

# Making Refuge: Place and Space in Refugee History

## Abstracts

**Saeed AHMAD**

### **A tale of two temples: Producing refugee spaces in postcolonial Delhi**

Indian Independence and Partition in 1947 demographically transformed Delhi, India's capital city, through communal violence, Hindu and Sikh refugee arrivals, and Muslim departures to Pakistan. This paper juxtaposes the postcolonial trajectories of a Hindu temple and Muslim tomb in the Jangpura-Bhogal locality of Delhi around questions of refugee-citizen rehabilitation, minority rights, and heritage.

While inheriting Delhi's 'monuments' and 'ruins', a postcolonial state and its citizenry encounter and negotiate with popular memories around these sites. In the first case, refugee revival of a dormant medieval Hindu temple in 1952 is interrupted through its demolition on grounds of illegality and interference with refugee housing construction. The vocal discontent of residents, negative media coverage, petitions evoking popular memories, and documentary proof of the site's antiquity yield results as the temple is allotted another site. In the second instance, Hindu refugees re-use an abandoned Muslim tomb to establish a temple in the 1960s. A decade later, legal claims of its past as a tomb are denied, and its material remnants demolished to expand the temple complex by the late 1980s, thereby erasing its histories and meanings for a now absent Muslim population.

A series of everyday, individual, and institutional actions 'revive' and 'replace' medieval ruins to produce sites of refugee community. We see the recovery of past histories and practices and the accretive erasures of memories, histories, space. Thus state-citizen relations, differences between present and absent populations, and 'official' heritage condition urban settlement, its attendant material transformations, and erasures.

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**Pauli ARO**

### **"Out of the barracks ... and back to agriculture"! Ethnic German expellees as farmers and settlers in post-1945 Austria**

This paper looks at the issue of place and space in refugee history through the lens of efforts to settle refugees – especially Danube Swabian farmers from South-eastern Europe – in rural post-World War II Austria. By the onset of the 1950s, the reorganisation of Austrian agriculture after years of integration into the economy of the Greater German Reich created incentives for local and national policymakers to use especially ethnic German refugees as a reserve army of agricultural labour. Ethnic German expellee activists in Austria not only tried to use these possibilities to ameliorate the situation of expelled farmers by settling them on available Austrian land. They equally equated rural settlement with a return to the conservative social norms that they held dear. They hoped to preserve – or create – specific ethnic German identities, to counter tendencies towards an urbanisation of lifestyles that they deplored as

“proletarianisation” or “spiritual massification”, and to create interesting incentives for farmers to purchase or at least lease Austrian farmland. It quickly became apparent, however, that especially younger expelled farmers were not the perennial colonisers willing to sacrifice the amenities of the postwar world for the romantic nationalist vision of a small, somewhat out-of-touch elite of self-proclaimed ethnic German expellee representatives. Instead of slaving away on the few patches of unattractive, remote farmland that were made available to them, young expellees chose to live and work near the cinemas and dance halls of urban agglomerations. As the failings of this settlement program show, space in refugee history can serve as a matrix that allows to question the uniformity of the category of “refugee”. Through the practical choices of expellee families about how and where to settle down, otherwise unarticulated social differences within a refugee group become apparent.

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## **Raphaela Monika BOLLWEIN**

### **“Those difficult to resettle [...]” Making space for the “residual cases” within displaced unaccompanied children in the post-war (1945-1951)**

After the main phase of repatriation and resettlement of displaced children and child search operations, the International Refugee Organisation stated in an internal memorandum in February 1950: “From the information available in the field, it is known that the child welfare cases include some children who [...] constitute a residual problem.” Despite the mass migration from Europe, not all children fitted into a particular emigration scheme. The selection procedures excluded many who were further categorised as “residual cases” and were still awaiting their settlement in various transit centres. The group was defined according to their suitability and consisted mainly of unaccompanied adolescents between the ages of 14 and 16 as well as disabled children. These children were considered “difficult to place” as they did not fit the picture of the “perfect migrant family”. Their placement required special precautions or facilities with specialised services. A permanent resettlement option had to be found for around 300 unaccompanied children who were still being accommodated in IRO children's centres in Germany and Austria under the mandate of the IRO at the time. Thus, age and disability were the factors that generally influenced their resettlement.

The children's centre in Dorfen/Bavaria in the American occupation zone of Germany, was set up as a home for children who were not accepted by the emigration commissions due to their illnesses or condition and had to remain in Germany, at least according to the applicable guidelines or until they recovered. Here, educational training was integrated into a medical rehabilitation programme. The aim was to make the children acceptable for resettlement missions in the future, but “with love, understanding and individual treatment”.

The immigration restrictions based on health criteria therefore not only meant that many children were not eligible for resettlement, but also that the time at which they were assessed, the place and the person assessing them could have a major impact on their future settlement. This certainly illustrates the limits of humanitarianism in the post-war period, but also how ‘imperfect’ migrant families with disabled children dealt with migration policies. Families often left the disabled child under the guardianship of the IRO and emigrated for the sake of their healthy other children or themselves. The abandoned children were then considered “unaccompanied” and further settlement plans have been made up by the IRO.

Accordingly, the children themselves, their autonomy and self-determination were mostly limited by their development and their dependence on adults and social norms.

The talk will be led by the question of how care in transitional homes such as Dorfen influenced the future placements of children classified as "residual cases", moreover it will also aim to show how help and assistance was provided and how and by whom decisions about resettlement were made. To summarise, long-term placement in isolation in a home seemed to be the preferred option for the children, even at the cost of permanent separation from their families.

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## **Cristian CERCEL**

### **From Refugees to Settlers: Danube Swabians in southern Brazil**

In 1951 and 1952, around 2,500 Danube Swabians – ethnic Germans who had fled Yugoslavia and Romania – migrated to Brazil, in a so-called “colonization action” organized by Schweizer Europahilfe, the predecessor of today’s Swissaid. It was one of several actions of humanitarian resettlement of European refugees and displaced persons to Latin America in the early postwar. The action was land-oriented, and led to the foundation of five new villages as well as to the establishment of a Danube Swabian agricultural cooperative in Guarapuava, in the state of Paraná. It drew on the representation of Danube Swabians as a *Kolonistenvolk* (people of colonists) who know how to settle.

The paper explores the various spatial imaginations and practices that informed this migration process, from the flight from southeastern Europe to the settlement as such in the south of Paraná. It employs a multilevel approach, dissecting the interactions between the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels. The macro-level analysis means in this case a critical engagement with the broader spatial logic informing the plans devised by national and international humanitarian institutions and various state actors to solve the postwar European displacement crisis by means of “organized migration” / “organized resettlement”, frequently with a view to land settlement. It distinctly adds the Brazilian land settlement politics to the equation. The meso-level analysis focuses on the spatial experience of German expellees and particularly of Danube Swabians whose flight from the southeast of Europe took them to Austria, a category including the large majority of those who migrated to Brazil. Finally, the micro-level analysis sets to reconstruct the spatial perceptions and experiences of the Danube Swabian refugees-cum-settlers themselves. It discusses the transfer (by ship and then by train) to the locale to be settled as well as at the process of settlement as such, which involved the erection of five villages as well as the appropriation of land for agricultural purposes.

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**Arnab DUTTA**

**The spatial scale of displacement and refugee political thought: Jewish exiles between Central Europe and British Bengal, 1930s-40s**

The Partition of British Bengal in 1947 (as part of the larger historical events of the Partition of British India) resulted in one of the largest permanent mass-migrations of twentieth-century history. As shown in recent works by Ria Kapoor, Milinda Banerjee and others, early postcolonial political thought in South Asia was, therefore, intricately entangled with the state and society's engagement with the refugee question in the immediate aftermath of mass-displacement and ensuing sectarian violence. On the other end of the spectrum, a new concept of culturally-defined self-description by the Bengali refugees themselves appeared outside of the early postcolonial state's definition of the refugee question, precisely at the same time when the new postcolonial state (Republic of India) declined to sign the 1951 Refugee convention. It gave rise to the concept of Bengali refugees being the নতুন ইহুদী / natun ihudi (New Jews). In doing so, displaced cultural actors and political thinkers in Bengal situated their political and social location as part of a genealogical tradition of German-speaking Jewish political exiles in the Atlantic world in the 1930s and early 1940s. While taking note of the emergence of the category of 'new' in 'New Jews' after the moment of postcolonial liberation in 1947, this paper traces earlier interactions between Bengali Hindu and Jewish Exile political thought before the zero hour of the postcolonial moment.

Analyzing the sites and spatial limits of interactions between Bengali anticolonial political actors and Jewish refugees and exiles stationed in British Bengal between 1933 and 1947, this research problematizes an otherwise static and unilinear genealogical claim propounded around the category of 'New Jews' at the postcolonial zero hour. Instead, I trace how space, distance, and the spatial scale of separation defined the essential constituents of the aforementioned genealogical claim. While postcolonial refugeedom in South Asia was strongly shaped by the internal emotional geographies and spatial congruence within the South Asian space, the political project of linking that with the transcontinental scope of displacement between German-speaking Central Europe and British Bengal in the interwar years had to search for an altogether different spatial scale of emotional geographies between the categories of transcontinental and local. Taking the disciplinary insights from the history of ideas, legal history and political theory, I show how the very history of the postcolonial Indian definition of post-Partition refugee necessitates not only the local history of internal displacement within South Asia but also a much larger global history of transcontinental exile in the 1930s-40s. In terms of empirical archival sources, this research draws from a wide range of primary sources – first, ego-documents (memoirs, autobiographies) of Jewish exiles in Bengal (most prominently, of Alex Aronson); secondly, Bengali memoirs and newspaper reports; thirdly, German consular documents (consulted in the archives of the German Foreign Office); fourthly, the papers of the Bengali Society of German Culture (consulted in Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Lichterfelde); and finally, archival papers related to Jewish emigration to interwar British India (retrieved from Mandel Center's archival collections, USHMM, Washington DC).

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**Michal FRANKL**

**Beyond the nation-state: No man's land and Jewish refugees at the end of the 1930s**

Analysing the history of refugees captured between the shifting borders of East-Central Europe at the end of the 1930s, the paper contributes to the conceptualisation of the no man's land in the context of refugee history (and presence).

Due to a combination of ruthless expulsions from Nazi Germany and other states and of heartless border closures, tens of thousands of mostly Jewish refugees were caught for extended periods of time in fluid border spaces. They lingered on a rusty tugboat, on a muddy field, on an unfinished road, in a decrepit mill. Their separation outside of the territory of the nation state was related to and reinforced the mass revocation of citizenship in Germany and other East-Central European countries. Paradoxically, the no man's land was a space created by state-sanctioned use of violence, but outside of the state sovereignty and power.

This paper focuses on the meanings attributed to this – so far neglected – refugee space. Not (only) the physical location and harsh environmental realities, but (also) the perceptions of refugees and other actors co-produced the experience and memory of these no man's lands. Closely reading testimonies, reports, press articles and art work, it examines narratives of these stateless spaces. It focuses on the concepts of space and time and ideas of society and refugees' agency beyond the container of the nation state.

*Michal Frankl is a senior researcher at the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences. He is the author of „Prag ist nunmehr antisemitisch“ (2011), a history of Czech antisemitism at the end of the 19th century and together with Miloslav Szabó of *Budování státu bez antisemitismu? (Building of a State With No Antisemitism?, 2015), an analysis of the role of antisemitism in the transition from the Habsburg Empire to the Czechoslovak nation state. With Kateřina Čapková, he wrote Unsichere Zuflucht (2012), a critical history of Czechoslovak refugee policy in the 1930s. His last book (Občané země nikoho, Citizens of the No Man's Land, 2023) examines the rapid appearance of no man's lands for refugees at the end of the 1930s as a critical aspect of the ethnonational reorientation of citizenship and remaking of borders (or re/bordering) in Eastern and Central Europe. He is the principal investigator of the ERC Consolidator project “Unlikely refuge? Refugees and citizens in East-Central Europe in the 20th century”. For more information: <https://www.unlikely-refuge.eu/project-team/frankl/>; <https://www.mua.cas.cz/cs/kontakt/frankl>.**

**Dimitra GLENTI**

**Shifting spaces: Exploring refugee housing arrangements and urban transformation in interwar Lesvos**

The Greek Island of Lesvos, due to its geographical location, has historically played a decisive role in population movements between Europe and the East. During the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) and the subsequent mass expulsion of Christian populations from Anatolia, Lesvos emerged as a primary reception point for those displaced from the Turkish coasts. The resulting refugee arrival effectively doubled the population of Mytilene, the island's capital, sparking an unprecedented housing crisis. How did the state, the local population, and the refugees themselves respond to this crisis? By what means and processes was the refugee space produced? And, crucially, how did the formal and informal spatial arrangements of refugee housing either foster or impede integration in the long run?

To address these issues, historical research delves into primary and secondary sources, particularly the local press of the interwar period and archives from relevant state authorities. This paper explores the diverse forms of refugee housing: from settling in newly constructed houses within state settlements to squatting in abandoned Muslim residences and establishing improvised makeshift shanties. Subsequently, it examines how refugee neighborhoods predominantly emerged in the northern part of the city, encompassing the former Muslim quarter. In this degraded part on the outskirts of the city of the natives, a vivid quasi-autonomous refugee city emerged during the interwar period. In conclusion,

the paper argues that these spatial arrangements perpetuated a pre-existing urban division, redefining its criteria while reinforcing the features of a spatial hierarchy within the city.

*Dimitra Glenti studied Architecture at the National Technical University of Athens (BA and integrated MA, 2010) and holds an MA in Social and Historical Anthropology from the University of the Aegean (2015). She recently completed her PhD in History (UoA, 2023), supported by the Hypatia Scholarship Program of the University of the Aegean. Her PhD research examines the formation and transformation of Asia Minor refugees' settlements on the island of Lesbos throughout the 20th century, by combining archival research with oral testimonies, mapping, and ethnographic fieldwork. She is particularly interested in aspects of social production and cultural construction of space, spatial representations, gender relations, and social differentiation in the context of refugee settlement from a historical perspective. She has taught classes such as "Cities and Refugee Settlement in Interwar Greece," "Public Memory and Urban Space," and "The European City after WWII" at UoA. She has published articles and participated in various international conferences and workshops, including the First Annual International Seminar in Historical Refugee Studies (KWI, Essen 2022). Her academic interests span refugee and forced migration studies, oral history, urban history and anthropology.*

## **Irial GLYNN**

### **Using the sea as a space and place of analysis for refugee history**

In 2015, over 1 million people crossed the Mediterranean in search of asylum. Boat refugees did not first appear in 2015, however. Jewish refugees crossed the Mediterranean in the 1940s; Vietnamese took to the South China Sea in the late 1970s and 1980s; Cubans and Haitians attempted to cross the Caribbean in the 1980s and 1990s; Albanians navigated the Adriatic in the 1990s, to give but some examples. To tell the global history of boat refugees, I concentrate principally on what occurred at sea and the offshore detention centres located between the port of departure and the place of intended arrival that often housed boat refugees. Water connects different regions but can also act as a serious obstacle for boat refugees. It is an ambiguous and liminal space that can lead to despair and death for some. It can act as a connector between different regions but as the sociologist David FitzGerald (2019) argues, it can also be used 'as a moat to keep out the unwanted'. Maritime references to migration are usually full of negative and uncontrollable connotations: 'waves' and 'floods' of refugees are often perceived to be coming (Mannik 2016). Nevertheless, successfully crossing the sea and beginning a new life can bring positive associations for boat refugees. The migration historian Peter Gatrell (2017) suggested that historians should start 'thinking through oceans' when writing about refugees as it can help to avoid the methodological nationalism of much migration-related research. This paper will try to show how the sea can be used as a space and place of analysis for refugee history and the potential benefits that this can bring.

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Ana GUARDIÃO

**Refuge within contested (post)imperial spaces: Refugee movements of the Kenyan, Algerian and Angolan independence wars (1951-1961)**

The decolonization wars of Kenya (1950-1963), Algeria (1954-1962), and Angola (1961-1975) propelled the immediate movement of thousands of people to different neighbouring polities borderlands: the British protectorate of Tanganyika, the former French protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia, and the recently independent Congo-Léopoldville, respectively. Based on these three cases, this paper aims to discuss different perceptions of spaces constitutive of the refugee experience and their consequences for refugee protection. It does so by considering multiple actors and levels of analysis. It takes into account refugee motivations to cross intra-imperial and post-imperial borders, local and imperial authorities' responses to these movements, and international humanitarian approaches and limitations to refugee protection and assistance, namely the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Red Cross Movement. A comparison of the three cases brings to light the debates that emerged regarding population management strategies in disputed imperial spaces, the empire-nation nexus, and identity and citizenship. Finally, the paper also approaches the diverse and disputed perceptions of border spaces among refugees, imperial, post-imperial, and humanitarian actors. What defined space of refuge for different actors where fictitious formal borders shaped different spaces? How were populations with nomadic characteristics handled? Who and which legal instruments defined conflicting identities? In discussing these questions, the paper seeks to contribute to an informed debate on the ways in which disputed spaces (concrete and imagined) and governance (colonial, post-colonial and humanitarian) shaped refugeedom (in varied ways) during the second half of the 20th century.

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Ines KOELTZSCH and Michala LŔNĀIKOVÁ

**Coping with Space Scarcity. Space Management and Refugees' Experiences on the Danube Steamer Pentcho (1940)**

While the history, political and organisational background of the Pentcho ship as an attempt of revisionist activists (Betar) to rescue Jews mainly from Slovakia and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia is relatively covered in the scholarship (e.g., Ofer 1990, Patek 2012), we know less about the experiences of the refugees themselves on the ramshackle paddle steamer. In our contribution, we will discuss the spatial management of the rescue mission leaders concerning gender, age, 'usefulness', and the refugees' strategies to cope with space scarcity and its consequences, as reflected in several published and unpublished ego-documents, including the unique diary of Ladislav Weiner capturing the whole journey from Bratislava (1940) until the liberation in Ferramonti, Italy (1943). The spatial hierarchy under the conditions of scarcity thus becomes particularly evident in the ironical language of

the refugees and the way they named the individual sectors of the small and overcrowded Danube steamer.

For many, but not for all, it was the first time that they experienced the space shortage and its various consequences, such as the separation of families, the lack of privacy, and unsanitary conditions, as well as food scarcity – in short, the transformation process from citizens into refugees within the liminal space of a ship.

*Ines Koeltzsch earned her PhD in 2010 at Freie Universität Berlin. She worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences between 2013–2018 and as a research fellow at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies in 2014/15. Since 2022/23 she is a Visiting Professor at CEU Vienna, Department of History/Department of Nationalism Studies (Jewish Studies program). She is the author of the book *Geteilte Kulturen. Eine Geschichte der tschechisch-jüdisch-deutschen Beziehungen in Prag 1918-1938* (Oldenbourg 2012) [in Czech 2016], *Vor dem Weltruhm. Nachrufe auf Franz Kafka und die Begründung literarischer Unsterblichkeit* (Böhlau 2024, forthcoming), and a contributor to *Prague and Beyond. Jews in the Bohemian Lands* (University of Pennsylvania Press 2021). Her research interests include the modern history of Jewish/non-Jewish relations, migration and flight, as well as literary culture and translation in Central and East Central Europe.*

*Michala Lónčíková is a historian who defended her dissertation on the anti-Semitic propaganda in Slovakia and the Independent State of Croatia. Her main research interest is the modern Jewish history in the 20th century, especially the Holocaust in Slovakia and its aftermath. Currently, she is focusing on Jewish living spaces in the urban landscape and forced dislocation. She is participating in the project “Genocide, Postwar Migration and Social Mobility: Entangled Experiences of Roma and Jews” at the Institute of the Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences. Since 2020, she has worked at the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences and is a researcher in the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI). Detail personal profile accessible online: <https://www.usd.cas.cz/vyzkumni-pracovnici/loncikova-michala/>*

## **Catrina LANGENEGGER**

### **More than a map: Swiss military refugee camps during the Second World War**

The Swiss policy on asylum and refugees during the Nazi era is an intensively debated topic. In 1942, the increasing number of refugees strained the civil resources of the refugee administration in Switzerland and the military was asked to stand in. Due to security policy, hygienic aspects, and too little civilian capacity, the military administration established a system of refugee camps.

My research focuses on military controlled refugee camps. The army took over 450,000 people into its temporary custody and housed them in more than 220 different camps all over Switzerland during the years 1942-1945. The dense source material allows a focus on the development of the military refugee system and its dynamics. It involves the analysis of an extensive dataset of over 9,500 entries, created based on the received weekly reports, normalized and enriched. The use of GIS allows visualizing the data in a digital map. My data also allows to answer questions about the relations between camp or building types and gender, age, social status of the refugees. Women, elderly people and better off refugees were placed in better equipped camps, while men often had to sleep on straw. With place and space as analytical categories my analysis I will also challenge the conventional definition of refugee camps. Neither were the camps closed buildings, nor was their geographical distribution aimed at separating the refugees from the Swiss population. Both theses have dominated previous research on this topic.

*Catrina Langenegger holds a Master of Arts in History and German Philology with a specialization in Jewish History from Basel University. She also holds a Master of Advanced Studies in Library and Information Science from Zurich University. From 2015 to 2019 she was a research and teaching associate for Jewish History at the Centre for Jewish Studies in Basel. She is a PhD student at the Centre*



for Jewish Studies in Basel. Her thesis is entitled "Heterotopias of War: The Camps of the Territorial Service and the Jewish Refugees 1942-1945". She works as a Subject Librarian for Jewish Literature and Cultural History at the University Library of Basel and is a member of the Digital Humanities Group. She is a research assistant for the Digital Karl Barth Complete Edition at the Karl Barth Archive. She has written several articles and book chapters on the Swiss refugee policy, refugee camps and on digital humanities. Her current publications include "Les réfugiés juifs dans les camps de Suisse romande", in *Albert, Esther, Liebmann, Ruth et les autres. Présences juives en Suisse romande* (2023), pp. 375–385; and "Die Flüchtlingsbetreuung in der Schweiz", in: *Grenzfälle Basel 1933-1945* (2020), pp. 59–65.

### **Lorraine McEVOY**

#### **‘There was a Dutch camp named “BROOMLEE”, Whose leaders were all very comely’: Temporary Reception Centres as Places of Meaning in Post-WWII Humanitarian Hospitality Schemes for Children**

In the aftermath of the Second World War, initiatives were undertaken throughout Europe to temporarily send groups of children abroad to remove them from areas where post-war conditions were harsh and to restore their physical and psychological health. They were organised - often independently of each other - by individuals, organisations, and governments, and involved many thousands of children. Though it varied depending on the scheme, children generally spent some time in reception centres before being sent to stay with foster families in the host country. While not all children on these schemes can be considered refugees, exploring the question of how we define refuge also forms part of my work to write a history of this phenomenon.

This paper examines the insights these temporary movements of children can provide for our understanding of space and place in refugee history. In particular, it will consider the multiple meanings attributed to temporary reception centres (such as youth hostels, camps, or repurposed buildings) that children stayed in on their journeys, the children’s relationships with their physical surroundings and with the staff that populated them, and their perceptions of being in transit, passing through, and being ‘at home’. Focusing on the experiences of Dutch children sent to the United Kingdom, it considers the insights we can gain from sources such as diaries/daybooks, drawings and poetry created by both children and adults, also reflecting on the importance of language and interpersonal relationships to perceptions of space and place.

*Lorraine McEvoy is a final year PhD candidate in the Department of History at Trinity College Dublin where her research has been funded by Trinity’s Ussher Fellowship and the Irish Research Council. She also holds a BA in History and English Literature and an MPhil in International History from Trinity. Her PhD research, ‘Little Guests’: Transnational Humanitarian Hospitality for Europe’s Children in the Aftermath of the Second World War, works towards an integrated, comparative, and transnational history of postwar recuperative holiday initiatives for children, and is based on research in Britain, Ireland, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands. She is an Early Career Researcher at the Trinity Long Room Hub Arts and Humanities Research Institute, former Junior Fellow at NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (Amsterdam), and a member of the History Team at the Museum of Childhood Ireland.*

### **Julia REINKE**

#### **A refugee town in the “Polish Wild West”: Zgorzelec as a place of refuge for Greek Civil War refugees in early postwar Poland**

In only a relatively brief period at the turn of the 1940s to the 1950s, the town Zgorzelec, located at the recent postwar border between East Germany and Poland, earned its reputation as “the capital of Greeks” in Poland, or “Greek republic”. This was due to the roughly 14,000 refugees from the Greek Civil War received by the socialist Polish state as part of a coordinated action of the emerging Eastern Bloc, and

their centralization in this town, especially with the “State Education Center” (Państwowy Ośrodek Wychowawczy) for the large number of child refugees from Greece, which operated there from late 1949 to summer 1951. This refuge however took place in the highly volatile phase after the significant westward shift of Poland’s borders in the aftermath of the Second World War, entailing an immense population exchange in the postwar order and known as the time of the “Polish Wild West” (cf. Beata Halicka).

The paper will focus on the interrelations between the refugees and their specific surroundings during this transitory phase of appropriating the region for the new socialist Polish state. What conditions did the “Polish Wild West” provide for the refugee reception? What implications did this entail for the refugee management? And what traces did the refugees leave in recollections of the town’s postwar history? Based on literature and administrative archival sources, I aim to explore these intersections between the refugees and the local context against the background of the evolving socialist state.

*Julia Reinke is a PhD candidate with a dissertation project on refugees from the Greek Civil War in the German Democratic Republic in East-Central European contextualization at the University of Jena. Since 2019, she has been a Research Fellow in the ERC project “Unlikely refuge? Refugees and Citizens in East-Central Europe in the 20th Century” at the Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. Before, she worked among others as Research Assistant at the Leibniz Institute for History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) in Leipzig and as Student/ Teaching Assistant at the University of Freiburg. Her Magister thesis on “West-German Relations towards Poland in the Early 1980s. Reactions to Solidarność and Martial Law against the Background of the Cold War and German-Polish History” (in German) was awarded the Scientific Prize of the Polish Ambassador, Munich, 2013.*

## **Kamil RUSZAŁA**

### **The First World War refugee camps experience in Austria-Hungary: Disparate perspectives from below**

The First World War pushed massive waves of wartime refugee migration in various directions. This experience also affected a multitude of civilians from Galicia, a province within the Habsburg Empire, which became a battleground between the military forces of the Central Powers and Russia. Civilians either fled or were evacuated deeper into their country, which was the Austro-Hungarian Empire, finding temporary accommodation in specially prepared camps or in the immediate vicinity of the local population. The experience of displacement, the sense of competition, and encountering new spaces elicited diverse feelings among war refugees. In this paper, I will analyze how the space of refugee camps (as well as the contrast of being outside refugee camps) functioned from their grassroots perspective. This will explore the functioning of the micro-communities created within these camps, examining how individuals understood and created their space. This will also juxtapose the official narrative on refugee camps with the real experiences of individuals and groups. The basis for analysis will be sources produced by refugees themselves (including petitions and personal accounts). Through this analysis, an attempt will be made to answer to what extent these communities accepted their fate, as evidenced by their organization of cultural life, or if the camp was perceived as only a temporary and resented space (i.e., camps as accommodated or unaccommodated space). Finally, there will be an answer to the question of whether one can see differences in the perception of space by the same group of refugees who were in refugee camps or beyond.

*Kamil Ruszała – PhD, is Ass. Professor in the Modern History at the Institute of History, Jagiellonian University, Kraków. He specializes in East Central European History in 19th-20th centuries, especially the Habsburg Empire, the First World War, refugees, war remembrance, war monuments and cemeteries, and the social experience of wars. He has published several books dealing with WWI as both author and editor: “Art in Uniform: Kraków War Graves Department 1915–1918” (Kraków 2022); “Postwar Continuity and New Challenges in Central Europe, 1918–1923: The War That Never Ended”, (Routledge 2022); in Polish: “Galician Exodus: Galician Refugees during the First World War in the*

*Habsburg Monarchy*” (Kraków 2020); *Intellectuals and World War I*” (Krakow 2018). Coming soon: *“Refugees and Population Transfer Management in Europe 1914–1920s.”* (Routledge 2024). He serves as a PI of research projects: *“Heritage of War 1914–1918”* (as part of the Critical Heritage Studies Hub at Jagiellonian University), *“Forgotten Refugee Camps in Austro-Hungary, 1914-1918”* (funded by the National Science Centre), and *“Humans in Motion: Refugees in Europe Research Group”* (PRA Heritage, Jagiellonian University) and also managing editor of the *“1914-1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War”* Project.

**Fabio SANTOS**

### **The coloniality of migration in the Caribbean: Offshoring Haitian refugee detention to Puerto Rico, 1981-1982**

Conventional migration studies – often characterized by methodological nationalism, Eurocentrism, and essentialist understandings of culture and society underlying the integration paradigm – have obscured spaces, itineraries, and experiences of refugeedom in regions like the Caribbean, which defy and complicate North-South divides. In my presentation, I employ “creolization” as a methodological lens to examine how colonial histories shape unequal mobilities. I zoom in on Haitian mobility detours to Puerto Rico by examining the experiences and experiments made at Fort Allen, a U.S. military base on the island. At the height of what the Carter and Reagan administrations perceived as a “Haitian Refugee Crises,” more than 800 Haitians were flown from Florida to the U.S. colony and held captive in a makeshift refugee camp between 1981 to 1982. In my talk, I uncover not only the official yet long-concealed spatial politics of deportation and detention of the Carter and Reagan administrations, but also the room for maneuvering those Haitian refugees and their allies – human rights organizations, churches, lawyers, politicians, scholars, and individual volunteers – created and were partly able to use for their advantage. This multivocal approach is also mirrored in the combination of archival records: I juxtapose internal government documents, sources from asylum and human rights advocacy institutions, legal documents, press coverage, and sources produced by refugees themselves, including private and official letters. This material supports my argument that the spatial outsourcing of the camp as well as its concrete spatial design served as both a deterrent for future refugees and a blueprint for subsequent offshoring strategies in the region.

*Fabio Santos is a sociologist with an interdisciplinary profile. His research revolves around the nexus between migration, inequality, and coloniality. He currently is a Fellow in the History of Migration Fellowship Program at the Institute of European Studies at UC Berkeley, with a joint appointment at the GHI’s Pacific Office. He studied European Ethnology and Cultural Theory and History at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and Sociology at Freie Universität Berlin before receiving his Ph.D. in Sociology from the same institution (German-Mexican Graduate School “Between Spaces”). Before coming to Berkeley, Fabio worked as a postdoc lecturer and researcher at the Institute for Latin American Studies at Freie Universität Berlin (currently on leave) and was a Visiting Professor in International Development at the University of Vienna and in Brazilian and Global Studies at Aarhus University. His first book, “Bridging Fluid Borders: Entanglements in the French-Brazilian Borderland,” examines the negotiation of border demarcations, belongings, and mobilities in a rarely studied borderland at the fringes of the Amazon rainforest.*

**Na’ama SERI-LEVI**

### **Mapping wandering routes: Exile and nomadism among Polish-Jewish refugees during World War II**

Most of the Polish Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, about 200,000 people, made it through the war by becoming refugees in the Soviet Union. They fled Nazi occupation, suffered forced deportation, and/or were trapped by Soviet occupation. During the war and until their return to Poland after the war had ended, the Polish Jews had spread over thousands of kilometers throughout the vast territories of the Soviet Union.

My post-doctoral project focuses on the geographical and spatial experiences and aspects of this story. In my project, I implement an innovative approach and analyze and map the flight and exile routes of the refugees and deportees from Poland toward the Soviet Union and within it during WWII for the first time, by examining personal and familial narratives found in questionnaires, early and late testimonies, and memoirs.

In my presentation, I will focus on a single case study: the city of Samarkand, which was one of the largest cities in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic at the time. I will explore the demographic aspects, particularly the geographical origins, of the Jewish refugees who arrived in the city between 1942 and 1946.

*Na'ama Seri-Levi is a Post Doctoral Fellow at the Alfred Landecker Digital Humanities Lab, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, a Claims Conference Saul Kagan Fellow in Advanced Shoah Studies, and a Research Fellow in Yad Vashem. Her dissertation, "Not Yet Lost: Polish-Jewish Refugees in the Soviet Union during World War II" (Hebrew University, 2022), focused on the refugees' networks and their connections with the Jewish world outside the Soviet Union. Her current study is devoted to mapping and analyzing geographical aspects of the refugees' wanderings. Her latest publications are: "‘Gypsy-Nomads’: The Refugeeism of the Jewish-Polish Repatriates," *Dubnow Institute Yearbook 18* (2019), pp. 209-232 (published 2022); „Ci ludzie wydają się zupełnie inni”. *Polskożydowski repatrianci z ZSRR w obozach dla przemieszczonych w latach 1946–1947*, in: Lidia Zessin-Jurek and Katharina Friedla (red.), *Syberia Żydów Polskich: Losy uchodźców z Zagłady* (Warsaw: Jewish Historical Institute, 2020), pp. 561-620.*

## **Konstantin SCHISCHKA**

### **Researching displacement, refuge and resettlement between time, space and administration**

The multi-phase process of spatial uprooting and violence-induced migration caused by the Second World War is structurally characterized on a spatial and administrative level primarily by central locations (hubs of displacement) where violence-induced migration is caused or negotiated. This uprooting posed major administrative challenges for states, NGOs, and, above all, international organizations such as UNRRA and later the IRO. While the majority of DPs could be "repatriated" by the end of 1946, it was not possible for many DPs to simply return to their original place of origin. Their fates were "administered" by the IRO. Depending on demographic characteristics as well as spatial and temporal circumstances, this process varied for different subgroups.

This paper models the migration histories of DPs of the "Last Million" based on micro- and macrohistorical sources as a multilayer network model in which the hubs are the nodes and the migration routes of the DPs are the connecting edges. Based on this model, an explorative, analytical approach is pursued with the help of network analysis and geo-information systems, to reveal spatial, administrative and temporal patterns of the displacement process in its entirety and for demographic subgroups and, as a result, to make them accessible for subsequent qualitative research. A well-documented sample of DPs who were resettled with the help of the IRO is transferred into a relational personal database based on their CM/1 files and linked to the central hubs of displacement based on their migration history. The approach can thus be perfectly integrated into the workshop, due to its strong spatial focal point.

*Konstantin Schischka (MA MEd) studied History, Geography and Contemporary History and Media at the University of Vienna. Since 2020, he has been working as a research assistant at several research institutions, including Verein zur wissenschaftlichen Aufarbeitung der Zeitgeschichte, Vienna Institute for Cultural and Contemporary History and Arts (VICCA), and University of Vienna. At these institutions, he has been involved in various historical projects with a strong methodological focus on approaches from the digital humanities or public history. Since March 2023, he has been a project collaborator and doctoral researcher in the ERC project GLORE in the team of Prof. Dr. Kerstin von Lingen and is working on his dissertation with the working title: *Mapping the Spatial and Social-Administrative Networks of Resettlement: The Role of Hubs of Displacement in the Resettlement Process of 'The Last Million'*. He is also involved as a Consultant for the use of methods from the Digital*

*Humanities in projects, including Die “Lange” Geschichte der Wiener “Secession“ and Ideentransfers durch „Expert Clearing Houses“ in Wien. For a full CV see: <https://zeitgeschichte.univie.ac.at/ueber-uns/projektmitarbeiterinnen/konstantinschischka/>*

## **Nikola TOHMA**

### **“We were like princes...”? Socialist Czechoslovak children’s homes as refugee spaces**

The paper focuses on children’s homes in early socialist Czechoslovakia as temporary spaces of humanitarian relief and education for child refugees from the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and the Korean War (1950-1953). The existing research framed socialist children’s homes as tools of social engineering aiming at the transformation of state socialist societies where children embodied the emerging utopian social order. This paper takes the focus off the ideological formation and, instead, investigates the everyday life and agency of refugee children, manifested through their experience of space and time. The children’s homes thus represent spaces in which top-level policy objectives and functions of the provided aid were confronted with day-by-day humanitarian practices on the ground, affected by postwar economic scarcity, population reconstruction, and the post-1948 political transformation.

Using archival materials, oral interviews, and refugee literature, the paper first reflects on the spatial continuity of the facilities as former aristocratic and Czechoslovak German property, confiscated after the Second World War and reused to shelter various refugee groups. The analysis highlights categories of distance, periphery, safety, and isolation, and the criteria of either physical or political “healthiness”, imposed by the socialist childcare. The perspective of time, ranging from the experience of timelessness and boredom to the overwhelming daily routine and feelings of time uncontrollably passing by, was further determined by the children’s understanding of landmark personal, social, and political events. The way the children’s homes were imagined from above as suitable places to raise the new socialist people clashed with how children perceived them as spatially and temporally accommodating but still highly restrictive institutions. The paper attempts to understand their strategies for overcoming the difficult experience through manifesting their nature, fulfilling their interests, and performing independent activities and protests to rebel against the established spatial and temporal order, mitigate its effects, and transform the children’s homes to make them more of their own.

*Nikola Tohma is a post-doctoral research fellow at the European Research Committee Consolidator Grant 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 in Prague, Czech Republic. She investigates the topic of pro-communist political refugees who settled in 1950s Czechoslovakia fleeing from various countries and conflicts, among them thousands of child refugees from Greece and North Korea. She earned her PhD in 2021 from Charles University (Prague) and Aristotle University (Thessaloniki), specializing in politics of anti-communism in 1950s Greece. Her general research interests include migration, political extremism, populism, and conspiracy theories. Her most recent publication is an article “Like we would help brothers or sisters”? Practising Solidarity with Greek Civil War Refugees in Socialist Czechoslovakia and the GDR in the Shadow of World War II (with Julia Reinke in *International Review of Social History*, 2024).*

## **Giota TOURGELI**

### **Negotiating the urban space: The Asia Minor refugee associations and their resettlement strategies (1922-1932)**

The compulsory uprooting of Orthodox Greeks from the Turkish coastline and inner Asia Minor after the catastrophic defeat of the Greek Army in the Greco-Turkish war of 1919-1922 resulted in an unprecedented refugee crisis in Greece. More than 1 million destitute and homeless people needed to integrate in a co-ethnic state which was underdeveloped, financially exhausted and politically divided.

Politically affiliated to the Liberal governments and from the outset organized in unions, associations and federations (by place of origin or settlement), refugees laid claim to land and houses and developed strategies of negotiation of the resettlement policies especially in the urban centers. They responded to the inadequacies of the housing programs implemented by the Greek state and the League of Nations (the Refugee Settlement Commission/ RSC) initially through collaboration with the authorities and later with radical interventions. Their militancy was expressed through the occupation of the housing quarters constructed by the RSC, the reaction to the police eviction from the state or private buildings or the abstention from voting. They also exhibited agency by creating building co-operatives and taking initiatives for self-housing or even by networking with illegal commercial groups. In doing so, they interacted with the Greek bureaucratic structure, the various institutional bodies but also with local people.

The paper relies on the findings from a three years post-doctoral research and on rich primary sources (press, state files and refugee organizations archives). It brings insights into the ways by which the Greek-Orthodox refugees attempted to modify “from below” the spatial distribution and the housing policies of the Greek state and to appropriate the highly disputed urban space by transform it to a place suitable for accommodation. Simultaneously, it examines the role of the refugee leaders in the settlement process: their struggles to defend and promote the refugee interests but also their involvement to networks of illicit enrichment. The analysis approaches the refugee organizations not only as a significant institutional partner in the process of settlement but also as another mechanism to legitimize inequalities and power asymmetries in the new environment.

*Giota Tourgeli holds a PhD from the University of the Peloponnese in Greece with a thesis entitled “Greeks in the USA, Remittances and Transformations of Local Communities in ‘Old Greece’ (1890-1940)”. From 2012 to 2015 she participated in a research project entitled “Migration Management and International Organizations: A History of the Establishment of the International Organization for Migration”. She is a Teaching Associate at the University of the Peloponnese and Researcher at the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences (Faculty of Political Science and History in Athens). She has recently completed her 3 years post-doctoral research on “The role of the Asia Minor refugee associations in the resettlement process in Greece (1922-1932)”. Her publications and research interests include the history of migration, refugees, diasporas, sending states’ policies and international organizations. She has published articles in journals and collective volumes, and she is the author of two books (in Greek): “The Brooklides (The Returnees). Greeks in the USA and Transformations of Local Communities, 1890-1940” published in 2020 by National Centre for Social Research (EKKE) (e-book) and “Gateways to America: The Migration Economy in Greek Port-Cities” (Crete University Press/ forthcoming in 2023). More: <https://220.academia.edu/GiotaTourgeli>.*

## **Benjamin Thomas WHITE**

### **European refugees in Egypt (1944–48) and the stuff of the refugee camp**

How does the materiality of a refugee camp affect the lives that people live in it? And how do people living in a refugee camp try to adapt its material fabric? This paper explores the stuff of the refugee camp. It takes as its case study the camps run for European refugees in Egypt by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).

It starts with the ground itself, stony, earthen, or sandy—as at the desert camp of Khatatba, which was dangerous for children: ‘the sand scorches their feet and fills their lungs with dust’. Hard surfaces were installed in some places and spaces, such as paved roads for supply trucks, or concrete or tiled floors for tents and dining areas: these provided permanence and stability, but were harsh and unyielding. Permanent structures, like water towers or office buildings, were often the fixed points around which a camp was organized. But impermanent structures, tents, housed most residents and staff: their fabric provided shelter, but limited privacy and less security. Meanwhile, moveable objects of all kinds circulated: blankets, clothing, and other supplies; luggage; objects foraged or found. Residents of the UNRRA camps also tried to reshape their material surroundings (planting gardens, moving or amending

structures) and adapt them to their own needs (turning tent linings into clothes, bamboo tent poles into whistles or tools, and empty petrol cans into almost anything).

Thinking about the materiality of the camp, the paper argues, helps us understand both the texture and the memory of the lives lived there.

*Benjamin Thomas White teaches history at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, where he is also a member of the Glasgow Refugee, Asylum, and Migration Network. A Middle East historian by background, he now teaches refugee history more broadly. His recent publications include journal articles about what becomes a refugee camp (with Katherine Mackinnon), the globalization of the international refugee regime (with Malika Rahal), the history of humanitarian evacuations, and humans and animals in a refugee camp setting, as well as book chapters on the global origins of the modern refugee camp, the relationship between animals, people, and places in displacement, and the use of old quarantine stations to house humanitarian evacuees. After not writing a book in over a decade, he is currently trying to write three different books at once—this paper is a draft chapter from the second of them. He is lead editor of RefugeeHistory.org and blogs (very) occasionally at singularthings.wordpress.com.*