



UNIVERSITY OF
GOTHENBURG



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
THE EARLY MODERN SEMINAR

CFP: Workshop

Challenging Concepts in Refugee History

2 – 3 May 2024

University of Gothenburg

Much has happened since 2007, when Philip Marfleet claimed that Refugee Studies' lack of historical research was "so marked that it constitutes a systematic exclusion".¹ Today, Historical Refugee Studies is a wide and exciting field, ever growing. Still, we have identified a lack of meeting spaces for researchers working on different time periods, and a difficulty in translating and comparing the experiences of forced migrants in various contexts. A major challenge for such comparisons is the lack of a joint vocabulary with which to address our research questions.

Present day Refugee Studies rely heavily on a legal framework that only came into place during the late 20th and 21st centuries. Concepts such as 'refugee', 'internally displaced person', 'asylum seeker', and 'forced migrant' are today packed with legal prerequisites but also emotions and cultural and political connotations. Together, they guide responses to and innovations in the global refugee regime to a degree that seems foreign to historical periods. The lack of discussion on how these concepts travel and what that entails for historical studies hampers comparisons between the past and the present as well as comparisons between different regions.

The workshop *Challenging Concepts in Refugee History* gathers scholars from around the world, working in different time periods and geographical areas, in analyzing what happens as concepts central to Refugee Studies – such as refugee, exile, asylum, border, state, humanitarianism, etc. – travel in space and time. What preconceived notions do these concepts carry, how do they interact with our research (what do they hide, what do they make visible), and which challenges and possibilities do they offer? Additionally, the workshop addresses how such central concepts were used in historical times, tracing terminological and conceptual changes. The goal is to offer

¹ P. Marfleet, 'Refugees and History: Why We Must Address the Past,' *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 26:3 (2007): 136. See also P. Gatrell, 'Refugees – What's Wrong with History?,' *Journal of Refugee Studies* 30:2 (2017).

insight into the challenges and possibilities of using connotation-laden concepts in historical research.

The organizers invite contributions by scholars working with historical refugee studies from various disciplines – migration history, history of ideas, legal history, history of religion, political science, etc. – with a keen interest in addressing the conceptual challenges sketched above, either through empirical studies or more theoretical perspectives. We are looking for an open and creative discussion, where established researchers meet early career scholars to jointly tackle the challenges involved in studying a today highly legalistic phenomenon in historical settings. We especially endeavor to have scholars from different time periods, sharing a deep interest for conceptual issues and the field at hand, meet.

Possible topics and contributions include, but are not limited to:

- Who is a refugee? Which other terms are used to capture the experiences of forced migrants in historical settings?
- When is someone characterized as a refugee, and when are other terms used? Why?
- What terminological and conceptual changes to refugee categorizations and narratives are discernible in historical sources?
- What methodological and theoretical perspectives, such as controlled anachronism, can help us understand the historical experiences of refugees and other forced migrants?
- How are concepts related to forced migration and refugees used in historical sources from various time periods and regions? What emotional, political, and cultural connotations do they carry?

Please send abstracts of 300-400 words and a short (2 pages) CV by **30 November 2023** to:

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Accepted participants will be notified by early January 2024.

Participants will be reimbursed for travel and accommodation costs, after generous grants from the University of Gothenburg, its Faculty of Humanities, and the project *Outsiders Within: Internally Displaced Persons in Early Modern Europe* (PI Sari Nauman), funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond and the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study.

The workshop is co-organized by Sari Nauman (University of Gothenburg), Olof Blomqvist (University of Gothenburg), Susanne Lachenicht (Universität Bayreuth), Thomas Mareite (Universität Tübingen), and Megan Maruschke (Universität Leipzig).