

Call for Papers  
**Recognising Refugees**

Workshop with DeZIM-Fellow  
Prof. Cathryn Costello, University of Oxford

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Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB)

Across the globe, states and UNHCR use a range of diverse processes to recognize refugees. Typically, this is done on a group basis, or at least based on strong presumptions of inclusion, based on the objective factors from which people flee. Only a small minority of the world's refugees undergo individualized refugee status determination (RSD), with interview, appeal rights and a remedy before a court.

The workshop forms part of the [DeZIM-Kolleg](#) project by the DeZIM Research Community, of which Professor Costello is a DeZIM-Fellow, and of the *Recognising Refugees* (RR) strand of Professor Costello's ERC funded [RefMig project](#). The RefMig project aims to broaden and deepen understanding of how refugees come to be recognised, taking a purposefully broad understanding of refugee recognition, encompassing individual refugee status determination (RSD), and the institutional processes that determine access to RSD (registration, admissibility processes etc.), as well as processes that are a substitute for individual RSD, such as *prima facie* or group determination. RSD refers to 'the legal or administrative process by which governments or UNHCR determine whether a person seeking international protection is considered a refugee under international, regional or national law. In contrast to RSD, we use the term 'Refugee Recognition Regime' (RRR) to capture the breadth of the rules, practices and institutions that we study.

We also aim to shed greater light on the role of UNHCR as the world's main RSD institution. The role of UNHCR varies, from principal decision-maker to external advocate and adviser. Much RSD is conducted by UNHCR, although its approaches too vary greatly from place to place. When UNHCR hands over RSD to states, many protection issues arise, yet these are often poorly understood, and there is a striking lack of guidance on how best to institutionalise RSD when handovers occur.

While much political and ethical debate concerns itself with refugee definitions, and whether it is defensible to treat refugees and migrants differently, that debate is remarkably silent on the fact that refugee recognition is the result of various institutional processes. These processes vary significantly in terms of their degrees of formality, juridification, and judicialisation. Different constellations of actors are involved in these processes, from dedicated asylum officials, police officers and border guards, to specialist tribunals and highest courts. Even when similar processes are used applying the same refugee definitions, these processes often lead to divergent outcomes, a phenomenon attracting increasing attention in political science, and of immense practical importance to ensuring refugee protection. The configuration of institutional process itself plays a significant role in determining whether any given person will be recognized as a refugee, irrespective of their objective protection needs.

At the workshop, scholars (at any career stage, including doctoral researchers) are invited to present work-in-progress on refugee recognition, ideally in the form of draft papers that will be circulated to all the participants in advance of the workshop. Proposals are welcome from any pertinent discipline, in particular empirical legal studies, political science, and sociology. Preference will be given to papers that engage in comparative analysis across regimes, and/or develop innovative methodologies to study refugee recognition.

Please send proposals and a brief biographical note to [cathryn.costello@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:cathryn.costello@qeh.ox.ac.uk) by **15. September 2019** (Deadline). Participants will be notified by the end of September.