

# Making Refuge

## Place and Space in Refugee History

*Prague, April 11–12, 2024*

The refugee experience is inevitably spatial. It involves movement between different places and imagination of locations as spaces of protection or danger, of mobility or immobility. It is no coincidence that terms like *refuge*, *displacement*, and *asylum* express the spatial dimension. Being uprooted often results in a perception of being lost in time and space, in transitory, in-between situations. Researchers have already explored cases when refugees were on the road, in camps, on the border, and in other refugee spaces. Building on this research, the workshop aims to more systematically examine the potential of the methods and approaches of spatial history to enrich the history of refugeedom.

This workshop invites participants to think about the refugee experience in the past through place and space and to consider the relevance of this research for the understanding of current refugee migration. The workshop mobilizes place and space to gain a better understanding of refugeedom and the interactions between its actors. Seeing refugeedom as an embodied, emplaced, and gendered experience, we not only explore where refugeedom unfolded, but also focus on the manifold constructions, transformations, and appropriations of places and spaces. While spatial perspectives have been employed in research to critique oppressive aspects of space as reproducing and enforcing social hierarchies and power structures, we also strongly encourage contributions that provide from below, microhistorical perspectives. In particular, we are interested in exploring how refugees interact in space with other actors and how they actively contribute to the making of places and the reframing of their meanings.

As the workshop takes place in East-Central Europe (but the contributions needn't be limited to its territory), we also place refugee experience in the broader context of disputed places and the resulting place-related practices. Given the multi-ethnic histories and ethnic cleansing, public spaces, borders, and borderlands as well as other spatial entities were contested and re/affirmed by governments, activists as well as ordinary citizens. The spatial experience of refugees thus cannot be separated from the national(ist) and other coding and arguing over places, determining who belongs and how. Spatial practices and imaginaries and different forms of *re/bordering* played an important role in constructing citizenship and producing statelessness.

We encourage scholars from diverse academic backgrounds and representing interdisciplinary approaches to apply and welcome considerations of methodological and thematic relevance of place-related historical research for current refugee and migration studies. We invite contributions which explore (but are not limited to) the following questions and subjects:

- Experiencing, appropriating, and constructing places and spaces of refugeedom (for instance in urban and rural areas, public and private spaces, refugee camps, on the move and in-between situations, etc.)
- Perception and representation of refugees as being *in place* or *out of place*
- Spatial management of refugees (macro-, meso- and microlevel) and its consequences
- Relationships between space, law, and citizenship
- Mappings and counter-mappings of refugee places and mobility
- Gender, age, social status, and refugee places and spaces
- Environmental histories of refugeedom
- Testimony and narratives of place and space
- Emotional geographies of refugeedom
- Memory and place: perception of refugeedom space in past and present (material remains, legacies)

The workshop is organized by the ERC Consolidator project *Unlikely Refuge? Refugees and Citizens in East-Central Europe in the 20th Century*, based at the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences, and the Refugees in Europe 1914–1923 Research Group at the Institute of History, Jagiellonian University in Cracow.

Paper proposals (max. 250 words) and short bios (max. 200 words), as well as any questions, should be directed to [unref-public@mua.cas.cz](mailto:unref-public@mua.cas.cz).

Submission deadline: December 10, 2023

The decision on acceptance will be communicated by January 15, 2024. The organizers will provide financial support for travel and accommodation.



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