The Central Mediterranean Border as a Humanitarian Space:
Migration Management between Inclusion and Exclusion

Paolo CUTTITTA
(VU University of Amsterdam)

This paper explores the relationship of humanitarianism with processes of legal and territorial inclusion/exclusion at the EU border of the Central Mediterranean. First, I analyze the role of human rights in the institutional humanitarian discourse about migration and border management. Then I show that humanitarianism, while contributing to the discursive legitimation and spatial delocalization of exclusionary policies and practices, also contributes to a symbolically and legally subordinate inclusion of migrants in the European space. In doing this, I also analyze the work of humanitarian NGOs, and reflect on how the relationship between governmental and non-governmental humanitarianism has changed in recent years. More generally, I unpack the interaction between the different actors, logics, territories and legal regimes at play, to show what kind of a (humanitarian) space takes shape in this maritime region, and with what consequences for the people trying to cross from North Africa to Europe.