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Article

Citizenship Islands: The Ongoing Emergency in the Mediterranean Sea

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Abstract

I present the concept of “citizenship islands” to analyze the ongoing emergency in the Mediterranean Sea. Citizenship islands are based on the idea of “nonplaces” for noncitizens who are both constantly present and invisible. Citizenship islands are a test of what is to come, as noncitizens such as migrants and refugees continue to arrive, even as countries refuse their right of entry and of seeking asylum. Based on research in Lampedusa, I argue that as understandings of citizenship change, the ongoing emergency in the Mediterranean Sea forces a focus on noncitizens. What is happening around discourses of citizenship, mobility, and migration requires new language to describe and analyze what is already happening, and to theorize new research tools for the future. Nonplaces invite a paradox between visibility and invisibility, between in-dependence and inter-dependence, highlighting the importance of language in characterizing the experience of migrants and refugees and how that language shapes relationships between newcomers/noncitizens and already established residents/citizens.

Keywords

citizenship; Mediterranean Sea; migrants; mobility; noncitizens; nonplaces; refugees

Issue

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1. Introduction

After a peak in arrivals in 2015, when Europe as a continent was caught off-guard by the influx of migrants and refugees, countries such as Italy, Greece, Spain, scrambled to address the crisis. The images have been in news-feeds around the world: migrants arriving in boats in the Mediterranean; visa-bearing citizens detained at airports; children being separated from their parents or dying while in custody; environmental refugees leaving places where water and food are already scarce; people in the streets demanding rights for noncitizens. But these are only some of the visible and dramatic images of the ongoing crisis. The policies of dealing with the influx of migrants and refugees presume various states of invisibility, in which individuals are whisked away from public view under ironically named “welcome centers”. This paradox of visibility and invisibility emerges in current discourses around migrants and refugees. Countries such as Italy and Greece, along with the rest of Europe,

are often in the limelight for sensational arrivals, but the migrants and refugees’ matriculation through the processing system is largely unseen. Even in the streets of Lampedusa, a small Italian island north of Libya, migrants walk peacefully among residents and tourists, only to board a ferry to mainland Italy after a few days, where they are discreetly distributed across the country. As of now, however, the dramatic arrivals are under threat. In 2018, the controversy over boat rescues in the Mediterranean left numerous migrants at sea, with more than 2,000 officially reported dead or missing, many more unaccounted for, as nations such as Italy and Malta denying entry at ports (see UNHCR, 2019).

This article presents the concept of “citizenship islands” to theorize the ongoing emergency in the Mediterranean Sea. Based on field studies in Italy in 2016, 2017, and 2018, with a specific focus on the island of Lampedusa, interviewing migrants and refugees, I explore what I define as “nonplaces”. Nonplaces are marked by the absence of what citizens of most Western nations

may take for granted: basic legal protections, access to education and health care, even with large disparity, access to political rights that guarantee agency and participation in the democratic and deliberative practices. In a nonplace, the basic legal rights and protections are not guaranteed by a sovereign nation to noncitizens, based on their status as citizens or residents of another nation.

Parts of Lampedusa, Lesbos, Kos, Samos, and other islands serve as nonplaces, both constantly present, engaged, and aware, yet invisible. Throughout short-term and long-term welcome centers in Italy, from small towns and large cities in the North, to rural and urban areas in Sicily, and throughout Lampedusa, we met migrants, refugees, volunteers, local officials and residents who were willing to share their stories. In this article, I use the example of Lampedusa to theorize citizenship islands. The balance between the now-in-peril duty to rescue migrants and refugees at sea and the ever-more-common passive response without a plan for short-term or long-term care, echoes an isolation that is familiar to many islanders, a do-it-yourself survival attitude. Yet, in a crisis of this scope, even the small receiving islands need help from the mainland governments. The now stalled, yet familiar process of arrival and removal from the island and the recent development of refusal of entry in Italian ports reveal the bureaucratic strain that leaves migrants and refugees with nowhere to go, stuck in nonplaces. I argue that citizenship islands are a test of what is to come. Nonplaces are becoming the new norm, as mobility becomes commonplace (see Kight, 2018), and noncitizens such as migrants and refugees continue to arrive.

The examples from Lampedusa force a re-invention of the status and placement of noncitizens. What is happening around discourses of citizenship, mobility, and migration requires new language to describe what is already happening and ways to research future developments in mobility. The language migrants, refugees, and those around them use matters, as it shapes the understanding of their experience, the relationship between newcomers/noncitizens and already established residents/citizens in the counties of arrival, and the policies that regulate their movement.

To that end, this article, first describes noncitizens—the ones identified in the news as refugees, migrants, asylum seekers—as people on the move with or without legal and political rights. They may also be nationals of countries that have abandoned them. Second, I argue that noncitizens exist in nonplaces where they live abandoned, in what I define as “citizenship islands”. The process of abandonment is more evident in islands such as Lampedusa, reflecting the paradox of visibility and invisibility, in-dependence and inter-dependence, which is heightened in a state of perpetual emergency.

2. Noncitizens

A citizen is usually a person who has a legal, political, social, and economic affiliation with a specific nation-state,

either by natural birth, based on either blood (*jus sanguinis*) or soil (*jus soli*), or by naturalization (Benhabib & Resnik, 2009). Citizenship often assumes more than legal rights and duties; it comes with a sense of belonging, rooted in shared language, cultural beliefs, habits, and rituals. As opposed to a citizen, a noncitizen “is someone who is not a member of a state nor owes allegiance to the state he or she currently resides” (University of Minnesota Human Rights Center, n.d.). The terms that describe noncitizens include stateless people, asylum seekers, third country nationals, refugees, migrants, and the more controversial aliens, denizens, illegal, irregular, undocumented citizens, or even “shadow citizens” (Yarwood, 2014, p. 61; see also Said, 2002).

Noncitizens also include expats, émigrés, and other professionals who work and live in a nation other than where they were born. The definition of noncitizens as other than a citizen covers a wide range of people in very different conditions, from asylum seeker to business traveler. The status of noncitizen also covers a long range of time, from short-term, temporary, such as an exchange student or a banker on assignment, to long-term, permanent moves, such as a refugee who leaves her country never to return. Noncitizens also vary in their agency and ability to move, ranging from those who chose to work abroad to those who are forced out of their country of origin (see Adey, 2016; Bloom, 2018; Sassen, 1999a, 1999b; Stonebridge, 2018; Tonkiss & Bloom, 2015; Wigley, 2018).

These definitions capture the understanding of citizenship as a legal possession (*de jure*), but also question how and why citizenship can be a performed practice (*de facto*; see Asen, 2004; Rufo & Atchison, 2011) when tied to a place where noncitizens may have no legal rights, but can participate in the community. I focus on noncitizens as those who leave or are forced to leave their home nation because of war, conflict, political unrest, or other conditions that inhibit their ability to stay. Even when noncitizens leave hoping to return, they often have no option of going home, making their move to other nations involuntary and permanent (our interviews with migrants and refugees reflected this pattern). The noncitizens in this definition, as Benhabib and Resnik (2009) note, “sit outside that circle of rights and obligations” allowed to citizens residing in a nation-state. While the relationship between citizens and their nation is “reciprocal”, as citizens are “recognized as members entitled to rights, protection, material support, and political loyalty”, noncitizens’ relationship to the nation where they reside, is one of exclusion (Benhabib & Resnik, 2009, p. 2). Balibar (2015, pp. 15–35) discusses a “dual violence” toward noncitizens who experience both a sense of non-belonging and a recognition of an “us” vs “them” approach, positioning citizens against noncitizens (see also Salter, 2007; Anderson, 2013).

The definitions for noncitizens matter because they shape the way others, including the media, address them and make policies for/about them (Biella, 2018; Dell’Orto

& Wetzstein, 2019). The legal definitions of various types of noncitizens are based on two important principles: the freedom of movement (in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, article 13) and the duty of hospitality (in article 14). From Albert Einstein to Sigmund Freud, Gloria Estefan to Madeline Albright, noncitizens have the right to leave their country (as citizens) and seek refuge elsewhere. The receiving nations have some legal duties to host noncitizens and allow them the opportunity to seek asylum, but they also hold the right to reject their requests for permanent resettlement.

I argue that there are two types of noncitizens: the dependent noncitizen and the hyper noncitizen. The two types of citizenship capture how discourses around noncitizens shape how others treat them, individually and politically. Scholars of human rights, migration, race, post-colonialism, and post-modernism have written about the dichotomy between the good and the bad immigrant, the model minority and the dangerous threat (Lyon, 2013; Sassen, 1999a, 1999b). The definitions of dependent noncitizen and hyper noncitizen generate from Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2005), who writes about exile and the noncitizens who move for political, geopolitical, humanitarian, and economic reasons. Refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Sudan, Mozambique, and migrants who move within at times non-defined borders, or socio-political confines, often become either dependent noncitizens or hyper noncitizens. For this dichotomy, I start with Agamben's return to classical Greek, with Aristotle and Sophocles, in *Antigone*, where he sees the oxymoron "*ypsipolis apolis*" (literally, superpolitical-apolitical). Agamben's argument focuses on how and why the one who is outside the polis is both inferior to a human and stronger than he is (Agamben, 1998).

Adding to Agamben's paradoxical, lose-lose positioning of the outsider as always otherized, both my definitions of noncitizens, as either dependent or hyper, are not alternatives to Agamben's taxonomy. Rather, my definitions highlight a state of abandonment (*al bando*), as citizens distance themselves from noncitizens as always outside of the traditional legal and social contracts (Agamben, 2005, pp. 34–35). The definitions as noncitizens capture key characteristics of survival necessary in a nonplace such as refugee camp, a welcoming center, or other temporary spaces for migrants and refugees, where citizenship is neither possession nor performance. In a state of abandonment, with no national or governmental support, the dependent noncitizen relies on national, international, supra-national organizations for aid, shelter, food, and health care. In contrast, the hyper noncitizen must "rise above" as superhuman to survive. The hyper noncitizen may gain legal status first as an asylum seeker (an option also for the dependent noncitizen) before becoming a full-fledged, integrated, functional member of the community.

The process of naming noncitizens as either dependent or hyper defines their status (especially between

asylum seekers and economic migrants) and their identity as either expendable or desirable. Examples of definitions that lead to policies about noncitizens and who they become politically include Angela Merkel's now infamous and contested welcome to more than a million Syrian refugees in 2015 ("We can do it"; see Dell'Orto & Wetzstein, 2019). Other defining moments include Denmark passing legislation to seize refugees' possession to cover their expenses; Sweden closing its bridge to Denmark for migrants; Hungary's Prime Minister Orban closing its borders and calling for a referendum on immigration; the European Union deals with Turkey and Libya, stalling refugees and migrants who arrive there, preventing them from reaching European Union nations; and Australia keeping migrants and refugees away from its shore, either at Nauru or at sea. The recent loss of a navigating license and eventual seizure of the *Aquarius*—one of the most visible, bright orange rescue ships in the Mediterranean—is the latest example of marking noncitizens as more than expendable, as a continent refuses noncitizens even the basic human right of rescue at sea.

The limiting definition of noncitizens as either dependent (with possible positive and negative valence) or hyper (also possibly negative or positive, but mostly positive) reduces stories into categories that determine how citizens engage with noncitizens. The classification as either expendable or desirable is always contingent upon legal arguments that can activate rights for those who seek asylum based on a combination of horror stories and proof of exceptionality. Examples of migrants and refugees as dependent noncitizens often mark them in urgent need of help, not necessarily desirable, but not expendable either. Hyper noncitizens include those who speak English or the language of the host countries; they may have an advanced education or the desire to be educated or trained professionally. The hyper noncitizen is desirable but also at risk of expendability, because there is no urgent need. This paradox positions all noncitizens as "others". A few examples from Lampedusa include numerous stories of young women arriving pregnant, as a result of sexual assault in Libya. We heard from both migrants and volunteers that captors and smugglers would force pregnant women on boats when close to term. In a few cases, these women gave birth at sea. A volunteer medical assistant explained that women, and their newborns, along with other medical emergencies, were often transported to hospitals in Sicily. As dependent noncitizens, women, children, and urgent medical cases got immediate attention and a ride off the island, only to be placed in welcome centers elsewhere, as their status as noncitizens persisted.

We also met a former professional soccer player from a Western African nation. He had spent several months traveling through Africa and had been waiting in Lampedusa for almost a month. He was confident that his skills, his education, and his fluent English would make him stand out from the hundreds of other young men in a similar situation. His plan was not to stop, or

be stopped, in Italy, as he had friends waiting for him in Germany, where he would hopefully go back to training on the football pitch. As a hyper noncitizen, his narrative of success and resilience made him confident in his ability to persuade the legal authorities that he could contribute again, just like he did in his native country. Nevertheless, as a noncitizen, his athleticism and confidence did not protect him from waiting among many others.

From stories in the streets of Lampedusa, the definition of noncitizens as dependent, hyper, positions them as “other”, separated from citizens, local authorities, and volunteers who respond to them based on this paradoxical classification. Noncitizens, be they in need of help as dependent, or ready to contribute as hyper, still have to present themselves as easy-to-categorize options. The limits of a definition that only captures being an outsider highlight the tie to nationhood as the only acceptable way to be a citizen. Both sad and success stories reveal the noncitizens’ vulnerability, their status as outsiders who still must start from scratch, stuck in a nonplace.

3. Nonplaces

The island metaphor highlights the lack of citizenship rights for both dependent noncitizens and hyper noncitizens within a nonplace. In a nonplace, “the right to have rights” (Arendt, 1958) is absent, and migrants and refugees are noncitizens who always have to prove that they belong (Arendt, 1943). In political nonplaces, rules that regulate interactions have high impact on passers-by, migrants and refugees who are defined by a lack of rights and benefits from whence they come, legally determining their status as in legitimate need of asylum to escape possible atrocities.

The definition of nonplace emerges from Marc Augé, who defines a nonplace as a “space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity” (Augé, 1995, p. 63). Nonplaces become “the real measure of our time” (Augé, 1995, p. 64). Building on what de Certeau had defined as a nonplace, Augé argues that mobility is a key feature of a nonplace, as places turn into “passages” where movement is the norm (Augé, 1995, p. 69). Augé’s examples of nonplaces include airports, supermarkets, but also “extended transit camps where the planet’s refugees are parked” (Augé, 1995, p. 28).

Nonplaces challenge the assumption that there is a home, where language and identity are based on the discourses of those who established what he calls “anthropological places”. The home-bound story becomes a “half fantasy”, “the fantasy of a founded, ceaselessly re-founding place is only a ‘semi-illusion’”, because mobility is the norm (Augé, 1995, pp. 38–39). Where people are born, by chance or through the stories which become the identity of the place we may call home, people exist through only memories, rituals, and language (Augé, 1995, p. 47). Nonplaces emerge in relation to “certain ends” such as transport or leisure, and “the relation indi-

viduals have with these spaces” (Augé, 1995, p. 76). Augé writes that “certain places exist only through the words that evoke them” as nonplaces, imaginary places whose myths, images, texts make them what they are, even as they regulate behavior and movement (signs that order “no entry” and “no smoking” in airports; Augé, 1995, p. 77). Since nonplaces are there to be passed through, they are not only the measure of our time, but they are measured in units of time: how long are we there for? (Augé, 1995, pp. 83–84). Nonplaces exist in what Augé calls an “acceleration of history” (Augé, 1995, p. 23). This excess in time and space creates a new understanding of identity, for individuals who exist in a place defined by meaning, relationship to others, and a new view on mobility.

Augé argues, however, that nonplaces are non-political, unlike citizenship islands, which are political. Nonplaces are a form of “smooth space”, a “horizonless milieu” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 379) for nomadic existence, always “in between” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 380–381) an intermezzo. Noncitizens in nonplaces are like a rhizome, no roots, no beginning and no end, only in between, no end goal and no origin story, and no long-lasting relationship. Their stories are a series of truncated conjunctions (...and...and...and...). The metaphors of the nomad, traveler, desert, island exist not just as an exercise in thinking that pushes an imagining of what life is “as” a nomad. They are an invitation to understand why and how meaning emerges in nonplaces, how and why power dynamics shape noncitizens and reinforce their positionality as abandoned and citizens as the ones abandoning (see Chavez, 2014, 2015; Duneier, 2016; Hauser, 2012; Nevins, 2018).

4. Citizenship Islands

Citizenship islands are geographically and metaphorically isolated from a land, other citizens, and assistance from government and nongovernmental agents. They often escape media attention. I argue that, in addition to *non-place-ness*, citizenship islands are also marked by the paradox between visibility and invisibility, and independence and inter-dependence. As I develop these concepts around language to theorize noncitizenship and non-place-ness, I use examples from interviews we conducted in the summers of 2016, 2017, and 2018. We met about 50 migrants and refugees, 20 local residents and volunteers, 20 international agencies/NGOs workers, and 20 local government officials. We asked them to share their stories and experience. We distributed surveys to ask about the migrants’ life before they traveled to Lampedusa, but the open-question method resulted in more meaningful conversations, after the initial survey, lasting from 20 minutes to 2 hours. Most of the migrants and refugees we met in Lampedusa were from various nations in Africa (Chad, DRC, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan), mostly young

males, as young as 14 and as old as 50, with most of them in their 20s. In Northern Italy and across Sicily, we also met migrants and refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, in addition to the same countries listed above. We interviewed only migrants who spoke Italian, English, or French, without translators. While we engage the data in other projects, in the next sections, I only include examples from our interviews to demonstrate how and why noncitizens exist in nonplaces.

4.1. Islands as Nonplaces

The non-place-ness of islands such as Lampedusa, similar to other islands where migrants and refugees land, marks their temporary status because neither the passers-by nor the authorities have the desire to stay. As Pugliese (2009) narrates, Lampedusa has a history as part of the penal archipelago in the South of Italy, on the border with Africa. On the island stands the symbolic Gate of Lampedusa, Gate of Europe, a monument dedicated by artist Mimmo Paladino to the dead and missing migrants (see Figures 1 and 2), ambiguously open as a welcome and a farewell. Lampedusa's history as a nonplace for out-laws makes it part of what Khrebtan-Hörhager (2015, p. 88) calls "the turbulent Italian south" which "faces a 'double trouble': as if being the backyard of Europe would not be challenging enough, the tiny island of Lampedusa—the infamous 'unsafe harbor'—currently serve as the troublesome gates of Europe". She adds that Lampedusa "is one of the nearest gateways to Europe for Africans fleeing poverty and conflict" (see also Triandafyllidou & Dimitriadi, 2013) making it an island

marked by non-place-ness, time-less-ness, and possible law-less-ness.

Citizenship islands are nonplaces because the relationship between citizens and noncitizens are framed by the limited stay and eventual movement. In Lampedusa, we spoke with many residents who, regardless of their view on immigration, had been welcoming people who came to their shore for more than 30 years. In an island of fishermen, one Red Cross volunteer who was at the center of the 2013 accident that left about 360 dead and who helped rescue 13 (out of the 150 survivors) on his boat, said that island people know the sea. They know it well enough to respect it, so they understand that nobody would take the risk of crossing if they were not desperate. When people arrived on the tiny island after the Arab Spring, residents in Lampedusa opened their homes, shared pasta in large tables in the street, and allowed the migrants and refugees to shower in their bathrooms. When the 2013 disaster happened, a local official told us that there were literally not enough coffins to bury the dead. They had to wait for days before coffins arrived from the mainland. Death proved an inconvenience in an island of 6,000, where migrants and refugees, whether dead or alive, are only there temporarily.

As a citizenship island, Lampedusa is a nonplace for migrants and refugees who arrive there as their port of entry, in transition to the next destination. In Figure 3, migrants and refugees are entering the harbor in Lampedusa, after being transferred from the ship that rescued them at sea. This is the first step in a series of transfer from nonplace to nonplace for migrants and



Figure 1. Porta di Lampedusa, Porta d'Europa/Gate of Lampedusa, Gate of Europe, by Mimmo Paladino, 2008. Photo taken by the author in May 2017.



Figure 2. Porta di Lampedusa, Porta d’Europa/Gate of Lampedusa, Gate of Europe (detail), by Mimmo Paladino, 2008. Photo taken by the author in May 2017. The caption reads: “A monument to the migrants who deceased and disappeared in the sea”.



Figure 3. Lampedusa, May 2017. Used with permission from Red Cross Volunteer.

refugees, most of them from various African countries, their black skin immediately marking them as strangers, outsiders, noncitizens (see Fanon, 2008), in contrast to the white Red Cross volunteers.

The status of migrants and refugees as temporary passers-by, even for those who remain on the island for hundreds of days or the few who make Lampedusa a home, remains as noncitizens even as they move North through Italy and Europe, existing in masked presence and visible neglect. For example, in Figure 4, migrants and refugees line up, waiting for the send-off in a com-

mercial ferry to Porto Empedocle, Sicily. They arrive in green military buses, exit in orderly lines, and wait patiently for the ferry, embarking before all other passengers. Their race, and in most cases their gender and age, as they are mostly young black males, highlight them as “others”. Frantz Fanon powerfully describes the “*visible appearance*” that makes them “watched” (Fanon, 2008, p. 18). The migrants are guarded, controlled, shuffled through the process of departure in ways that dehumanize them as cargo. While in line, everyone stayed silent, following the rules of the transition, marked as



Figure 4. Lampedusa, June 2017, taken by the author.

another step in the migrants' non-place-ness as outsiders, outlaws, others.

The non-place-ness characterizes both their origin and their destination. In Lampedusa, we met young men who paused, quietly mentioned Libya and the length of time there, suggesting an unspoken understanding of incredible hardship. Their journey before the waiting period in Libya took months, with no option of turning back. After the boat rescue that got them to the tiny Italian island, many young men spoke of going to the mainland as their next stop, on their way to northern Italy, Germany, or meeting relatives in the UK, but without the certainty of a secure path there.

4.2. Islands as Visible and Invisible

In-visibility, as connected to the rhetorical trope of *ennoia*, the rhetorical strategy of masking the present, is another characteristic of a citizenship island. The move is masking while exposing, holding back information even when the meaning is made apparent, as citizens help noncitizens and ask for help, but simultaneously carry on as if they were not there. Migrants and refugees are ubiquitous in Italy, Greece, and across Europe, yet they seem invisible to citizens. Their invisibility is paradoxically visible in the number of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea, those who never made it to Lampedusa. Writing in 2015, Khrebtan-Hörhager (2015, p. 92) noted that "death is the most commonly used word in the current discourse of Lampedusa crisis". Even before the term crisis was used to describe the increase in arrivals, she argued that "there is hardly anything more real than the countless stories of normative human deaths of anonymous

alien African bodies in the Mediterranean" (Khrebtan-Hörhager, 2015, p. 92). Although in the first 3 months of 2019, deaths are down, compared to the past 4 years, mostly due to harsh policies of refusal of entry by European governments, the number of confirmed deaths soared over 5,000 in 2016, and averaged about 3,000 in 2015, 2017, and 2018, according to the Missing Migrants Project, totaling about 20,000 death in the last 10 years (see also Olivieri et al., 2018). There are many more migrants who go missing and unreported. While those who make it to Lampedusa are the lucky ones, the invisibility of their "anonymous alien African bodies" (Khrebtan-Hörhager, 2015, p. 92) persists.

In nonplaces, migrants and refugees exist as temporary, non-permanent passers-by with no rights and benefits, even as NGOs and international organizations provide shelter, food, and basic medical assistance. In both official and unofficial camps, short-term hot spots and long-term welcome centers, the presence of migrants and refugees is hidden in plain sight, always at the margins of cities (Athens, Milan), abandoned airports (Ellinikon), unused parts of busy ports (Pireus), and islands. The geographic position of islands such as Lampedusa places them "naturally" on the trajectory of migrants and refugees, but even on these small masses of land on the sea, migrants and refugees reside in nonplaces at the outskirts of villages, away from where citizens, residents, and tourists stay (see Bayraktar, 2012). Pugliese (2009), following Foucault's heterotopia, defines "asheterotopic space" as one marked by invisibility, "the absolutely other space, the penal colony". He argues that these spaces, or nonplaces, become "invisibilized and unintelligible within the enframing discourse of

Western tourism". In Lampedusa, while vacationers were in plain sight on the beaches and throughout the city center, migrants and refugees walked through a hole in a fenced wall to escape "the squalor and suffering of the immigration prison" (Pugliese, 2009, p. 673).

The welcoming center in Lampedusa is not a detention center, even if regulated by police. Technically, the center does not allow migrants and refugees to leave, but the unwritten rule is that they can come and go from an "open" fence in the back. During our days in Lampedusa, migrants and refugees walked freely in the main street, made calls at an internet café, and waited in line at a local church where they could search through donated clothes and shoes. We were among the few nonlocals to engage them. The residents paid no attention to them, seemingly used to them as they are of each other, just as they would ignore anything else that is always there. Besides a local man warning the young woman/co-researcher to be aware of the migrants, and a few puzzled looks when we sat to talk, the local residents ignored the groups of mostly young men strolling through the streets. The migrants who talked to us were open to share their stories. As Khrebtan-Hörhager (2015) argues in her analysis of the Lampedusa-based film *Terraferma*: "The immigrants are either still or quiet, they are longing, instead: longing to belong to the world, profoundly marked by diminishing humanity as the meta-cause of institutionalized Othering in all its manifestations" (Khrebtan-Hörhager, 2015, p. 94). The invisibility of their presence was far from neutral. Shortly after we visited Lampedusa in 2017, the residents elected a new right-wing mayor who had campaigned on an anti-immigration platform, ousting the award-winning mayor who had made it a priority to rescue and welcome migrants.

The contrast of highly visible cases in Lampedusa, such as the October 2013 shipwreck, and the daily invisibility of the migrants and refugees is politically orchestrated by the Italian government and European Union officials, including Frans Timmermans, the European commission's first vice-president, who recently declared that the migration crisis is over (Smith, 2019). As Giannacopoulos, Marmo and de Lint (2013, p. 561) argue, writing about high profile cases in Lampedusa and Australia:

These militarised *rescue* missions not only function to normalise exclusions at the borders of the global North, but set in place a climate of fear and silence that functions to *disappear* the real structuring dimensions of migratory movements, thereby curbing the possibility of moving towards equitable resolutions in the global governance of irregular migration.

Invisibility, for them, is an "epistemic and material phenomenon" that leads to "the *disappearance* of the asylum seeker" as "both literal and figurative" (Giannacopoulos et al., 2013, p. 569). The carrying-on as if the migrants were not there is powerful in the non-

place-ness of an island where citizens treat noncitizens as non-present, non-permanent, non-people who are worthy of emergency care, but not long-term relationships. With the exception of three families adopting young men who had first arrived in the 1990s, and volunteers who stay in touch with migrants from the 2013 boat rescue, no local resident we met had a story of a migrant who had made the island a home. To be sure: many local residents travel and study in the mainland, as it is typical for a small village with limited jobs and resources. It would not be fair to expect an island to provide a home for passers-by when the local themselves make mobility a habit. The temporality and contingency of the migrants and refugees, however, become a characteristic of their status as noncitizens, non-residents, passers-by in the first of many nonplaces.

4.3. *Island Mentality as In-Dependent and Inter-Dependent*

As migrants and refugees remain invisible to citizens even when in plain sight, the temporality of noncitizens and the long-term nature of the "emergency" arrivals make the relationship between the islanders and other citizens one of dependence, no longer based on independence. The *connection* between the non-place-ness of a citizenship island and the "other" citizens, be they those on the mainland of a nation such as Italy, those of international organizations such as UN, UNHCR, MSF, and many others, highlights the inter-dependence among agents who operate as if nonplaces may be kept at a distance, geographically and metaphorically; hidden away as a temporary abnormality, but they are not.

Islands are distant from a mainland, with the possibility and/or risk of isolation, often marked by the ability to be independent, resilient, relying on their own resources in time of need. But they also depend on others, especially in times of crisis (see Pugliese, 2009), practicing reciprocity among themselves and with others (see Hau'ofa, 2017, p. 12). Hau'ofa protests the notion that islands are isolated, as not to mask the richness in culture, economic opportunities, and the ability to move freely in the sea. Writing about Oceania, Hau'ofa uses the examples of resources from islands as "no longer confined to their national boundaries; they are located wherever these people are living permanently or otherwise". He also argues that islands extend far beyond their perimeter, "their universe comprised not only land surfaces, but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it". He cites a poem narrating the perspective of a fisherman on a boat, as static, not navigating the sea, rather letting the sea come to him. This reversed relationship between land and sea captures the paradox of dependence and inter-dependence, redefined not as needing assistance from others, but as opportunities for others to encounter the richness of islands. In Figure 5, migrants and refugees who have just arrived in the port of Lampedusa are in line, awaiting examination, before

leaving for the welcoming center. This moment is usually one of the happiest in their journey, after the peril of the sea, and before the realization that the welcome is not one that leads to the life they had imagined in Europe. In this brief moment, the encounter of the island, the arrival of the migrants as the African others, the bodies that risked death at sea, exemplify the lesson from the fisherman's tale: "In search of new land, confident in the belief that, as usual, islands would rise over the horizon to meet him" (them; Hau'ofa, 2017, p. 16).



Figure 5. Lampedusa, May 2017. Used with permission from Red Cross Volunteer.

As the residents of Lampedusa know, migrants and refugees have been landing on their shores for decades, long before the world turned their attention to the tiny island of 6000. In 2011, residents welcomed more than double their population after the Arab Spring, then the turmoil in the Middle East, and the ongoing unrest in sub-Saharan Africa. The residents of Lampedusa had their independence and resilience challenged by the need for resources beyond their control. The example of the lack of coffins is one of many lessons in dependency on others.

Another story from a resident of Lampedusa demonstrates the paradox of independence and interdependence of a nonplace. Late one night in 2011, the resident recounted hearing a noise from the kitchen and thinking his wife may be awake. When he saw her in bed, he decided to check what may be happening downstairs. He found a young man, an African migrant, taking

food from the fridge. Instead of being scared or angry, the resident shared his story as one of extreme sadness. The young man had nowhere to go, no welcome center or NGO to feed him on the overcrowded and under-resourced island, so the only place to find food was a private home. The young man had to depend on the kindness of residents, and residents had to rely on each other, while waiting for more resources from the mainland, to deal with the influx of migrants and refugees. During this state of emergency, the non-place-ness of Lampedusa also allowed for what authorities may consider a crime, breaking into a home, not to be reported, but rather considered in the context of extreme need.

Isolation and dependence on others, however, do not mean that Lampedusa, or other islands, are weak or do not function well. The tension between independence, strength, survival typical of islands in the Mediterranean and elsewhere (Haiti, Puerto Rico, Indonesia) relates to the abandonment of noncitizens. The increase in arrivals, the new presence of more migrants, and the absurdity of a prolonged, extended time of crisis, force a dependence on others that makes Lampedusa more visible on the map of humanitarian agencies. Yet, Lampedusa's dependence on others and continued calls for assistance remain invisible, far away enough to avoid tackling the issue of mobility in the Mediterranean, the ongoing departures from Libya and other parts of Northern Africa as more than a seasonal or temporary phenomenon.

The weakness of isolation and dependence is strategic when governments such as the far-right-ruling party in Italy and others across the Mediterranean decide to block or detain rescuing ships such as the *Aquarius* and the *Mare Jonio* (see Euractiv, 2019). Hau'ofa (2017, p. 9) writes in *Our Sea of Islands*, referring to Oceania, that "in the days when boundaries were not imaginary lines in the ocean, but rather points of entry that were constantly negotiated and even contested, the sea was open to anyone who could navigate his way through". He argues for defining islands together, showing their force through their multiplicity, as a sea of islands, rather than islands in the sea. This strength emerges in the stories we heard from all Lampedusa residents, who came together to rescue migrants and refugees at sea, feed them, and provide a first-landing place, but also realized that supporting them long-term and providing them a permanent home in Lampedusa is not an option.

What a government official in Agrigento, Sicily, called an "ongoing emergency" challenged Lampedusa's ability to stay independent, to protect their isolation to outside sources, as Italian and international aid agencies arrived in the hotels now deserted by tourists. The very independence that relied on people visiting the beautiful island for leisure, sustaining its economy, crumbled under the un-sustainable, never-ending flow of migrants and refugees. The now defunct Lampedusa model, as locals call it, had been a semi-efficient way to ensure that migrants and refugees only stay on the island for an average of 10 days before they line up on the commercial

ferry to Sicily, off to their next nonplace. The island mentality is tested by the need for others to keep the process moving.

5. Conclusion

The non-place-ness of citizenship islands presents unique characteristics. As noncitizens in nonplaces, the examples from citizenship islands demonstrate the paradox of visibility/invisibility and in-dependence/inter-dependence. Even in Huxley's (1962/2009) utopian island of Pala, isolation and distance are prerequisites for testing a perfect society, but in the end, others make it to the shore. Recently, as arrivals in Lampedusa have slowed due to the Italian Government's refusal to rescue migrants at sea, migrants and refugees have found alternative routes, with Spain and Greece seeing an increase in arrivals. What has now become an example of an island "of despair", the Moira camp in Lesbos (see Magra, 2018; McElvaney, 2018; Psaropoulos, 2018) shows the need for others. Migrants and refugees have been waiting, losing hope, and dying in the overcrowded camp, as the Greek authorities have nowhere to send them.

In *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid (2017) writes about a young refugee couple in a semi-imaginative apocalyptic world where newcomers and natives are displaced. Hamid writes that "we are all migrants through time", and it is only a matter of time until others may constantly be the move, with no home. The non-place-ness of citizenship islands has moved to the few rescue ships that still have permits, or to commercial ships willing to risk breaking national laws to save lives, as nations refuse the right of entry to noncitizens. The ongoing emergency continues. On 20 March 2019, Lampedusa was back in the news, as a commercial ship challenged the Italian government and disembarked 49 migrants, who once again quickly disappeared into non-place-ness.

In this article, I challenge traditional notions of citizenship and place-based identity to present a model of belonging and engagement, based on the assumptions that noncitizens exist in nonplaces. This new mobility paradigm theorizes non-place-ness as a discursive norm, a practice and habit for migrants and refugees who move, leaving everything behind, to adapt, forge new relationships, establish a new life in a place other than where they were born, but without the option of returning "home". Both as dependent and hyper, whether they are expandable or desirable, from the perspective of citizens, residents of hosting nations, even the volunteers and NGOs workers who rush to Lampedusa and other hotspots to help, noncitizens are otherized.

As scholars of communication and media, it is important to recognize how metaphors authorize new arguments. I introduce language to invite citizens and noncitizens to process what is already happening: Stochasticity, mobility, noncitizenship, non-place-ness, islands (see Braidotti, 2011; Lyon, 2013; Von Burg, 2012, 2014). This is not just an exercise in imagination that risks an

"asymmetrical role reversal" (Lyon, 2013) or a naïve invitation to put oneself in other people's shoes. Kant's (and Arendt's) invitation to "go visiting" starts with the imaginary idea of understanding others, even developed as a duty to hospitality (Arendt, 1992), but citizenship islands are not places for citizens, privileged scholars, or diplomats to "go visiting" and return with horror tales of inhumane conditions.

Citizenship islands are important theoretically, as they become sites to reconsider the notions and practices of citizenship. What I define as nonplaces for noncitizens reveal lessons for the studies of mobility and migration, and how to study them in communication and media. Nonplaces are the new norm, noncitizens are here to stay, non-visibility will eventually make itself apparent, inter-dependency will overcome isolation, as citizenship islands are a test of what is to come.

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The author declares no conflict of interests.

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