



## **Public Lecture Series on Migration, Mobility and Crises**

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**Thursday, 12 December 2024**

### **The Cyprus-Lebanon Mobility Corridor – Crisis, Pushbacks, Colonial Legacies, and Militarized Humanitarianism**

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**Leandros Fischer, Aalborg University**

**Discussant: Janine Dahinden, University of Neuchâtel**

**17:15 – 18:45 CET**

This talk will be held in person at the University of Neuchâtel, Av. du Premier-Mars 26, Room D71, on WEBEX ([link](#)), as well as live-streamed on the nccr – on the move YouTube channel ([link](#)).

## Abstract

This lecture aims to provide an overview of the materialities and ‘continuing’, ‘enabling’, ‘hierarchical’, as well as ‘oppositional’ mobilities (Piccoli et al 2024) constituting an emerging corridor of mobilities between Lebanon and Cyprus. Separated by only twenty-five minutes of flight-time, the physical space between both countries has recently evolved into a dynamic and crisis-driven scene of illegal migrant pushbacks and border externalisation. The latter is exemplified by last May’s EU-Lebanon agreement on migration, signed at the behest of the Republic of Cyprus to curb the number of arrivals of Syrian refugees by boat from Lebanon. Complementing these practices are processes of transnational class (re) making by middle-class Lebanese commuters-cum-immigrants in Cyprus. While structured by a double context of recent crisis – the aftereffects of the Eurozone crisis on the island, and the socioeconomic implosion of Lebanon after 2020 – these mobility-migration processes are themselves inextricably linked to colonially-derived racial and classed categories of difference, manifested within both spaces. Lastly, the Western military buildup in Cyprus, ostensibly to evacuate foreign nationals from Lebanon, combined with Cyprus’s proudly self-proclaimed status as a ‘life raft in a turbulent region’, serve to highlight the necropolitical nature of this mobility regime, in which class, the ‘right’ passport, and discourses of civilizational difference decide who gets pushed back and who gets evacuated to safety.

The lecture argues that a context of multiple accelerating crises – economic, the crisis of the European border regime, and more recently, the tense security situation in Lebanon in conjunction with Israel’s ongoing assault on Gaza – has served to accentuate the exclusionary character of this mobility regime. At the same, however, the obvious discrepancies involved therein have engendered instances of solidarity, which – paradoxically – have decentered Europe, transforming Cyprus from a peripheral European region into a center in its own right, a borderland zone between the Global North and the Global South, with historical ties to the rest of the Levant region.

## About the Speaker

Leandros Fischer is Assistant Professor for International Studies at Aalborg University, focusing on migration, mobility, social and political movements. He has researched extensively on migration and mobility regimes in Cyprus, focusing on aspects of citizenship, identity formation, race and class, as well as crisis. He is the editor of the volume *The Crisis-Mobility Nexus* (Palgrave 2023). His upcoming project concerns the study of an emerging corridor of migration and mobility between Cyprus and Lebanon.