

Report of 6th IBBY Camp Lampedusa 5 - 11 March 2018

The situation at present

The situation at present is as follows: the library is open and functioning every Saturday and Wednesday afternoon, and registers a large number of clients and of loans. In the morning if requested by schools, it opens for guided visits and for loans to groups and classes. The number of people present during every opening time is very high. Mothers of the children are starting to form groups and to take part in the training. The permanent team of voluntary workers (5 people) is strong and united, and they support each other in the difficulty of making bonds of friendship and reciprocal esteem. This means that the library is ready to receive, whenever necessary, the requests and necessities of the migrant community.

Activities proposed during the camp

During the camp we met 20 classes and proposed 2 training sessions.

During the week there were workshops and other activities every afternoon in the library.

In the evening three sessions on various themes for the voluntary workers took place

One meeting with Armin Greder

One training session with Debbie Beeks

One meeting/debate on the future actions of the library, with the voluntary workers

One training session on the Sebina operating system.

The participation of the young people from the Welcome Centre of Mazzarino was very important - two Egyptian boys who have been in the centre for three years and who joined in with the voluntary workers in all the activities, giving everybody a different and more intense perspective on who we are and the reasons that bring us to meet on Lampedusa. This is certainly a collaboration that we will continue with and enlarge. The presence of these boys shows up a better version of what we all imagine to be our role in Lampedusa or elsewhere and of the "migrant" in our cultural services.

Observations

1.

The library has become a wonderful example of a democratic action by an active citizenship, a stronghold of reading and free thought, an example of how one can work without hierarchies by taking and creating one's own space and one's own participation according to one's own needs, inclinations and feelings. The voluntary workers who have been coming for some time help those who have just arrived and see that they are included; those who have arrived for the first time are welcomed with open arms and every field of action becomes special. The island always shows itself to be a "wide open" space in which everyone looks out at the world of today and decides how to relate to its contradictions.

2.

I was able to see that every voluntary worker who comes finds himself in the situation of the migrant who has to communicate with "the other" and meet him through using the books without words. Often the voluntary workers sit down to read about the background and discover what the books contain, since these are rare books difficult to find elsewhere (apart from the Palazzo delle Esposizioni); both the voluntary workers of Lampedusa and the "older" ones from the camps have a great familiarity with using this instrument which they use regularly during the readings in the library, both those for Italian children and those for migrant children passing through. I believe that the international part of the project should be widened and encouraged. The place is ideal for encounters between people from different places, interesting from a political, anthropological, natural and historic point of view and ideal for welcoming and giving importance to visits from any part of the Western world.

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The idea of being at the centre of the Mediterranean and of focusing one's actions towards the culture and the development of anyone who finds himself in the surrounding area is a powerful incentive for future actions. I believe that IBBY should really consider actively the meaning of the fact that hidden in the Mediterranean there is a library managed by this association which has made of the book its own instrument for accessing the future with dignity and strength.

Possible future prospectives

In the meeting between the voluntary workers present (the only possible way to make decisions together) many ideas for the future came out. Each idea should be developed using the capacities and contacts of IBBY and the possibilities and necessities of the island, considering and making use of the methods built up in these years by this community.

Some ideas:

- 1 Give more importance to the quality of the initiative, by bringing to the island a training course structured in theory and practice (not a camp), arranged by IBBY for external use.
- 2 Think of a continuing activity as residents, by inviting artists and writers who fit in to the project to spend some time on the island to learn to give what they can..
- 3 Begin to think of a programme of cultural activities, story-telling, reading etc. to offer to visitors to the island, in the summer months too.
- 4 Set in motion the national and international civil service to give a permanent work force and a support to the voluntary workers who work in the library.
- 5 Start external collaborations between the library and the rest of the world by proposing initiatives and meetings in order to describe the experience on the island in involving the juvenile population and from that all the others.

Other news

Financial aid of 2500 Euros from LATERZA

Financial aid of 2000 Euros from the Lampedusa solidarity forum

Publication of the book Stormy Seas by the publisher Il Castoro

Book proposed by Mariella Bertelli and translated by the children of the project of alternating school and work of the library of Lampedusa. To be published in 2018.

Administrative contacts

We have the proposal for a new protocol to be approved and signed, to last one year.

Contacts with other networks

The associations on the island (Legambiente, Mediterranean Hope, Il Forum, Terra Onlus) sustain and support the project. We are part of a network which guarantees a constant flow of information from the island - this is a long-standing relationship and necessary for the project.

Conclusions

At the end of this camp I feel that I can see that these camps are still very useful even though the library is now open, and they should be put on the calendar from one year to the next, to allow the international community to organize itself.

I would like to finish this report with a great sense of gratitude to the voluntary workers (known as VVV) who have shown by their presence that it is possible to feel part of a process of change and that it is possible to count on the participation of those who see themselves as part of a community and as an essential part of its future.

The library in Lampedusa in the centre of the Mediterranean is something simple, a room full of books, but at the same time it is an enormous example of a search for liberty and of creative self-determination, and the success of it can be attributed to this participation of so many people from all over the world.