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Deaths at the Borders. From Institutional Carelessness to Private Concern.

Research Notes from Italy

1. Introduction

On 12th of May 2015 the VU University of Amsterdam published the Deaths at the Borders Database, an evidence-base of information retrieved from the death records of migrants who died attempting to cross the EU's southern borders to Greece, Italy, Malta, Gibraltar and Spain, and whose bodies were found and processed by the authorities of these countries, between 1990 and 2013.¹ From this research it emerged that two thirds of deceased migrants were classified as unidentified and that the identification rate varied greatly depending on both place and time factors.

In Italy, more specifically, data collection involved searching through documents issued within the death management system of Italian coastal towns, which have been receiving migrants by sea for the last 25 years, in Apulia, Sardinia, Sicily and Calabria. The retrieval of an unidentified body begins a series of procedures involving various local authorities, and produces a considerable amount of paperwork. In Italy, alongside the official procedures that must be implemented throughout the nation, there are many procedures imposed at the regional, provincial and local levels. This creates differences from place to place, leaving identification of deceased migrants to chance, dependent on the individual abilities and competences of the local authorities in the exact place where their body is found or brought from the sea.

This article offers a broad picture of the Italian death management system in this regard, paying close attention to the effects and consequences of a non-standardized identification process, which has proven to be ineffective in many places where migrants bodies are found, and thereby incapable of guaranteeing the dignity of the deceased and their families. Compensations for this ineffective system are made by members of the local communities, by guardians of cemeteries, and by mayors, who do what they can to offer religious rites and burial ceremonies that (attempt, at least) to restore the memories of these too-easily forgotten dead.

2. Official procedures and documentation: from discovery of a body to death registration

Between 1990 and 2013, migrants' bodies have been retrieved from the sea in different ways. The highest numbers of bodies are retrieved when rescue boats are present at the scene of a shipwreck. For example, 368 bodies were retrieved in the days following the shipwreck of 3rd October 2013 because the shipwreck occurred relatively close to the island of Lampedusa,² the coast guard were mobilized quickly,³ and a national Disaster Victims Identification (DVI) Unit team, including divers, was dispatched to help retrieve and process the bodies. Many shipwrecks, however, are not the subject of such rescue and recovery operations. Instead, bodies were found because they washed up on beaches, or became trapped in fishing nets or in the rocks at the bottom of cliffs. The numbers of bodies found in this way are considerably lower, but they are proof of many more shipwrecks and missing people about whom we may never have any news.

Regardless of the way in which the body of a migrant is retrieved from the sea, it is necessary to inform a police officer. The first documentation about the body can, therefore, be found in the 'Report of body retrieval' (*Verbale di ritrovamento cadavere*) compiled by the police according to Art. 347 of the Criminal Procedure Code (*Codice di Procedura Penale*). However, there is no fixed rule on which police

¹ The Database was the result of multi-sited field work. Data was collected in Italy by Giorgia Mirto and Amélie Tapella, coordinated by Tamara Last, under the Human Costs of Border Control project, directed by Prof Dr Thomas Spijkerboer. See www.borderdeaths.org.

² Near Isola dei Conigli.

³ A Lampedusan fisherman had spotted the boats and alarmed the coast guard immediately.

force should respond in cases like this. The failure to complete the Police Reform of 2000 (*Norme di delega al governo in materia di riordino dell'arma dei Carabinieri, del Corpo Forestale dello Stato, del Corpo della Guardia di Finanza e della Polizia di Stato*) has left considerable confusion in Italy as to the precise obligations of the numerous police forces, including the recovery of cadavers.

In Lampedusa, for instance, during the period under study, the police forces appointed with the task of retrieving bodies included the *Guardia Costiera* (Coast Guard), the *Guardia di Finanza* (Italian Finance Police) and the *Carabinieri*. But technically, any and all police forces equipped to retrieve a body could be called upon, even the *Corpo Forestale dello Stato* (State Forestry Force). Operations conducted by police forces are recorded and archived in their respective archives, according to difference archival and data analysis procedures. This creates a serious obstacle to research about border deaths as the 'Reports of body retrieval' that would offer invaluable information are scattered. The picture becomes even more complex if we consider that there are many national and European forces involved in 'preventing illegal migration' that also retrieve bodies that end up in Italy.

The police officer, whichever police force he works for, must inform the *Procura della Repubblica* (Public Prosecutor's Office) of the province, and send the retrieval documentation to the prosecutor on duty.⁴ The Procura should open a case against 'unknown', on the presumption that a criminal act caused the death of the deceased. The Procura is always involved when migrants have died at sea, and this is one of the aspects of border death cases that help to distinguish them from other deaths.

The judiciary police and the coroner, appointed by the *Pubblico Ministero* (Public Prosecutor), conduct the forensic investigation into the identity of the cadaver and the cause and circumstances of his/her death. There is no standard procedure in Italy through which authorities must proceed to identify a cadaver. Instead, identification is too often subject to the initiative and know-how of the individuals who conduct the forensic investigation. Biological samples – from which DNA can be extracted for profiling – are very rarely taken. An autopsy, including an internal as well as external medical examination of the body, is not obligatory in Italy. Cause of death may be determined by a simple, external examination, which is recorded in the 'Cadaver inspection report' (*Verbale d'ispezione cadaverica*). The 'Cadaver inspection report' is completed by a medical professional (not necessarily a pathologist), who may choose to include a recommendation for a full autopsy. The final decision is taken by the Procura, who issues an order for the body to be transferred to a legal medical institute for this purpose, but the recommendation in the 'Cadaver inspection report' carries substantial weight in this decision. No such recommendation was made on behalf of the majority of border deaths that we found: instead, their cause of death is recorded as either 'asphyxia' or 'cardiac arrest' based solely on the appearance of the body and where it was found. It is impossible to find a cadaver whose heart and breathing didn't stop.

In cases in which an autopsy is conducted, the pathologist sends a detailed report to the Procura. The Health Authority (*ASL, Azienda Sanitaria Locale*), legal medical center, morgue or cemeteries where the autopsy was done, drafts a Certificate of Death (*Certificato di Morte*) which is sent to the Municipality office, in accordance with Art.8-15 of DPR⁵ 285/1990.

The judiciary police investigate the death to determine any criminal elements. But their investigation may include aspects that would contribute to establishing the identity of the cadaver, such as testimonies from survivors, testimonies from those involved in recovering the body, and personal effects found on the body or at the scene. The judiciary police provide a report of their investigation to the Procura. In turn, the Procura issues the burial permit (*Nulla Osta al Seppellimento*) in accordance with Art.77 DPR 396/2000, which orders the release of the body for burial and usually signals the closing of the case.

⁴ Some Procuras have instituted *inter-force* specialized team against illegal immigration, constituted by prosecutors, police officers and Prefettura officials. This is the case of the Palermo, Siracusa, Brindisi and Lecce's procuras.

⁵ Decree of the President of the Republic (Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica).

All these documents are archived in the case files of the Procura, which are difficult to access and difficult to search. All cases are digitally archived in regional databases (REGGE, currently being replaced by SICP), but these databases do not have standardized classifications for border deaths. As the dates of death and persons who died 'border deaths' were unknown to the researchers, it was not possible to use these databases to identify new cases, only to confirm particular details about cases already known to the research from death registries.

In order for the burial of a cadaver to go ahead, the *stato civile* (Civil Office of the Municipality) must issue an authorization of burial corresponding to the burial permit issued by the Procura. This should only be done after the *stato civile* has been presented with the necessary information to fill out an *Atto di Morte* (Act of Death) in accordance with Art.10 DPR 396/2000 and the directions of the Procura and the police forces involved (Art.71 DPR 396/2000). The *Atto di Morte* is permanently archived in the death registry of that Municipality, as it constitutes the legal proof of death for that person.

Despite the clear regulations concerning the registration of deaths, researchers visited a shocking number of *stato civili* – in Agrigento province in particular – in which *Atto di Morte* had not been issued for border deaths, despite the *stato civile* having received the *Nulla-Osta di Seppellimento* and issued a burial authorization for the body. Researchers determined the main reason for this negligence to be an uncertainty among civil servants regarding how to complete an *Atto di Morte* without any personal information about the deceased because the deceased had not been identified. However, Art.78(1) DPR 396/2000 states that in cases in which retrieving or recognizing the body is impossible, the Procura should establish the facts that should be recorded about that person's death. In the *stato civili* which had not registered deaths, civil servants explained that they were waiting for more details from the Procura (even years later) or that they did not know where in the registry to record such deaths. The result of this negligence is tragic and unsettling: that in certain places, peoples' deaths can pass without registration. In these cases, the only documental evidence that the person died falls solely on the cemetery office which has archived documents attesting to the arrival of the cadaver, or, in a few extreme cases, there is no traceable documental evidence at all and the existence of the cadaver rests solely in the memory of the guardian of the cemetery or the one who dug the grave. Fortunately, this problem appeared to be isolated to particular provinces, such as Agrigento, and the researchers, once aware of the possibility, took care to raise the issue with the civil servants of each *stato civile* so that it could be taken into account in the data collection strategy for that Municipality/province. The result was that data collection in Italy took more time and effort than originally thought, because extra precautions were taken to ensure that all border deaths were accounted for.

3. Traceability of bodies: sea victims as a special case

During the investigation, the cadaver remains in the custody of the *Azienda Sanitaria Locale* (Local Health Authority). Usually it is kept in the morgue of the Municipality in which it was found, which can be found in the cemetery or the hospital (Art.14 DPR 285/1990). However, not all Municipalities have morgues as it is only obligatory for Municipalities with more than 5000 inhabitants.⁶

In Municipalities without morgues, bodies are moved to other Municipalities which offer their space, or they are provisionally buried in specially designated spaces.

Moving a body from one Municipality to another requires burial permits issued by the Procura, burial authorizations issued by the *stato civile*, cadaver transportation permits issued by *ASL*, as well as written agreements between the Municipalities concerned. Moving bodies also generates considerable costs for Municipality in which the body was found, including, for example, sanitary taxes which are due to the Municipality which receives the body as well as any Municipalities that the body passes through during transport. Funeral services both incur expenses and generate income from moving migrant bodies from cemetery to cemetery. The Ministry of Interior has promised the refund of burial expenses for "illegal immigrants" ("*immigrati clandestini*"), but will only do so if the Procura has labelled

⁶ The Municipality of Lampedusa and Linosa, for instance, has less than 5000 inhabitants.

the cases as such, which is difficult to do, both practically and morally speaking, if the deceased remains unidentified.⁷ In places where the number of shipwrecks have started to weigh heavily on the bureaucracy of Municipalities and the space in local cemeteries (places such as Lampedusa, Porto Empedocle and Pozzallo), the local *Prefettura* (the office of the local representative of the Ministry of Interior) has intervened.⁸ The *Prefettura's* involvement is not regulated by any law or norm, so has only materialized in cases where the local Municipal authorities have exceeded their capacity.⁹

As a result, while the first waves of EU border victims have been buried in the coastal Municipalities where they were found or first brought to, for several years bodies have been dispersed among different Municipalities, chasing whatever space is made available for them. Thus, in Sicily in particular, bodies of deceased migrants are not buried where they are found but spread out across the region, creating a crisis of traceability. One of the biggest obstacles facing the Italian researchers for the Deaths at the Borders Database was to trace documentation pertaining to a particular cadaver so as to avoid double-counting of cadavers recorded in more than one *stato civile* and cemetery. The traceability crisis had implications both for the methodology of the research, which had to adopt a proactive, investigative approach in Italy, and for the analysis of the death management systems pertaining to border death victims. Only by cross-referencing all retrieved documentation from *stato civiles*, cemeteries, *Procura*, *Prefettura*, *ASL*, and funeral services in all the Municipalities of the southern Sicilian provinces was it possible to trace a reliable total of border deaths in that region.¹⁰ As a result the Italian part of the Deaths at the Borders Database was built on information from many documents generated by the death management system, in addition to *Atto di Morte*.

No state authority keeps track of the movement of migrant bodies; not even the *Prefettura* of Agrigento was able to answer the simple question: where are they buried? All bodies entering a cemetery with a valid burial permit should be registered in the cemetery registry. These registries are not centralized in any way, and we found that some do not record when bodies are removed to other cemeteries. Unidentified cadavers are usually registered according to the label they are given in the documents by police, coroners or the civil servants of the *stato civile*: eg “Unknown number 1” or “Immigrant who died in Lampedusa”. But sometimes the police and coroner give different labels to the bodies, and the cemeteries may also have their own system for recording the unidentified migrants buried there. Moreover, it is worth noting that some of the guardians of Sicilian cemeteries that we encountered are illiterate, meaning that they were unable themselves to trace the documentation in their possession to particular deceased individuals.

DPR 285/1990 does not specify the norms with which burial must take place, nor does it establish an obligation to conduct appropriate rituals in accordance with the deceased's faith. Religious rites are carried out according to the receiving Municipality's sensibilities, the community's reaction to the incident, and the broader socio-political climate at the time that the body was found.¹¹ We observed at several cemeteries that migrants' were placed in graves in particularly meaningful spots such as on the main promenade (eg Cemetery of Piano Gatta, Agrigento) or under the statue of the Virgin Mary (eg

⁷ Successfully reclaiming burial expenses has proven to be a lengthy and difficult task even in cases which meet the criteria imposed by the Ministry of Interior. For example, the Porto Empedocle City Council is still waiting on refunds from 2012. However, many Municipalities, especially in Agrigento province, have not even attempted to reclaim burial expenses for migrants, seeing these costs as the price of solidarity and respect for victims of the sea. In a few places, they have even added expenses by embellishing migrants' tombs with elegant marbles and epitaphs. In Otranto, many migrants' burial expenses were borne by private funeral services.

⁸ The involvement of the Prefecture occurred mainly in Sicily and not in the other regions concerned with the survey and it's linked to the flow of bodies to the towns of the coasts and to their ability to grant a decorous burial to these ones.

⁹ The *Prefettura* has intervened with different time frames in each municipality, depending on the period in which they have been involved in these sea tragedies: Agrigento's UTG has been involved since 2003, while Ragusa's – responsible for the tragically famous Pozzallo municipality – has been only since 2014.

¹⁰ This was especially the case in Agrigento. Other regions in Italy, touched less by the phenomenon, presented with higher traceability of cadavers.

¹¹ V. Zagaria, *Grave situations - The bio-politics and memory of the tombs of unknown migrants in the Agrigento province*, forthcoming.

Cemetery of San Nicola, Tremiti Islands, Foggia). We also found records of unidentified migrant bodies that had been baptized under the name of a local patron saint or a pope. While many migrants are buried without ceremony, some have had elaborate funerals attended by significant local authority figures and groups from the local community and commemorated with elegant tombstones or epitaphs. On occasion, migrants have been interred according to Muslim rites under the supervision of local imams (eg we observed cases like this in Gela). However, we also observed many deprived burials, such as single graves containing unknown numbers of bodies, and unmarked sites that were impossible to locate. Both norm and human dignity dictate that each body should be buried in a separate and recognizable tomb. But alongside examples of great generosity and solidarity towards migrants who have lost their lives at sea, there are examples in which migrant bodies have become lost inside cemeteries. In both Lampedusa cemetery and Sciacca cemetery, an unknown number of bodies is buried in a single slot due to lack of space. In Licata cemetery, there is a large concrete slab with “Unknown” carved into its surface with a stick, which covers an unknown number of graves.

4. Accessibility and availability of data concerning deceased persons

Death records in Italy are archived by the local authorities of the Municipality(ies) where the body was found, processed and buried. In order to count every migrant whose body had been processed by Italian authorities, the research covered all provinces that had witnessed shipwrecks or their victims' bodies washing up since 1990. This meant that data needed to be collected from the offices and archives of 235 Municipalities, spread across 20 provinces of 5 regions. As already discussed, in some provinces, such as Agrigento and Ragusa, it was necessary to search multiple offices and archives within a Municipality in order to be sure that all border deaths had been counted. In most Municipalities, however, it was only necessary to search the death registries archived by the *stato civile*. But gaining access to these registries to collect data on border deaths proved to be one of the most sensitive and controversial aspects of the research.

Because there was no list of border deaths for whom to collect death certificates, and because there is no uniform way of registering border deaths that would make them easy to identify as such, it was necessary for the research to be able to search through the death registries from 1/1/1990 to 31/12/2013. Death certificates only include particular information about the deceased, such as their name and surname, last known address, nationality, date and place of birth, and date and place of death. Identification of border deaths from this information requires a deductive approach: We excluded Italian and European citizens as well as foreigners whose place of residence was in the EU. We used what we knew of the death management system to establish criteria, such as those cases in which the Procura was involved. We also used what we knew of irregular migration routes and border deaths in the area to establish further criteria, such as the fact that people on the way to Italy almost always die at sea, their bodies found in the water or on the coastline. Death certificates may contain additional information, clues that contribute to the likelihood that the person died a border death. For example, if there are a series of death certificates registered on the same day with the labels “unknown 1”, “unknown 2”, “unknown 3”, etc, and they were found in “the sea” at or around the same time, this is very likely to be numerous victims of a shipwreck. But these kinds of details cannot be known until the original death certificates are consulted. The same methodology was used to collect data in Greece, Malta, Gibraltar and Spain. However, in Italy, direct access for researchers was not permissible and, therefore, data collection required the intervention of *stato civile* officials (Art.450 of the Civil Code).

After death, a person no longer has a right to privacy; but safeguarding of sensitive data remains intact where there are personal or family reasons for preserving privacy regarding specific data (Art.9 co. 3, of the Italian Personal Data Protection Code, *Codice in materia di protezione dei dati personali*). Article XIV 106-108 DPR 396/2000 provides that extracts of *Atto di Morte* may be issued on request, even by third parties. DPR 396/2000 and D.Legs 196/2003 confirm that all information reported in

registry acts (including Acts of Death) are available to those who have an interest in it, including for research. But directly accessing the original registry archives is restricted to officials of the *stato civile*.¹² This ambiguous accessibility to data in death registries meant that gaining access often required length negotiation. Researchers presented official requests to the Mayor, the civil servant in charge of the *stato civile*, and sometimes also to the Procura. At times, civil servants and other officials in the Municipality offices helped to expedite the request, while at other times they made it more difficult. In provincial capitals, due to the sheer number of local governmental offices¹³ and the size of the registries themselves¹⁴, the procedure of gaining access was often far more complex. In the end, access was granted according to a compromise between the Italian restrictions and the methodology required by the research. This often meant that researchers had to instruct civil servants in the methodology of the research and, if possible, supervise their search so as to be sure that death certificates were collected in a systematic way.

In Italy, cause of death is not reported in an *Atto di Morte*. This made it more difficult to determine whether a person died a border death because we knew that most migrants die from drowning, hypothermia or dehydration, and could exclude from the collection persons who died from diseases, for example. We, therefore, sought additional channels of information about cases in which there was insufficient data in the death certificate to decide whether or not the person died a border death, including other documents generated by the death management system as described above, which are sometimes stored in *stato civile* and/or cemetery archives. For example, we finally excluded a person who had died in Palermo hospital after being found close to death on the coast of Trapani, because we found a copy of the coroner's report which stated that he had died of a terminal illness. We also sometimes took into consideration the testimonies of officials of the *stato civile*, judicial authorities, police, health authorities, and cemetery guardians, if the information they provided was consistent with the other information we found about the particular case. However, the availability and accessibility of these other documents are even more tenuous than that of death registries.

5. The special case of Lampedusa (Agrigento province)

This research note has explain how and why death management systems in Italy vary from region to region, province to province, and even Municipality to Municipality. The province of Agrigento has been mentioned already several times as a place of exceptions, where researchers faced many obstacles to data collection. Within Agrigento province, the Municipality of Lampedusa and Linosa was probably the most difficult to research border deaths. To some extent, this was anticipated due to the geographical location of these islands and the huge numbers of migrants who were brought here in the peak of the Italian "illegal immigration crisis" (before the Navy operation, *Mare Nostrum*, distributed the flows of people to provincial capitals throughout the country). This was why Lampedusa was selected as the site of a case study for the research project. However, the reality we found was worse than expected.

In 24 years, Lampedusa's *stato civile* had recorded only 15 of the roughly 600 deceased migrant bodies that passed through the island. It is not possible to say exactly how many deceased migrants' bodies have passed through Lampedusa as not all death records contain information about where the body was found. Only 1 of these 15 *Atto di Morte* correspond with the roughly 32 migrant bodies buried in Lampedusa's cemetery. It is not possible to say exactly how many deceased migrants are buried on the island because there are two tombs which serve as temporary storage places for cadavers that are planned to be taken to Agrigento or Porto Empedocle for autopsy or burial, which are opened and

¹² DPR 396/2000; D. Legs. 196/2003; ASSOCIAZIONE NAZIONALE UFFICIALI DI STATO CIVILE E D'ANAGRAFE (National association of Civil Office and Registry Office officials), *Il Regolamento dello Stato Civile: Guida all'Applicazione* (Regulations for the civil office official), September 2009.

¹³ In the city of Bari, the death registry was split between several offices according to the city's districts.

¹⁴ In Palermo *stato civile*, there were more than 100 death registry books covering the period 1990-2013.

resealed often. At the time of the case study, these tombs each contained roughly 3-5 bodies; the gravedigger who pointed out the unmarked graves to us was not certain and claimed there was no documentation to check because they were not recorded in the cemetery register because they were not there to stay. Lampedusa does not have a morgue or any other facilities for storing cadavers because the resident population is below 5000 persons.

Once again the decision not to register the deaths was justified by the civil servants of the *stato civile* as due to insufficient information about the deceased providing by the *Procura*. The civil servants chose not to interpret the *Nulla-Osta di Seppellimento* sent by the *Procura* as a direction to register the deaths, because they were migrants, not residents, and because they were not going to be buried on the island. There was no explanation for why they had registered 15 cases; although none of these were unidentified, they were not the only identified ones according to the other documents we found. These decisions have created the risk that there may be deaths of which there is no trace at all.

While the vast majority of the border deaths were not to be found in the death registry of Lampedusa, there were many documents pertaining to them in the office. The *stato civile* had separated documents they had received that concerned foreigners and kept them in several large files, one of which was labelled “extracomunitari”. These files contained documents about repatriation of bodies, cadaver inspections, coast guard and police reports about retrieving bodies from the sea, *Nulla-Osta di Seppellimento*, burial authorizations, cadaver transportation authorizations, and communication between various local and provincial authorities concerning migrants’ bodies. Of particular interest from a procedural perspective was the many documents in which one of the police forces on the island was granted (sometimes even by phone) the responsibilities of the *Procura* in cases involving migrants. These files were disorganized, in no particular order whatsoever, and missing any kind of index or list of contents. It took considerable investigative work to piece together the information to determine how many bodies the documents referred to in total.

In addition to the files in the *stato civile*, we were granted access to the personal archives of the head of Lampedusa’s medical clinic, who is the island’s acting medical examiner for the purposes of cadaver inspections. His archives of cadaver inspection reports, dating back to 1999, were invaluable for corroborating the information found in the files at the *stato civile*. We even found some cases there which had left no trace in the *stato civile* or any of the cemeteries visited in Agrigento province. Through meticulous, investigative research throughout the island and the province, we believe there is little chance that there are any migrants missing from the Deaths at the Borders Database, whose bodies were found and processed in Italy. However, it is possible that one, or even a few, have disappeared without a trace, buried somewhere in Sicily without the smallest possibility of being traced or identified.

6. Conclusions

The procedures that make up the Italian death management system have been mapped and analyzed through this research, from the discovery of a dead body to its burial. These procedures generate considerable documental evidence, which record border deaths in such a way as to make them difficult, yet possible, to trace. It was clear from our research that the system has many flaws, lacking standards for body-identification in particular. The multitude of authorities involved, without clear tasks and responsibilities, are problematic in some provinces. Most worrying of all was the finding that traceability of bodies is very low in certain areas, creating the possibility that bodies disappear. The degree to which this treatment is specific to migrants or a symptom of a more systematic problem was outside the scope of this research, but deserves further attention.

The research revealed the extreme reality of border deaths in Italy.

On the one hand, this is evidence of a general lack of interest or concern on the part of Italian authorities for the presence of hundreds of unidentified bodies scattered throughout cemeteries, some not registered anywhere, which have become part of the country’s history and heritage. There are

people who were found but who were not, and will never be, identified, and, as a result, they will be forever lost to their families, who in turn will remain in a condition of ambiguity in their mourning.¹⁵ In this way, many border deaths are “ungrievable”¹⁶, “whose loss is no loss”, because their deaths were not properly processed or recognized. They had “bare life”, because in death they are not even remembered.¹⁷

On the other hand, informal procedures have emerged that demonstrate solidarity and respect for the victims of irregular migration in the Mediterranean. From our on-site investigations at many cemeteries, and the testimonies of those involved in the management of border victims’ burials, we have seen how migrants’ deaths have been shouldered by local communities who, without clear norms to follow, have treated them as their own customs dictate. In this way, citizens groups, funeral services, and local associations have mobilized to pay for the funerals and dignified burials of migrants, welcoming their bodies in their family tombs, recognizing them as part of their local history. The contribution of private individuals and local communities needs further study, as well as the impact that migrants’ bodies have had on the locals on this side of the EU external borders.

¹⁵ S. ROBINS, *Families of the Missing: A test of Contemporary Approaches to Transitional Justice*, Routledge, London , 2013.

¹⁶ J. BUTLER, *Frames war: when is life grievable?* Verso, London, 2004, pp 24.

¹⁷ G. AGAMBEN, *Homo Sacer, il potere sovrano e nuda vita*, Einaudi, Torino, 2005.