwara but their boat quickly ran into trouble. They called someone who alerted the Italian Coast Guard. After a good few hours drifting, panic had started to set in because they were out of water and some people on the boat were feeling faint. They were relieved when they saw a ship approaching: it was a merchant vessel. They were told that rescue was on the way and given bottles of water. The ship remained close to their boat until the Coast Guard arrived and took them on board two vessels. Although the police told me that it took two to three hours, he described disembarkation as a long process which is not uncommon given that he would have been extremely tired at this stage. I met Ahmed two and a half weeks later. Ahmed had been through all the first reception processes (medical triage, identification, registration, fingerprinting and other forms of interrogation for intelligence collection purposes). He was still in the centre because his transfer had not yet been authorised for administrative reasons. He was told that he would be given the opportunity to formally submit an application for asylum upon his transfer to another centre.

'First reception' refers to the very first part of the reception system which overlaps with the border system. In brief, the aim is threefold: a) implementing the procedures related to identification, registration and classification for security purposes as well as to ascertain the status of the migrant; b) accommodation; and c) urgent humanitarian needs. First reception in Italian law for example refers briefly to the accommodation needed to carry out the necessary operations to define the legal position of the foreigner: '*Per le esigenze di prima accoglienza e per l'espletamento delle operazioni necessarie alla definizione della posizione giuridica, lo straniero è accolto nei centri governativi di prima accoglienza...*' (Article 9(1), Article 9(4) and Article 9(5) of the Italian law LD 142/2015). First reception is further regulated by EU policy, in particular the 'hotspot approach' enacted by the European Commission following the 2015 so-called refugee crisis to help Member States deal with situations of crisis. The hotspot approach is a management approach which serves as a platform for cooperation among EASO, Frontex, Europol and Eurojust and is established to swiftly process asylum applications, enforce return decisions and prosecute migrant smuggling (European Commission 2015). These EU agencies together with national officials identify, fingerprint, screen and register asylum applicants, organize relocation to other member states of those who qualify and organize the return of those who either did not apply for international protection or whose right to remain on the territory has ceased (European Council 2015). It is envisaged that the period of first reception is short and migrants would be processed quickly and redirected to their respective centers (for examples, centers for people who are waiting for an asylum decision, centers for expulsion, centers for unaccompanied minors, centers for relocation participants). This model is also being implemented in other countries with variations. For example, Malta's Initial Reception Centre (IRC) is designed on this model, even though there have only been a handful of boat arrivals in the last years and it has only been used to process migrants arriving through the relocation scheme.

During the first reception process, migrants may register a wish to apply for asylum but technically they do not formally submit their application. Although, in Italy there is currently a slight overlap - in fact submitting an asylum application can take place in what is still called 'first reception', that is the *Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria (*Centres of Extraordinary Reception) - but if we were to take the hotspot approach as indicative of the EU model for first reception, it is in the next stage. The management of first reception is the responsibility of the prefecture. Most processes are conducted by different organs of the police, except health which is the responsibility of the public health authorities, and accommodation and services within the centre which are farmed out to '*cooperattive*'/cooperatives through a public procurement process. Waiting for the migrants at the wharf are various local, national, European and at times international or intergovernmental security actors. They are debriefed by Frontex and/or by local Police whose aim is to collect intelligence on the journeys, and identify as quickly as possible potential smugglers or traffickers. Humanitarian actors are also present, generally on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Interior with the agreement to offer a service.

Administrative detention, if not authorised by a judge, should not take more than 48 hours according to the Italian Constitution[4]. In practice, in Italy it can take from a few hours to a few months (AIDA 2017). This depends on the efficiency of the prefecture, and the ancillary organs, entrusted with the processing, the number of arrivals as well as the availability of beds in the next centre. Mostly during periods of high arrivals (but not only) 'bottleneck' situations have been recorded which slow down the process (ECA 2017: paras 76-83). After submitting the application for asylum, there are mixed modalities as to how long a person remains in a CAS or is moved on to 'secondary reception' a *Centro di Accoglienza* (Reception Centre) or a SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees).

Ahmed spoke English quite well, and told me that he knew people working with the United Nations in Sudan. I don't know what his background was but he was clearly familiar with international governance terminology. Ahmed's anger and cynicism transpires from the quote above. And although, as I showed above, this was exacerbated by other factors such as lingering tiredness from the journey, stress from incidents that he witnessed in Libya and the tumultuous sea crossing in itself, he was clearly disappointed. He had expected 'good treatment, a welcome and sympathy in Europe'. It is revealing that he had the outburst right after he overheard a cultural mediator describe first reception activities to me as hospitality.

First reception consists of a series of processes which prioritises public and state security. As such, any attempts to humanise them will prove difficult. This is not to say that migrants are ill-treated during these processes, even though as I have argued elsewhere, the risks of grave human rights violations are present at an elevated level during first reception (DeBono forthcoming). Hospitality indicates treatment which puts emphasis on the interests of the guest, and on the relationship with the guest as a fellow human being. This is difficult, if not impossible, to enact in a system which is led by contrasting aims.

4. The pervasive nature of the hospitality metaphor in first reception

Italians, and in particular Sicilians (which is the site of my fieldwork and make up the majority of my Italian informants and interviewees), like the Maltese, often portray first reception (*prima accoglienza*) and reception within a hospitality framework. Different actors explain, re-explain and discuss first reception to me not simply as some legal or institutional structure, but by using hospitality terminology. In Italian, the use of words like *ospite* (guest), *ospitare* (host) and *accogliere* (to receive/welcome/accept[5]) is very common across the board: territorial borderworkers working with different state and non-state entities, but also policy-makers, politicians and the media. In Malta, terminology used is either in the Maltese language or in English: *nilqagħhom* (we receive them),

---

[4] The 'National Unified Text on migration regulating migrants' detention' does not permit administrative detention for the purposes of identification, while ordinary criminal custody aimed at identification must comply with solid guarantees (a judge should be immediately informed and the maximum length of detention is 24 hours). The Italian Constitution in article 13 on the inviolability of personal liberty expressly states: 'No form of detention, inspection or personal search nor any other restriction on personal freedom is admitted, except by a reasoned warrant issued by a judicial authority, and only in the cases and the manner provided for by law. In exceptional cases of necessity and urgency, strictly defined by the law, law-enforcement authorities may adopt temporary measures that must be communicated to the judicial authorities within forty-eight hours. Should such measures not be confirmed by the judicial authorities within the next forty-eight hours, they are revoked and become null and void. All acts of physical or moral violence against individuals subject in any way to limitations of freedom shall be punished. The law establishes the maximum period of preventive detention.'

[5] The verb *accogliere* in Italian translated literally into English could equally mean 'to receive', 'to accept' and 'to welcome'. The noun *accoglienza* could then refer to 'reception', 'acceptance' and 'welcome'. However in the context of immigration, 'accoglienza' has a meaning of its own and refers to the 'institutional reception system'. My reference here is to the use of the term *accogliere* in the context of receiving, accepting and welcoming a person on the basis of a respectful relationship.

nieħdu ħsibhom (we take care of them) and in English 'welcome', 'reception', 'guests' (or residents). Although not the only factor, an influential reason might be the strong Catholic ethos still very strongly interspersed with local culture which presents hospitality practices towards foreigners as morally good. The picture emanating from the use of this language is of a large institutional system all geared up to welcome, receive, accommodate, host and take care of irregular-arriving immigrants, with employees eagerly awaiting what they portray as an opportunity to exercise hospitality practices. Hospitality features prominently at some points of contention between different stakeholders within the larger reception and immigration system: typically, non-state actors will blame the authorities for not being humane and hospitable, and the authorities label non-state actors as utopian do-gooders who are not practical and give misleading pictures of migrants as poor victims in need of care and asylum.

The reality was indeed very different. In the broader/secondary reception system services are notoriously inconsistent and in general riddled with a lack of resources, lack of formation for staff often employed precariously, at times gross mishandling of money, fraud by cooperatives running different centres (Il Fatto Quotidiano 2016; Iacono, 2017;) and in some cases in Sicily, the mafia was involved as shown by, amongst others, the investigation 'Mafia Capitale' initiated in 2014 (La Sicilia 2017; Marceca 2018). This, apart from some scattered good practice examples around Italy, provides few opportunities to engage in hospitality practices. In the first reception system, which as I explained above, involves border processes, this opportunity is in practice non-existent. In this section I will go through some of the uses of hospitality terminology. Drawing on a writing style used predominantly in case study methodology, I will present incidents (paraphrased or direct excerpts from my fieldnotes) and quotations from interviews to show the meaning attributed to the concept through other linkages.

CASE 1: Enrico: hospitality as welcome, as tradition/cultural and as a patronising relationship

> This morning at the Police Station, Enrico introduced me to their superior, an officer who held a high rank as could be gleaned from the ritualistic introduction. Enrico told him that I was conducting research on first reception and that I was interested in the practice processes. Enrico's superior nodded, raised his eyebrows in a typical ceremonious manner: "*Prima accoglienza* for us is about giving a dignified reception to these people. Italy is known in European circles for being the foremost country doing this. We have chosen to save people from the sea and to bring them to our shores. Reception means treating these people like guests, feeding them and giving them a bed. First reception, for us who are at the Italian and European border, is a test of our hosting skills, because, and rightly so, it involves a series of delicate processes. What you will see is how we register people, take their details and so on. But these guests of ours are also being scrutinised on other levels to ensure that no smuggler, trafficker or terrorist passes through our net." (My fieldnotes, Agrigento, April 2016)

This type of comment, coming from a high standing official, used to representing his department, needs to be viewed as a reflection of national narratives of Italy's ''openness'' to foreigners, and in the context of migration humanitarianism. Indeed Italy has clearly positioned itself within the EU as a state with humanitarian interests. The decision by Italy to embark alone on Mare Nostrum in 2013-2014, a military and humanitarian operation aimed at tackling the humanitarian emergency in the Strait of Sicily due to the dramatic increase in migration flows, which cost the Italian state 9.5 million euro over 12 months, only served to further consolidate this image.

Let us, for the sake of the argument, take what Enrico says at face value – before entering into a more critical discussion further down. For Enrico's superior *prima accoglienza* is about hospitality, about hosting in a dignified manner another person. Reception, understood as hospitality, is a demonstration by the state that it is generous, welcoming and possibly cosmopolitan. Indeed hospitality speaks not only of the welcome and 'acceptance' of a foreigner, but equally of who is a foreigner, who is acceptable and therefore who are the non-foreigners (natives) who have a claim to that territory.

This brings us to the discussion of the Italian state, and its complicated history of unification and nation-building. Cinema, one of the primary cultural forms of Italian state and society, is imbued with

the figure of the foreigner. But as Wood (2005) notes, some representations of Italy's migrants in contemporary Italian cinema imitate the kind of stereotypes used to represent internal migrants from the south (that took place decades before). Duncan writing about Italian post-war cinema points out for example that the representation of the non-Italian in the cinema of the post-war period serves as 'a pretext for the affirmation of an exclusive Italian identity rather than an opening out to more inclusive articulations of belonging and citizenship' (Duncan 2008: 196).

> On my way out, Enrico was little more apologetic, making reference to the fact I was Maltese commented: "You will understand me when I say that for us southerners, hospitality and *accoglienza* is something that we take seriously. Unfortunately due to the political and the economic situation we have been unable to be as hospitable towards these people as we would have liked to be. But don't be fooled by what you see, these poor people (*poveracci*) are seen as unwelcome guests (*ospiti-non-graditi*) by Sicilians because politicians have left us in this culture of crisis and emergency, we Sicilians are not like that." (My fieldnotes, Agrigento, April 2016)

Enrico qualifies the Director's approach and prepares me for what I will see in the operations of first reception. He does so by reproducing another well-known cultural form. Sicilians have embraced hospitality as part of their identity. This can be seen in the many Sicilian local councils (comune) that have officially adopted '*accoglienza*' or '*ospitalita*' in their official description. Trapani for example has recently added 'accoglienza' to its welcome slogan to the city: '*La Citta della Vela, del Sale e dell'Accoglienz*a' (Fulco 2016); Lampedusa is known, now worldwide, as a symbol of rescue and hospitality and is the location for the monument by Mimmo Palladini 'The door to Europe' (Comune di Lampedusa e Linosa 2008), Palermo is also projecting itself as *'la citta modello di accoglienza e convivenza'* (Rainews 2016). This nod towards hospitality and welcome has deeper roots. The idea of cultural differences between Northern and Southern Italians is well entrenched, stemming from a long tradition of racist explanations of the different socio-economic and political development of the south (for an excellent paper on this see Cimino and Foschi 2014). Banfield (1955) in his ethnography of a small southern Italian village writes about hospitality practices as part of the moral and behavioural values of the southerners; Schneider & Schneider (1976) in their ethnography of Western Sicily mention hospitality several times as a characteristic trait, in inter-personal and inter-group relations, reproducing itself through traditions such as feasting and wine consumption; Fiume (2006) starts her article by "Sicilian reactions combine curiosity, availability, and an impulse towards welcome'' (37) and Hilowitz (1977) notes that "Syracusans have a great respect for people from different areas and for the needs of others, and the hospitality they offer would be excessive for Northern italy" (72). Hilowitz adds that this tradition of hospitality lies, sometimes at odds, with the Syracusan family's jealous reserve and affective life, where interests are measured in relation to the family (Hilowitz 1977). Most researchers of Sicily note warmly the hospitality towards themselves too.

Enrico presents *accoglienza*, an intrinsic part of hospitality, as a customary practice. Whether such practices of feeding, protecting and providing shelter to strangers are still customary nowadays goes unquestioned. In a typical manner he draws on representations of the warmth of the *meridione*/the south and the 'Mediterranean', as opposed to the cold north (northern Italy and northern Europe). And yet the sympathy with the south is not extended farther than Malta.

> At the entrance to the Police Station, there was a long, thick cordon of migrants: looking far from happy. They were Tunisian and Moroccan migrants who had been released from the hotspot a few days before with an expulsion order requiring them to leave the country voluntarily within seven days. They were at the Police Station to submit an appeal. Enrico insisted on offering me a coffee from the machine and smoking a cigarette. They hassled him with questions but he waved them off to take his position a few metres away. "They, he explained, are the problem. Because they don't behave, because they don't obey. In Sicily we say "'A casa capi quantu voli 'u patruni[6]" (lit. translation: Hospitality depends on the willingness of the head of the house), and we don't want

---

[6] In Italian this would be: *la casa è capiente quanto vuole il padrone: l'ospitalità dipende dalla volontà del padrone di casa*

them. They spell trouble. You can't force *hospitality*. By definition, the *guest* can never be the one dictating." (My fieldnotes, Agrigento, April 2016)

Enrico here shifts. Clearly it cannot be forgotten that traditional hospitality and honour amongst Sicilian communities mixed with Catholic ideas of charity and benevolence, is embedded in a largely hierarchical and patriarchal organisation of society. Hospitality is therefore defined as a relationship embodying a strong power imbalance. It is a patronising relationship of dominance and control of the host over the guest.

Enrico here is making a difference between what Faleschini Lerner (2010) calls a hospitality of invitation'(7) and 'a hospitality of visitation' (7). Whereas in the former the host remains in control of his threshold, determining who should or should not be invited in and under what conditions, in the latter, where the visitor is unexpected, a pure host would open their house without asking questions (Faleschini Lerner 2010:7). Evocatively Faleschini Lerner is discussing the Giordana's 2005 film *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* and describes how conditional hospitality is the operational principle of both the *centro d'accoglienza* and also the protagonist's family.

CASE 2: Rosario & Nunzio: Hospitality as humanitarian treatment, welcoming of guests

> For some reason, clothes and shoes are often scarce in the centre. What is worse is that when they have ailments which cannot be treated by the visiting doctors of the centre they bring them to our health centre. And they are often brought without shoes and with tattered clothes, often just a t-shirt. This is something that I cannot accept. What kind of *accoglienza* are we speaking about then? Is this how we welcome and host people? Just last week two Senegalese guys were brought in like this. I told the officials: what kind of clothes are these, and why are they not wearing shoes? They responded, typically, with: we gave them from what we had, but don't worry they are used to being barefoot in their own countries. I got mad, and told them: what kind of treatment is this?! And maybe, yes, they are used to being barefoot, but in their own homes and possibly in warmer temperatures than these! Look around you – and I showed them the locals in the waiting room all wearing scarves and jackets. At which point, I just took the two guys into a room we have at the back of the health centre where I keep some warm clothes and shoes and told them to take some clothes. (Rosario, offers medical services to migrants in Lampedusa hotspot, interview, September 2016)

> Later that day I spoke to a person working in the centre and brought this issue up. He defended the *modus operandi* of the centre saying that the migrants were treated well. He explained that migrants often arrived barefoot and that although they generally had gave them a pair of sandals, sometimes they ran out or the migrants tore them. However, he explained, 'we do the best we can, we give them food and shelter, but they cannot expect five-star hotel treatment'. But nevertheless I can tell you, with hand on heart, that I give them five-star care and attention. From the minute they step off at the wharf I show them that I care, I smile to them and look them directly in the eyes. I go out of my way to demonstrate kindness. In the centre, I take care of them as I would with a guest in my house. Not because I'm a do-gooder, but because that is how I have been brought up to treat people in my family. A guest is looking for human kindness and not some shiny service. (fieldnotes from conversation with Nunzio, hotspot worker, Lampedusa, September 2016)

In these two snippets of conversation the limits of conditional hospitality are discussed. Whilst Rosario feels that addressing the material needs, like basic clothing, is important, Nunzio contests it. Nunzio makes an interesting distinction between hospitality expressed through material gifts, and hospitality as the relationship with the foreigner. Nunzio, like many Lampedusans, has also worked in the tourist industry. One can see the influence in his way of thinking. Amongst businesspeople in this field it is normal to speak about financial aspects of hospitality, which is how clothing in first reception is seen by him. Care, smiles, gracious treatment do not cost anything and therefore are not a privileged possessions.

CASE 3: Anna: Hospitality influenced by social movements

Anna is an activist and an artist who has been in touch primarily with first reception structures in Western Sicily (including Lampedusa), but during some periods also secondary reception in northern Italy. She is in her 40s, works in the private industry and equates *accoglienza* to an ideological Kantian definition of hospitality against a background of social justice and human rights. This excerpt is particularly telling:

> *Accoglienza* is a meeting between equals. That is how we can speak of real *accoglienza*. No one treats migrants as they would treat a guest. This is a reality that saddens me, especially now that there is so much information on the root causes of migration, on global inequality and on the unimaginable difficulties that these people face during their journeys. If we are not even able to offer them a dignified welcome, how do we then expect them to integrate and become part of our society? (Anna, Sicilia, activist, October 2017)

Anna's use of hospitality is akin to that found in Homer's *The Odyssey*, which for ancient Greeks was a source of ethics, theology and history. Hospitality is identified with civilisation, with a humane treatment of guests. Odysseus on his departure from the island of the goddess Calypso is wrecked on the Phaecian coast, where he says (Book VI):

> "Alas," said he to himself, "what kind of people have I come amongst? Are they cruel, savage, and uncivilized, or hospitable and humane? I seem to hear the voices of young women, and they sound like those of the nymphs that haunt mountain tops, or springs of rivers and meadows of green grass. At any rate I am among a race of men and women. Let me try if I cannot manage to get a look at them. (The Odyssey Book VI)

This is to be contrasted with the description of the cruel Cyclops as "lawless and inhuman", a conclusion derived primarily from their ill-treatment of guests. The consequences of a lack of hospitality for Anna are long term and might influence the integration process. Again this is an allusion to a Cyclopian uncivilised society.

CASE 4: Adrian: Refuting hospitality

Conversations with Adrian were quite confusing. He has been a territorial borderworker in Malta for over 10 years. Starting as an NGO worker, but eventually moved to a government agency. With both entities, Adrian had direct contact with migrants at first reception and secondary reception. In the two recorded conversations I had with him, he interspersed the interviews with hospitality terminology. He spoke at times ideologically, like Anna above, of 'meeting migrants as equals', of ensuring that the initial encounters of migrants with the authorities at first reception was designed as a 'welcome'. He showed me 'welcome packs', and lamented generally the lack of cultural mediators in Malta, who could 'facilitate initial encounters, enable trust in us and the system, but also understand that as our guests they had to respect our rules'. A truly excellent example of the use of the hospitality paradigm in first reception. Towards the end of the second interview, Adrian stops and in a reflective comment says:

> Let us be clear. As I explained we treat everyone like a guest and we try hard to be good hosts. But they (migrants) have to understand that we are under no obligation to treat them in this way. And you have to remember that officers working here are not in the hospitality industry, and that these migrants are not paying guests, who by the way also have to follow rules, these are paid guests. And what that means is that since the buck starts and stops with us, it is up to us to lay down the rules. Malta does it because the country has human rights obligations, and because it is benevolent and this is of course a good thing. But how much can you expect if you have come illegally and you don't even pay? (Adrian, August 2016, IRC worker, Malta)

Hospitality for Adrian is a charitable activity, and not a rights-based process which migrants can lay claim on. It is clear that he feels that the state does not owe irregular migrants hospitality – they are not paying and they crossed the border illegally.

Adrian's comment here is reflecting the law and policies. The law, including EU laws, does not put an obligation of hospitality, but outlines as explained procedurally a complex series of operations that take place when a person enters the territory irregularly. Basic humanitarian needs are to be met but there are no obligations on the state or on anyone else to 'host' them, and they are not 'guests' but residents in a migrants' centre until the state decides what status it is going to assign to them.

Underlying this comment is also an intimation of hostility. The language is not only firm and authoritative but dismissive of claims that migrants might make. This strongly evokes Derrida's 'hostipitality' which refers to an inherent tension within the concept of hospitality. Derrida challenges the idea of hospitality as a form of unconditional charity, but shows that hospitality ultimately chains even the host to the relationship. As a result hostility remains a subtext of any enactment of hospitality, and the potential of hospitality to morph into hostility is always present (Derrida 2000).

5. Hospitality as an empty signifier and a key node of power struggles

Hospitality remains a complex concept, as Derrida's attempts to bring out the logic that governs the concept of hospitality demonstrate. He claims that this logic which conditions hospitality within Western traditions takes the form of a tension, an antinomy or a double imperative: between traditional hospitality and power (Derrida 2000). If hospitality, already as an abstract concept, is complex and multi-faceted, what is strange about the differential use by different actors in the field? The answer is straightforward and brings me back to the initial quote by Ahmed: first reception cannot be considered 'hospitality' by any stretch of the imagination. It is a series of bureaucratic procedures imposed on a vulnerable person by virtue of their action of crossing the border without state authorisation. And although it is interesting to see the different uses, the aim of the previous section's presentation was not simply to analyse the quotes or to show that hospitality is used by different actors in myriad ways, but to present the rampant, pervasive use of this metaphor. *What* does this pervasive use of hospitality tell us? Corollary questions which then fall outside the scope of this paper but which need to be further investigated are: *Why* is this metaphor used? *What* are the consequences? Does the use of this metaphor indicate more humane treatment or a wish to enact practices that are more humane?

Navigating and sifting through discursive fields is not an easy task. Hospitality is broadly used with a clear idea of what hospitality entails. Different elements of hospitality terminology could be conceptualised as 'floating signifiers', with a fixed meaning, without a referent point, possibly ambiguous and imbued with different meanings in different contexts. But hospitality itself, as a paradigm, is different. The problem is therefore not a lack of a definite meaning, but that there appears to be a split, no connection to the actual activities at hand, to the practices. Hospitality in this setting is to a large degree devoid of meaning because it does not have any referent within this field of first reception. And yet, in spite of this, it is clearly a locus of significant power. In this regard, it is useful to consider hospitality as a Laclauian 'empty signifier'.

The empty signifier conditions the discursive field and is where power is located. The hospitality metaphor functions like an empty signifier and therefore is the site of efforts to fill/influence/form content. As such the hospitality metaphor, under a cosmopolitan, humane, seemingly harmless exterior is the site of power struggles. Whoever manages to invest content into the empty signifier will influence change within the discursive field, and through hegemonic processes bring about structural change and social change. I propose therefore, in part challenging Derrida's indications of conclusions, that hospitality is not conflicted conceptually because it is unclear as a concept/its boundaries have shifted over the years, but precisely because it is the site of power struggles tied to the idea of the nation-state. State borders, nationalism, ethnic centrism are some of the ideas that the discursive power of hospitality language can change. What is portrayed in territorial borderworkers idiosyncratic use of the hospitality metaphor at first reception is not only the tension emanating from folk notions of hospitality and the structuring of social relations by the state, but merely the tip of the iceberg of the power struggles that are assailing the modern nation-state.

Reflecting on the discursive power of hospitality in the field of first reception, allows us to understand state hegemonic processes better. First by projecting an image of cosmopolitanism, of generosity and of encounter, the state asserts its territorial sovereignty, ideas around ethnic centrism and thus maintains social control. A Foucauldian argument which is neatly encapsulated in this quote:

> It is the exclusivity of hospitality that Derrida critiques most forcefully in challenging the claim by European governments that irregular migrants "abuse" the hospitality of the nation-state. The problematic nature of hospitality lies not in its expression in communal forms of welcome to migrants at an everyday level, but rather in how a language of hospitality may become a political tool to suggest values of cosmopolitanism while simultaneously enforcing the right to exclude those seen as unworthy of welcome. (Darling 2014: 163)

Second, the hospitality metaphor suggests values of cosmopolitanism, tolerance and acceptance that in many first and second reception systems go beyond the practical reality. In first reception, the split can be felt strongest, as Ahmed eloquently described: 'I have to beg for closed shoes because I feel cold…Our 'hosts' are many police outside and some people in here' and 'I am not a guest, I am a prisoner'.

Third, Poerksen whose work is entrenched in a different disciplinary tradition and therefore does not provide the sophisticated semantic analysis of Laclau, Mouffe and other semioticians, nonetheless reminds us that plastic words are a means for authoritarianism to ensure its power/hegemony. Poerksen argues that plastic words (which could be regarded as the equivalent of floating signifiers) produce an impoverishment of the language. Poerksen reminds us that plastic words need to remain uncritically challenged by its mass users, in order to allow elite power bosses to engage in their own power struggles. What would happen to the power struggle dynamics if mass users critically challenged and made an attempt at forming the meaning? Instead what happens is that mass users uncritically use these terms, indulge in the false security they attribute to the terms and fight useless battles against signifiers. Little realising that in so doing they render themselves powerless, unable to think or reach beyond the discursive field. Identifying and addressing the cultural formation of the node is essential for bringing about political and social change.

For the time being territorial borderworkers, and by extension mass users of the hospitality metaphor, are chained to a discursive field that is being slowly but surely formed by power struggles between the elite for whom the state remains the ultimate tool of power. First reception is particular because on the ground apart from the various state actors, there is a predominance of intergovernmental organisations (such as UNHCR, IOM and EU entities) and apart from a few exceptions, no non-governmental actors. The reason for this is that since first reception is part of the border system state security aspects such as health, registration and identification are prioritized. The influence of non-state actors on the ground is limited.

This has not stopped NGOs from actively competing to re-appropriate the language of hospitality in a bid to influence the field. Rosario´s comment here is a typical reproduction: ´What kind of *accoglienza* are we speaking about then? Is this how we welcome and host people?´, as is Anna´s assertion ´*Accoglienza* is a meeting between equals. That is how we can speak of real *accoglienza*. No one treats migrants as they would treat a guest'. NGOs however have tended to target floating signifiers and other signifiers. A typical example is the 'Yes, we host – *un rifugiato a casa mia'* (a refugee in my house) project run by the Diocesan Caritas of Agrigento and the Fondazione Mondoaltro (Caritas Diocesana Agrigento 2015), through which migrants are offered accommodation and integration into a family, instead of the typical 'hosting' in an impersonal migrant centre. This is a valid project which surely provides great opportunities for the migrants and their Sicilian host families. The objective is 'Moving from a model of hospitality, that of the great centers for refugees and asylum seekers, to one that offers a micro-diffused hospitality, directly in Italian families' (Caritas

2015).[7] However the effects of broader political change are likely to be minimal. At its best, this is a humanitarian project offering opportunities to individuals. Had Caritas wanted to enact broader political change, the target should have been the ´empty signifier´, which at the moment is filled with the hospitality discourse. It is only by aiming at the nodal point that the dominant political power can be challenged, and immigration policy is challenged.

Unwittingly NGOs often reinforce the hegemonic discourse, and rather than engage in a process of deconstruction of the discourse they retain the same discourse thus actively participating in it's (re)production. The Refugees Welcome campaign which rose to prominence in 2015 during the so-called refugee crisis in response to the suspension of Schengen/closing of borders between different Member States is another example. It showed an incredible effort of NGOs and civil society to convey new meaning to 'reception' and 'welcome'. Refugees Welcome however did not challenge the hospitality paradigm but rather played into it. It was an attempt to change the referent, to change the meaning. In practice, although the campaign proved extremely successful in providing an opportunity to many to contribute and engage in humanitarian activities, it has not brought about change in policy or institutional levels. Post the 2015-2016 refugee crisis, the EU's migration and external border policies remain the same and have worsened. At the height of the Refugees Welcome campaign in March 2016 the EU passed the controversial EU-Turkey agreement, which effectively closed a refugee route into the EU. Even more controversial due to the gross human rights violations and mistreatment of migrants, as well as the shaky post-conflict situation the country is in, in September 2017, the EU instituted an agreement with Libya to target the Central Mediterranean route. And many more examples could be listed here. The official EU policy is anything but 'refugees welcome', even though the predominant paradigm remains that of hospitality even at first reception. Therefore what the Refugees Welcome campaign did was feed into the hospitality narrative, and attempts to dent the hegemonic dominance of exclusionary and discriminatory politics of border control were unsuccessful.

6. Recognizing the plasticity of hospitality

As Rosello (2011) had indicated with reference to the broader immigration field, the conditioning of knowledge production and conceptualisation of the first reception system by the hospitality discourse ought to be more widely discussed. Hospitality is loosely used, in various ways, often in a vague, imprecise manner creating contradictions in narratives. This creates a situation where discussions on the ground remain at an impoverished level due to the vagueness and fluidity of the concepts. The discursive field is strong and coherent, and has been internalised by territorial borderworkers and policy makers over decades. There are very few attempts at its deconstruction on the ground. Just as unhelpful it is to territorial borderworkers, the hospitality paradigm is obstructive to those wishing to challenge current immigration policies. Worse still it serves to put the masses at the whim of those in power - be they local, national, European or international politicians.

Hospitality, despite its noble origins, unfortunately leads not only to an impoverishment of the production of knowledge in this field but to a retention of the dominant discourse and existent structures which serve the interests of the state at times to the exclusion of the interests of the individual. Pitt-Rivers (2012/1977) had argued that ambiguity and ambivalence are perennial features of relations of Mediterranean hospitality. Perhaps this is what makes 'hospitality' resonate with 'plasticity', making it amenable to manipulation through political discourse.

---

[7] Although in a similar vein, this is not to be confused with the governmental national policy of 'accoglienza diffusa' which is a social policy project modelled on successful framework implemented in Tuscany and aimed at housing migrants in smaller independent units in order to address problems of institutionalisation and facilitate integration. Interestingly, this governmental policy is also couched in hospitality terms, and therefore further supports the argument that the hospitality framework supports power dynamics and contemporary selective/restrictive immigration policy.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) remind us that in spite of the hegemonic dominance of a discourse, competing discourses can be sent to the margin but cannot be eliminated. Ahmed´s outburst is one such attempt, as is this paper and my ethnographic encounters and conversations with territorial borderworkers on the use of the hospitality discourse. Political change is therefore possible but, this paper is suggesting, use of the hospitality paradigm should be avoided.

References

Asylum Information Database - AIDA. 2017. *Place of detention: Italy* http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy/detention-asylum-seekers/detention-conditions/place-detention#footnoteref4_mj9w7po

Banfield, Edward C. 1958. *The moral basis of a backward society*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Candea, Mattei and De Col, Giovanni. 2012. "The Return to Hospitality". *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 18: S1-S19

Caritas Diocesana Agrigento. 2015. *Yes, we host*. 5 August. https://www.caritasagrigento.it/en/un-rifugiato-a-casa-mia/

Cimino, Guido and Foschi, Renato. 2014. Northerners versus southerners: Italian Anthropology and Psychology Faced With the "Southern Question". *History of Psychology*. 17 (4) 282-295.

Comune di Lampedusa e Linosa. 2008. *Porta di Lampedusa – Porta d'Europa: Il monumento*. http://www.comune.lampedusaelinosa.ag.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=125&Itemid=101

Darling, Jonathan. 2014. From Hospitality to Presence. *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*. 26(2): 162-169.

DeBono, Daniela. Forthcoming. In defiance of the reception logic: the case for including NGOs as human rights monitors in the EU's policies of first reception of irregular migrants. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*.

Derrida, Jacques. 2000. *Of hospitality*, Stanford: Stanford University Press

European Commission. 2015. *Communication from the Commission to the European parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A European Agenda on Migration*. Brussels, 13.5.2015 COM(2015) 240 final.

European Council. 2015. *Council decision (EU) 2015/1601 of 22 September 2015 establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and Greece*, Brussels: Official Journal of the EU. 24.09.2015

European Court of Auditors – ECA. 2017. *Special Report: EU response to the refugee crisis: the 'hotspot' approach*. Luxembourg: European Court of Auditors

Faleschini Lerner, Giovanna. 2010. From the other side of the Mediterranean: Hospitality in Italian migration cinema. *California Italian Studies*. 1(1): 1-19.

Fulco, Ornella. 2016. Trapani "città del sale, della vela e… dell'accoglienza". Cambia la frase sui cartelli di benvenuto. Trapani Oggi. http://www.trapanioggi.it/trapani-citta-del-sale-della-vela-e-dellaccoglienza-cambia-la-frase-sui-cartelli-di-benvenuto/

Hilowitz, Jane. 1977. Economic development and social change in Sicily. London: Routledge

Iacono, Silvia. 2017. "Rimborsi spese gonfiati", truffa al centro migranti: sei denunce a Pozzallo. Giornale di Sicilia. 24 Jan 2017. http://ragusa.gds.it/2017/01/24/rimborsi-spese-gonfiati-truffa-al-centro-migranti-sei-dipendenti-denunciati-a-pozzallo_620223/

Il Fatto Quotidiano. 2016. "Mafia Capitale, nuova inchiesta sul Cara di Mineo: presenza di migranti gonfiate, truffa da 1 milione. Sei indagati". 22 June 2016. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/06/22/mafia-capitale-indagine-sul-cara-di-mineo-6-indagati-e-perquisizioni/2850519/

La Sicilia. 2017. Migranti, Zuccaro: «La mafia attirata dai soldi per l'accoglienza». La Sicilia. 9 May 2017. http://www.lasicilia.it/news/catania/80604/migranti-zuccaro-gli-interessi-della-mafia-attirati-dai-soldi-per-l-accoglienza.html

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1950/1987. *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss trans. Felicity Baker*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Marceca, Romina. 2018. Agrigento, blitz con 56 arresti. La mafia chiedeva il pizzo ai centri di accoglienza per rifugiati. La Repubblica. 22 Jan 2018. http://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/01/21/news/agrigento_blitz_con_59_arresti_la_mafia_vo leva_gestire_i_centri_di_accoglienza_per_rifugiati-187003668/

Pitt-Rivers, Julian. 2012/1977. "The law of hospitality". *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2(1): 501-517.

Poerksen, Uwe. 2004. *Plastic words: The Tyranny of a Modular Language*. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Rai News. 2016. *Palermo, una tv olandese la sceglie come città modello di accoglienza e convivenza* . 7 Novembre. http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/palermo-tv-olandese-sceglie-citta-modello-accoglienza-convivenza-ff6f399c-3e80-471e-a8ae-5cc702b26583.html

Rosello, Mireille. 2001. *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Schneider, Jane and Schneider, Peter. 1976. *Culture and Political Economy in Western Sicily*. New York: Academic press Inc.

Stierl, Maurice. 2016. A sea of struggle – activist border interventions in the Mediterranean Sea. *Citizenship Studies*. 20(5): 561-578

United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSML) and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). 2016. *Detained and dehumanised: Report on human rights abuses against migrants in Libya*. HTTP:

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/LY/DetainedAndDehumanised_en.pdf [accessed

14 November 2017]

Wiley, Norbert. 2008. *The Pragmatists' Theory of the Self. Studies in Symbolic Interaction*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Volume 31: 7-29.

Author contacts:

Daniela DeBono

Senior Lecturer/ Marie Curie COFAS Fellow

Department of Global Political Studies/

Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare

Malmö University

20506 Malmö

Sweden

until December 2017 Marie Curie COFAS Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute

Email: Daniela DeBono <daniela.debono@mau.se>