

The International Organization for Migration (IOM): Gaining Power in the Forced Migration Regime

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Abstract

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) remains understudied, despite its dramatic growth in recent decades, particularly in the humanitarian sphere. In this article I examine key factors driving IOM's expansion, and implications for the forced migration regime. Despite lacking a formal protection mandate, IOM has thrived by acting as an entrepreneur, capitalizing on its malleability and reputation for efficiency, and carving out distinctive roles in activities including post-disaster camp management, data collection, and assistance for migrant workers in crises. I reflect on IOM's efforts to accrue increased authority and power, and suggest that understanding IOM's humanitarian engagements is now essential to understanding the organization itself and, increasingly, the forced migration regime.

Résumé

En dépit de sa croissance spectaculaire ces dernières décennies, particulièrement dans le domaine humanitaire, l'Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM) reste peu étudiée. J'envisage dans cet article les facteurs clés qui ont conduit à l'expansion de l'OIM et leurs conséquences sur le régime de la migration forcée. Bien que n'ayant pas de mandat officiel de protection, l'OIM s'est en effet développée comme un entrepreneur, en exploitant sa malléabilité et sa réputation d'efficacité et en se taillant des activités distinctes parmi lesquelles la gestion des camps faisant suite à des catastrophes, la collecte de données, et l'assistance apportée aux travailleurs migrants dans les contextes de

crise. Je révèle les efforts de l'OIM pour accroître son autorité et son pouvoir, et suggère que comprendre les engagements humanitaires de cette organisation est aujourd'hui essentiel pour comprendre l'organisation elle-même et, progressivement, le régime de la migration forcée.

Introduction¹

The work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in responding to forced migration has been extensively analyzed,² yet the role of another major intergovernmental organization, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), remains understudied. Established in 1951 as the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME), IOM is not a UN agency, but became “part of the UN family” in September 2016 as a “related organization” of the UN.³ The lack of in-depth analysis of IOM is striking, given the agency's dramatic expansion since the 1990s: its pool of member states has grown from 67 in 1998 to 165 in 2015, while its budget increased five-fold from \$242.2 million in 1998 to \$1.4 billion in 2014.⁴ With some 10,000 staff in 500 offices and duty stations, IOM is now by some measures as large as UNHCR, with its approximately 10,100 staff in 471 locations.⁵

This article examines key factors explaining IOM's dramatic growth over the past twenty years, and the implications for the forced migration regime. Recognizing that the vast majority of IOM's expansion is attributable to its increased involvement in humanitarian contexts, I suggest that despite its lack of a formal humanitarian protection mandate, IOM has thrived by acting as an entrepreneur, capitalizing on its

malleability and reputation for efficiency. In particular, it has carved out distinctive roles for itself in activities including post-disaster camp management, data collection, and assistance for migrant workers in crises, while it continues to navigate controversies linked to some of its “migration management” work. Drawing on Barnett, Finnemore, and Duvall’s influential scholarship on power, authority, and international organizations, I reflect on the extent to which IOM is accruing increased power and influence in the forced migration regime, and suggest that understanding IOM’s humanitarian engagements is now essential to understanding the organization and, increasingly, the regime itself. I begin by briefly summarizing IOM’s organizational development, and its increased humanitarian involvement. I then explore key factors underpinning IOM’s growth, before discussing IOM’s evolving power and influence, and its potential implications.

This article is a preliminary reflection that is part of a broader project on the evolution of IOM in the humanitarian sphere. My aim in this exploratory piece is largely to raise questions about the shifting roles and power of IOM, rather than to offer definitive answers to them. While the present article does not aspire to offer policy prescriptions, my hope is that ultimately this work helps to advance the conversation amongst scholars, policymakers, and practitioners on IOM’s current and potential future roles, and the ways in which more systematic, protection-oriented responses may be ensured for displaced persons who fall outside UNHCR’s traditional mandate.

While focusing on IOM’s work with displaced populations, I recognize the impossibility of drawing a bright line between voluntary and forced migration, and the need to maintain careful awareness of the tensions between humanitarian and human rights principles, and programs in areas such as “assisted voluntary returns.”⁶ I also recognize that there is some debate over whether IOM can rightfully be considered a humanitarian agency. Although IOM characterizes itself as a humanitarian organization,⁷ some counter that “this language effaces the coercive practices inherent” in IOM’s involvement in the “ordering of movement” and activities such as detention.⁸ In considering IOM’s evolution as a humanitarian actor, my intention is not to minimize such ethical concerns, but to accurately position it amongst the growing ranks of institutions (including corporations) with multiple “hats,” mandates, and interests that engage in humanitarian work, generating new possibilities, tensions, and challenges for the forced migration regime.

To this end, I use the term humanitarian engagement to refer broadly to efforts to respond to emergencies and their aftermath; normatively, these efforts are to focus on saving lives, reducing suffering, and protecting rights. I use the

term *forced migration regime* to refer to the interconnected norms and institutions that inform and facilitate cooperation in response to displacement across borders as well as internally. Scholarly attention has typically focused on the more discrete refugee regime, in which the 1951 Refugee Convention encapsulates the cardinal norms, and UNHCR is the primary institution. Analyzing the broader global forced migration regime has the advantage of underscoring the links between different “categories” of displaced persons, and the ways in which the norms and institutions developed to respond to refugees have, since the early 1990s, been reconsidered, adapted, and assigned to advance more coordinated responses to refugee-related populations such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and labour migrants uprooted in conflict situations.

IOM’s Expanding Humanitarian Engagement: Background

PICMME was established in 1951, transformed in 1952 into the International Committee for European Migration (ICEM), rebranded in 1980 as the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration, and finally emerged in 1989 as the International Organization for Migration.⁹ Over this period, the body evolved from a regionally focused logistics agency to a global organization working in a wide range of voluntary and forced migration scenarios and dedicated—in theory, if not always in practice—to managed migration “for the benefit of all.” Migration management serves as a loose “umbrella” concept under which diverse activities are clustered, from refugee resettlement, evacuations, camp management, policy development, and counter-trafficking training to the implementation of detention programs and “assisted voluntary return” schemes for unsuccessful asylum seekers.¹⁰ (Importantly, IOM uses the term *migration* to include both cross-border and internal movements.) The agency divides its work into four general areas: (1) migration and development; (2) facilitating migration; (3) regulating migration; and (4) addressing forced migration.¹¹ To a certain extent the IOM’s work with forced migrants crosscuts these four areas, but has come to occupy the lion’s share of IOM’s operational budget and staff resources.

IOM and its precursors were mandated to facilitate orderly migration flows generally, including the “migration of refugees” (ICEM Constitution, Article 1.3). Notably, IOM does not have an explicit mandate to protect the rights of migrants, including refugees and IDPs. Many of IOM’s member states see the agency’s lack of a formal protection mandate as a key strength; for its part, “IOM has come to see protection falling within its mandate, although others might contest the extent of the agency’s commitment to protection principles.”¹² The agency’s constitution indicates that member states must have

a “demonstrated interest in the principle of free movement of persons.”¹³ While minimalistic, for decades this expression of normative commitment served the important political function of precluding the membership of Communist states that prevented citizens from leaving their territories. Like UNHCR, the organization’s work was initially limited to Europe, but this restriction was eventually lifted in light of the need for coordinated international responses to forced migration further afield. As Elie points out, both UNHCR and PICMME were “offsprings of the IRO [International Refugee Organization], but neither were its true successor.”¹⁴ UNHCR was delegated to take on IRO’s legal protection work, but the United States, which dominated negotiations over the establishment of both UNHCR and PICMME, opposed the creation of an operational UN agency with responsibility for (forced) migrants. Indeed, the US Congress decreed in 1951 that no American funding for responding to displacement and population challenges in Europe could be “allocated to any international organization which has in its membership any Communist-dominated or Communist-controlled country.”¹⁵ This initially precluded a strong operational role for UNHCR.

Although IOM (and its precursors) has long represented itself as a migration agency with a broad interest in the movement of people, in the contemporary context and at various points in its history, the organization has in fact worked predominantly with displaced persons, whether refugees or IDPs. For instance, by 1974 some 90 per cent of those supported by ICEM were refugees.¹⁶ Despite the agency’s long history of engagement with displaced populations, it has often “been dismissed by scholars as a significant international actor in its own right. Throughout its existence, in fact, it frequently has been derided as a ‘travel agency,’ booking passages for all kinds of migrants.”¹⁷ When the IOM Constitution was adopted in 1989, several of its objectives pertained directly to the organization’s work with forced migrants, and in the humanitarian sector generally, providing a foundation for more recent expanded humanitarian engagement. According to Perruchoud, the objectives guiding the development of the IOM Constitution included fortifying the organization’s “basic humanitarian character and orientation,” and underscoring the importance of cooperation among states and international agencies on refugee issues, and migration more broadly.¹⁸

IOM’s sometimes contradictory and controversial activities reflect not only its lack of an explicit legal protection mandate, but also its governance structure, and its status as an intergovernmental organization outside—but now closely related to—the UN. IOM has adopted human rights discourse, but views on its roles and responsibilities vary significantly between its two main operational divisions, the Department

of Migration Management and the larger Department of Operations and Emergencies. The latter is responsible for IOM’s field engagement in humanitarian contexts, although the work of both departments affects forced migrants in a range of situations, as detailed in a key document for the organization, the 2012 “Migration Crisis Operational Framework.”¹⁹ IOM’s member states, which govern the organization through the IOM Council, value and often capitalize on IOM’s ability to work “on the edges” of the UN system, where it can execute programs that states wish to see implemented, unencumbered by rigorous formal protection mandates. As it is almost entirely dependent on project-based funding, IOM has often agreed to implement initiatives that arguably constrain rather than advance the rights and well-being of migrants, fostering the perception that IOM is simply a servant of its state masters.²⁰ At the same time, key member states and leaders within IOM itself have advocated a closer relationship with the UN and more explicit protection commitments, culminating in the 2016 Agreement between the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration, under which IOM became a related organization in the UN system, unanimously acknowledged by member states as an “essential contributor in the field of human mobility, [including] in the protection of migrants.”²¹

IOM’s dramatically expanded involvement in forced migration crises has unfolded against the backdrop of the recent growth in humanitarian emergencies worldwide, and the expanded scope and functioning of the forced migration regime, with the emergence of IDPs and migrants in crises as key categories of concern alongside refugees. However, these factors alone cannot explain IOM’s expansion. Rather, as discussed in the following section, IOM’s growth is also attributable to its efforts to strategically position itself, leveraging its malleability and its reputation for logistical efficacy and efficiency to entrepreneurially expand into new areas of work.

Explaining IOM’s Increased Engagement in the Forced Migration Regime

In 2007, IOM member states adopted a new vision for the organization that identified twelve strategic priorities, many of which relate to an increased role for the agency vis-à-vis forced migration. These include: enhancing “the humane and orderly management of migration and the effective respect for the human rights of migrants in accordance with international law;” increasing efforts to tackle human smuggling, trafficking, and other forms of “irregular migration”; participating in coordinated inter-agency humanitarian operations by providing migration services and other support in emergency and post-crisis contexts; and facilitating the voluntary return and reintegration of refugees, IDPs, and other migrants.²²

By 2011, projects undertaken in emergency and post-conflict contexts already represented the majority of IOM's \$1.27 billion budget.²³ IOM participates actively in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the main mechanism for coordinating international agencies' humanitarian action, operates in the field as part of the UN country team, and often participates in UN humanitarian country team planning, while also working to develop its involvement in longer-term developmental responses related to forced migration, such as disaster risk reduction.²⁴ An influential 2008 Sida evaluation of IOM's humanitarian assistance efforts catalyzed a detailed humanitarian policy development process that resulted in the release in 2015 of a new policy entitled "IOM's Humanitarian Policy: Principles for Humanitarian Action," which is presently being implemented, alongside more regular IOM-humanitarian NGO consultations.²⁵ These initiatives merit ongoing study, as they may further systematize IOM's engagement in the forced migration regime and respond to the need to more clearly articulate and institutionalize the agency's relationship to core human rights and humanitarian principles related to the protection of forced migrants.

Given these developments, current explanations for why states turn to IOM to undertake work in the humanitarian sector and in the context of the forced migration regime increasingly appear underdeveloped. For example, some suggest that states call on IOM principally "because it is outside of the UN frameworks and therefore unencumbered by the human rights obligations and state scrutiny the UNHCR faces."²⁶ While these factors have certainly influenced state decision-making, such explanations sit in tension with how powerful member states such as the United States and Sweden have pushed IOM to join the UN system as a related organization, and develop its new humanitarian policy, which expressly ties the agency to core human rights and humanitarian principles. Further, this explanation overlooks the significance of IOM's own concerted efforts to capitalize on its reputation for efficiency and nimbly position itself to respond to emerging challenges (a strategy driven in part by IOM's constant need to raise money through projects, given its lack of core funding). This approach also discounts the significant interaction effects between UNHCR and IOM in the context of the evolving forced migration regime, in which member states have restricted UNHCR's engagement with "newer" forms of displacement (such as forced migration linked to the effects of climate change) in light of concerns regarding its capacity to successfully execute its core legal mandate, and have turned to IOM to help paper over persistent gaps in responses to different forms of displacement.

An Organizational Entrepreneur

Statist examinations of international organizations typically consider them simply as servants of states, rather than as potentially autonomous and even powerful actors.²⁷ This assumption of unmitigated state control is particularly strong vis-à-vis IOM, given its lack of a formal protection mandate and pronounced reliance on project-based financing. However, analyzing IOM's striking entrepreneurialism brings into focus how the agency seeks, even if in modest ways, to expand its influence and autonomy.

Like many international organizations, IOM has a long history of entrepreneurial behaviour. For example, as demand declined in the early years of the agency's existence for the migration of Europe's so-called "surplus population," ICEM endeavoured to identify alternative activities that it could undertake, such as supporting the movement of refugees as labourers.²⁸ Today, IOM "picks up the slack" on a remarkably wide range of issues in emergency and post-crisis contexts (some only tangentially related to migration), filling gaps on issues including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants; disaster risk reduction and mitigation; and the management of reparations programs and initiatives relating to housing, land, and property.

As an organizational entrepreneur in the humanitarian sector, IOM capitalizes on its reputation for being able to execute complex logistical projects in challenging circumstances, and more generally as an efficient, nimble body that can mobilize rapidly to respond to requests for assistance. In identifying new areas for expansion, IOM also leverages its ability to be flexible, given its very broad mandate and the fact that the IOM Constitution (unlike, for example, the UNHCR Statute) does not specifically define the populations that are to be the focus of the agency's work. From the outset, the "mandate of ICEM was not limited to refugees in the strict sense, but extended to other persons in refugee-like situations";²⁹ foreshadowing the increased role the agency would come to play in relation to IDPs, a document brought before the ICEM Council in 1979 noted that the "organization has also been called upon to assist a growing number of so called 'potential refugees,' i.e. persons who find themselves in the condition of refugees in their own country."³⁰ IOM's ability to flexibly respond to different groups has been beneficial for IOM itself, but arguably also for displaced populations in need of assistance, and UNHCR, which in some instances has had limited capacity, as the result of its status as a UN agency, to work in particular countries.³¹

At the same time as IOM has operated as a jack of all trades, a core element of its entrepreneurial strategy has also been to carve out distinctive niches that can be parlayed into more

structural responsibility and influence. For example, IOM has assumed increasing levels of responsibility for conducting emergency evacuations; collecting data on displaced populations; and assisting migrant workers displaced in emergencies, such as in Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion and Gulf War, and in Libya during and after the 2011 revolution. Perhaps most significantly, IOM has become a major player in disaster-induced displacement. It has conducted extensive research and facilitated discussions on displacement associated with the effects of climate change, and has taken on major operational roles in post-disaster displacement crises. By 2010, IOM had conducted over 500 projects in this field, spanning emergency response as well as recovery, mitigation work, and preparedness efforts.³² Since 2010, IOM's involvement in this area has increased dramatically, with massive disaster response efforts in Pakistan, the Philippines, and post-earthquake Haiti, the largest operation in IOM's history. By assuming responsibility for IDP camp coordination and management after natural disasters in the context of the IASC's cluster system for humanitarian response, IOM solidified a major new role, upon which it may cultivate increased power and influence in the forced migration regime.

Increased Power and Influence? IOM's Growing Role in the Forced Migration Regime

IOM's expanded humanitarian engagement has helped to paper over gaps in the forced migration regime, particularly relating to displaced people who do not qualify for refugee status. Yet if the regime is to maintain its commitment to key human rights and humanitarian principles, a clear need remains to more systematically integrate protection considerations into IOM's work, and to resolve dissonances associated with its continued involvement in controversial activities such as "assisted voluntary returns." (As Koch points out, UNHCR and IOM often collaborate closely on assisted voluntary returns, although IOM attracts the lion's share of criticism.³³) Achieving increased coherence in the agency's work, and in turn greater power and influence in the forced migration regime, is limited by competition between IOM's operational departments, and competing pressures from different branches of IOM's member states, who may encourage the development of IOM as a principled humanitarian actor at the same time as they continue to press it to undertake work that fits uneasily with humanitarian and human rights standards.

To be sure, the view on IOM's power and influence in the forced migration regime looks very different in Geneva and in the field. In Geneva, IOM maintains a relatively small, understaffed headquarters, meaning that it has only limited presence in inter-agency meetings where humanitarian actors set agendas and jockey for influence. In contrast,

particularly after major disasters, IOM rapidly ramps up its field presence to become one of the largest operational agencies, exercising power and influence in diverse ways, from coordination and resource distribution to agenda-setting and lobbying.

In this section, I use Barnett and Finnemore's work on the authority of international organizations, and Barnett and Duvall's typology of power in global governance, to bring into focus some of the primary ways in which IOM exerts different forms of power.³⁴ Barnett and Duvall discuss four forms of power: compulsory, institutional, structural, and productive. However, in their application of this typology to liberal international organizations, Barnett and Finnemore focus on compulsory, institutional, and productive power. I follow Barnett and Finnemore in restricting my discussion to these three forms, which are most relevant to understanding IOM's evolving roles. I also consider, albeit to a lesser extent, the ways in which IOM is subject to these varying forms of power. In undertaking this analysis, I understand IOM to be situated—like most major intergovernmental organizations involved in humanitarian response—at the "intersection of the nation-state, international human rights regimes, and neo-liberal governance."³⁵ That is, IOM's work is shaped in varying degrees by human rights principles, state interests, and the drive to outsource—whether to NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, or private actors—goods and services that have in some contexts been provided by states, including protection, emergency assistance, and reconstruction support. While IOM is often treated in the literature (to the extent it is considered at all) as an institutional outlier, this analysis suggests that in many ways IOM has much in common with other international organizations struggling to develop and exert power and influence in a contested field. This analysis also underscores the point that IOM's accrual and exercise of authority and power is not a linear process: its behaviour on some fronts detracts from its authority and consequently its power as an emerging humanitarian actor, while at the same time, through other activities, it strengthens its position and contributions to the field.

International organizations' exercise of power is, as Barnett and Finnemore argue, intimately tied to their capacity as bureaucracies to establish and exert authority.³⁶ Understood as an actor's ability "to deploy discursive and institutional resources in order to get other actors to defer judgement to them," authority may be delegated, or it may be grounded in moral claims or expertise.³⁷ While some protection protagonists within IOM are eager for the organization to establish greater authority through more systematic promotion of and adherence to human rights and humanitarian principles, their agenda puts them in competition with other interests within the agency, as garnering and preserving authority

in the humanitarian sector may constrain some of its other migration management activities.

Delegated, Moral, and Expert Authority

In a basic sense, international organizations' authority is always rooted in the fact of state delegation.³⁸ However, authority, and by extension varying degrees of autonomy, may also be founded on an organization's moral claims and/or expertise. At the institutional level, without a robust mandate, IOM enjoys very little systematically delegated authority. It is not, however, atypical in this respect: "Mandates to international organizations are often vague or broad, or contain conflicting directives ... Consequently, mandates need to be interpreted and, even with oversight, the agenda, interests, experience, values, and expertise of IO staff heavily colour any organization's response to delegated tasks. Thus, international organizations *must* be autonomous actors in some ways simply to fulfill their delegated tasks," perhaps all the more so if these tasks are nebulous, as in the case of IOM.³⁹

IOM does not enjoy clear, delegated authority over a particular issue or population, as with UNHCR and refugee protection,⁴⁰ and is particularly full-throated in its rhetorical commitment to serving the will of its member states when they delegate IOM to execute particular tasks. However, in this respect IOM differs from other IOs in degree, but not in kind. As Barnett and Finnemore emphasize, delegation may enable international agencies to act with a degree of independence, but this is contingent on appearing to loyally adhere to their mandates and member states' directives.⁴¹

International organizations are often established to advance shared values, which underpin their attempts to act authoritatively. In the case of organizations working in the forced migration regime, they claim authority on the basis of their efforts to promote the rights and well-being of those pushed from their homes.⁴² Given its lack of a formal protection mandate and the critiques that IOM sustains for the negative human rights implications of some of its work, the agency appears on some levels ill-positioned to claim authority on moral grounds. Yet, when it was created, the organization was undergirded (however loosely) by a moral commitment to facilitate free movement, in contrast to Communist governments' common practice of restricting their citizens' departures. Since the end of the Cold War, IOM's core message has been that migration can work "for the benefit of all"—a message that openly appeals to states' self-interest, but arguably as a strategic way of advancing free movement as a moral good.

Beyond "straightforward mandated moral authority ... international organizations often traffic in another kind of moral appeal. IOs of all kinds often emphasize their neutrality, impartiality, and objectivity in ways that make essentially

moral claims against particularistic self-serving states."⁴³ IOM is comparatively reticent when it comes to engaging in this kind of appeal, perhaps because it tries to simultaneously play multiple games that sometimes militate against each other. That is, it strives to increase its moral authority as a humanitarian actor, but also to cultivate its perceived comparative advantage in catering to states' desires. Many within IOM are aware that it cannot continue to expand in the (growing, lucrative) humanitarian sphere—a field heavily conditioned by normative principles—without more purposefully augmenting its moral authority.⁴⁴ The humanitarian policy process instigated by the 2008 Sida review is in part a response to this concern and could potentially translate into significantly increased moral authority. As this process unfolds, IOM has meanwhile increased its deployment of protection officers in post-disaster contexts, stressed its practical efforts to advance migrants' rights, and emphasized the "de facto protection" provided through its activities.⁴⁵

While IOM has weak claims to delegated and moral authority in comparison to an agency such as UNHCR, it has made considerable progress in cultivating expert authority. States are driven to establish specialized bureaucracies in part by the desire to delegate tasks to perceived experts.⁴⁶ Developed on the basis of its involvement in displacement situations in Uganda (1972–4), Bangladesh (1973), Chile (from 1973), Cyprus (1974), and Vietnam (1975), IOM's reputation for logistical competency, particularly in humanitarian transportation, translates into a considerable source of expert authority for the agency.⁴⁷ Linked to its reputation for the cost-effective execution of complex technical operations, IOM uses corporate rhetoric that on a certain level sits in tension with the traditional *modus operandi*, principles, and values of the humanitarian sector, and may from some perspectives undercut its authority. Yet the humanitarian world is also an industry increasingly characterized by business-oriented approaches (and the direct involvement of for-profit corporations), in which IOM's reputation for efficiency and strong logistics positions it to thrive. IOM has further burnished its expert authority through increased investment in research, and through spearheading standard-setting processes on migrant workers in countries grappling with crises.⁴⁸

Overall, the power of international organizations, as bureaucracies, rests in their capacity to represent themselves as legitimate authorities that are not overtly exercising power but neutrally assisting others.⁴⁹ Depending on the sources of their authority, international organizations, including IOM, will exercise power in particular ways and to varying degrees, whether through direct or indirect regulation, or by helping to "constitute the world that needs to be regulated."⁵⁰

Compulsory Power: Directly Shaping Behaviour

Typically associated with physical or economic power, compulsory power is the “exercise of direct control of one actor over another and the ability of an actor to ‘use material resources to advance its interest in direct opposition to the interests of another.’”⁵¹ As an international organization governed by its member states, without independent financial resources and with little systematically delegated authority, the extent to which IOM exerts compulsory power is starkly limited. However, IOM certainly exerts compulsory power over some forced migrants, such as those living in camps the agency has been mandated to close. Compulsory power is arguably also exerted in the context of assisted voluntary returns, the “voluntary” designation notwithstanding. IOM’s dependence on project-based funding makes it relatively beholden to the compulsory power of its donors (arguably even more so than other international organizations in the forced migration regime, such as UNHCR, which is reliant on earmarked voluntary contributions but has more central support through the UN system, and greater ability to channel funds to core thematic programs and concerns). Yet IOM in turn exercises a degree of compulsory power over NGO partners who become reliant on funding channelled through IOM.

In considering the current and potential future roles of IOM in the forced migration regime, it is especially important to consider the ways in which—and the extent to which—IOM, despite its reliance on project-based financing, mediates the compulsory power of its donors and member states by refusing to undertake certain projects that pose problems in terms of respect for human rights and humanitarian principles. IOM has agreed to participate in some programs proposed by influential member states, such as Australia’s now defunct initiative to reroute asylum seekers to Cambodia, despite their negative protection repercussions. However, it also refuses to engage in some proposed projects; reviews of the accordances of the proposed activities with international standards inform this decision-making process, but other factors likely also influence institutional decision-making. Further research is needed to develop better accounts of how and when the agency makes such decisions, and the implications for understanding the exercise of compulsory power.

International organizations can also exert compulsory power by using “normative resources” to influence actors’ behaviour; indeed, some international agencies “are quite candid in their beliefs that one of their principal functions is to try to alter the behaviour of states and nonstate actors in order to ensure that they comply with existing normative and legal standards.”⁵² Although IOM increasingly draws on human rights and humanitarian principles in its work, the extent to which it appeals to normative resources to exert

compulsory power is presently limited. IOM has developed an increased media presence in relation to, for example, the deaths of asylum seekers attempting to cross the Mediterranean. Through such media work, IOM draws attention to failures to protect migrants (such as through the cancellation of robust, EU-funded search-and-rescue efforts), but has not used overt shaming techniques more readily associated with compulsory power. Compulsory power may also be exercised through the strategic use of information, including the collection of some forms of data over others.⁵³ IOM has dramatically expanded its involvement in data collection in humanitarian contexts, an activity that increases its compulsory power, but even more so its institutional power.

Institutional Power: Shaping Behaviour “At a Distance”

In contrast to compulsory power, institutional power may be understood as a more indirect aspect of power, which involves states crafting international organizations to advance their interests; these agencies may then go on to shape other actors’ behaviour.⁵⁴ In wielding institutional power a particular actor may, through the procedures, rules, and activities of an institution, “guide, steer and constrain the actions (or non-actions) and conditions of existence” of other actors, whether states or international organizations.⁵⁵ Drawing on institutional power, international organizations can shape understandings, behaviours, and social contexts, including by downplaying or sidelining particular issues in agenda-setting processes.⁵⁶

Understanding institutional power in relation to IOM entails analysis of how states use IOM to indirectly influence other actors and issues, and how IOM has positioned itself institutionally to achieve desired outcomes. IOM has, by some accounts, been used extensively in the former respect, with Ashutosh and Mountz arguing that “IOM functions as a state apparatus in supranational guise.”⁵⁷ Indeed, on some levels IOM’s history is very much a story of states’ exercise of institutional power, with the United States using IOM’s precursor institutions as a way to address migration and displacement without having to cooperate with or cede power to the USSR. IOM remains an instrument of Northern foreign policy, more so than other international agencies, but institutional power in relation to IOM cannot be fully appreciated in isolation from examination of UNHCR.⁵⁸ Having one international organization with a robust protection mandate, and another, more operationally focused agency has served the interests of member states whose policies and ambitions vis-à-vis the governance of (forced) migration are often far from coherent. This configuration has suited states concerned to limit “mission creep” on the part of UNHCR and leery of increased, protection-oriented attention to issues such as displacement associated with the effects of climate change.

For its part, IOM has sought to increase its own institutional power in the humanitarian sphere by participating in agenda-setting, including in relation to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the September 2016 UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants, and by assuming greater responsibility as the lead agency for camp coordination and management in post-disaster settings. By taking on this role, IOM is particularly well positioned to exert institutional power through classificatory practices. A core characteristic of bureaucracies is their involvements in knowledge organization and classification.⁵⁹ Indeed, the ability to create and infuse categories with prescribed meanings, to classify objects and people, and in so doing shift their very definition and identity, is one of bureaucracy's greatest sources of power.⁶⁰ UNHCR plays a major role in this regard, especially in refugee status determination, but IOM also exerts considerable institutional power in this respect, especially vis-à-vis IDPs. IOM's involvement in exercising institutional power through classificatory practices has grown as it has developed significant new roles in data collection and dissemination in humanitarian contexts, including through the implementation of a tool known as the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). Whether explicitly or implicitly, data collection in conflict, post-conflict, and post-disaster contexts often involves categorizing people as displaced or not displaced, and increases IOM's influence over other actors by putting IOM in a position whereby states and other international organizations come to depend on it for quantitative information on the "caseloads" who are the target of humanitarian interventions. Because the IOM Constitution does not, as aforementioned, give formal definitions of groups such as refugees and IDPs, the organization has considerable discretion in the approaches it may take to categorization in the context of data collection. For example, although IOM supports the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, in its data collection work in post-earthquake Haiti, IOM's implementation of the Displacement Tracking Matrix focused predominantly on IDPs resident in camps. This perpetuated the perception that, despite the broader conceptualization of internal displacement in the Guiding Principles, IDPs in Haiti were simply those resident in camps, and that closing camps was tantamount to resolving the IDPs' predicament.

Productive Power: Contributing to the "Constitution of Global Governance"

Productive power involves the creation of subjects through social interactions.⁶¹ Examining international organizations' productive power underscores that these agencies not only help regulate the world, but are also involved in "constituting that world that needs to be regulated."⁶² Through productive power, international organizations help establish certain issues as *problems* to be understood through the application

of particular frames, and tackled through the deployment of particular strategies.⁶³

IOM is comparatively active in developing this aspect of its (potential) power as an international organization, intersecting with its exercise of institutional power through classificatory practices. For example, IOM exerts productive power by applying a displacement "lens" to post-disaster situations that are increasingly, but arguably need not necessarily, viewed as forced migration crises. The agency has also applied productive power, alongside other actors, to position displacement associated with the effects of climate change as a pressing contemporary and future challenge, and to establish migrants uprooted in crises as a group in need of greater attention and a more systematic response. Through a cooperative effort, IOM helped make the Libyan revolution catalytic in drawing attention to this issue, using it as a springboard to develop institutional frameworks to structure future responses to similar situations. Through productive power, international organizations shape what progress is understood to entail. In this and other situations, IOM has applied productive power to make the case that progress must entail a forced migration regime that responds reliably and more equitably to those forced from their homes, but who may not fit into traditionally established or understood categories such as refugees or IDPs uprooted by conflict.

Conclusion

As Milner stresses, understandings of power and influence in the forced migration regime must be historically situated; that is, they must be sensitive to the ways in which power relations shift over time.⁶⁴ Such historically situated analyses are more likely to illuminate the evolution and expanding roles of institutions like IOM. Opinions are divided on the implications of IOM taking on a more active role in the forced migration regime, and in the governance of migration more generally. For example, Martin argues that IOM has "the strongest capabilities to take on the range of activities needed if an international migration regime were to be adopted," while Ashutosh and Mountz contend that IOM works in favour of nation states to the detriment of people on the move, and characterize IOM's embrace of human rights language as little more than window dressing.⁶⁵ I have suggested that while IOM's engagement in the humanitarian sphere has brought with it increased attention to groups that could otherwise fall through the cracks of international response systems, particularly IDPs in disasters and migrant workers uprooted in crises, a clear need remains for the agency to continue to develop a more explicitly protection-oriented response to forced migration. The extent to which IOM delivers on this in a systematic manner will depend on the commitment and direction the organization receives from its member states,

and on IOM's own internal efforts. This will hinge in part on the capacity of protection protagonists within IOM to more comprehensively socialize humanitarian and human rights principles within the organization, and overcome internal debates and divides, particularly as they relate to declining to undertake projects in tension with humanitarian and human rights values.

Whatever one's perspective on these debates, it is now clear that IOM plays major roles in the forced migration regime, and that these roles are likely to grow in the future, such that to understand IOM one needs to understand its roles in the humanitarian system and forced migration regime. Equally, to understand these systems one needs to understand the shifting roles of IOM, and its approaches to accruing and exercising authority and power. This in turn demands further research on IOM's historical and ongoing evolution, and its political, operational, and normative consequences.

NOTES

- 1 This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
- 2 See, e.g., Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Gil Loescher, *The UNHCR and World Politics: A Perilous Path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Gil Loescher, Alexander Betts, and James Milner, *UNHCR: The Politics and Practice of Refugee Protection into the 21st Century* (London: Routledge, 2008).
- 3 IOM, "IOM Becomes a Related Organization to the UN," 25 July 2016, <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-becomes-related-organization-un>.
- 4 To the limited extent that IOM has been examined in the literature, the focus has generally been on its *international* migration management activities, overlooking its now considerable engagement with *internal* movements. See, e.g., Ishan Ashutosh and Allison Mountz, "Migration Management for the Benefit of Whom? Interrogating the Work of the International Organization for Migration," *Citizenship Studies* 15, no. 1 (2011): 21–38; Martin Geiger and André Pécoud, *The Politics of International Migration Management* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Martin Geiger and André Pécoud, "International Organizations and the Politics of Migration," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 6 (2014): 865–87; Fabian Georgi, "For the Benefit of Some: The International Organization for Migration and Its Global Migration Management," in *The Politics of International Migration Management*, ed. Martin Geiger and André Pécoud, 45–72 (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); IOM, "The International Organization for Migration: Renewal and Growth since the End of the Cold War," in *World Migration Report 2011* (Geneva: IOM, 2011); and Lina Venturas, ed., *International "Migration Management" in the Early Cold War: The Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration* (Corinth: University of the Peloponnese, 2015).
- 5 William Lacy Swing, "Comments at the September Summit and Signing of the IOM-UN Agreement," New York, 19 September 2016; UNHCR, *Global Report 2015* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2016), 2.
- 6 Anne Koch, "The Politics and Discourse of Migrant Return: The Role of UNHCR and IOM in the Governance of Return," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 6 (2014): 905–23; Francis Webber, "How Voluntary Are Voluntary Returns?," *Race and Class* 52, no. 4 (2011): 98–107.
- 7 IOM, *Half a Century of Experience* (Geneva: IOM, 2001); Michelle Ducasse-Rogier, *The International Organization for Migration: 1951–2001* (Geneva: IOM, 2001).
- 8 Ashutosh and Mountz, "Migration Management," 24.
- 9 Ducasse-Rogier, *International Organization for Migration*; Richard Perruchoud, "From the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration to the International Organization for Migration," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 1, no. 4 (1989): 501–17; Georgi, "For the Benefit of Some."
- 10 Geiger and Pécoud, *Migration Management*, 3.
- 11 Susan Martin, *International Migration: Evolving Trends from the Early Twentieth Century to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 124.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 124–5.
- 13 Constitution of the International Organization for Migration, 1951, Article 2(b).
- 14 Jérôme Elie, "The Historical Roots of Cooperation between the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration," *Global Governance* 16 (2010): 349.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 350; Martin, *International Migration*, 125.
- 16 Elie, "Historical Roots," 351.
- 17 Miriam Feldblum, "Passage-Making and Service Creation in International Migration" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Washington, DC, 1999); Elie, "Historical Roots," 346. For a helpful discussion of ICEM's early work with refugees, and the relationship between UNHCR and ICEM, see Elie, "Historical Roots." While the UNHCR-IOM relationship has often been characterized as fractious, suspicious, and competitive, inter-organizational cooperation is more common than is sometimes assumed or acknowledged.
- 18 Perruchoud, "From the Intergovernmental Committee"; see also Martin, *International Migration*, 132.
- 19 IOM, "Migration Crisis Operational Framework," 2012, MC/2355.
- 20 Georgi, "For the Benefit of Some"; Ashutosh and Mountz, "Migration Management."
- 21 IOM and UN, "Agreement concerning the Relationship between the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration," 2016, Article 2(2). See also UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/296, 25 July 2016.

- 22 Martin, *International Migration*, 135–7.
- 23 Ibid., 143.
- 24 Ibid., 149.
- 25 Anders Olin, Lars Florin, and Björn Bengtsson, “Study of the International Organization for Migration and its Humanitarian Assistance,” *Sida Evaluations* 40 (2008): 1–96; IOM, “IOM Humanitarian Policy: Principles for Humanitarian Action,” October 2015, C/106/CRP/20.
- 26 Alexander Betts, “Institutional Proliferation and the Global Refugee Regime,” *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 1 (2009): 54.
- 27 Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, “The Power of Liberal International Organizations,” in *Power in Global Governance*, ed. Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 162.
- 28 Feldblum, “Passage-Making”; Elie, “Historical Roots,” 351.
- 29 Perruchoud, “Intergovernmental Committee,” 505–6, quoted in Elie, “Historical Roots,” 355.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Elie, “Historical Roots,” 355.
- 32 Martin, *International Migration*, 137, 147–8.
- 33 Koch, “Politics and Discourse.”
- 34 Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*; Barnett and Finnemore, “Power of Liberal International Organizations”; Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, “Power in Global Governance,” in *Power in Global Governance*, ed. Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, 1–32 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- 35 Ashutosh and Mountz, “Migration Management,” 22.
- 36 Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*; Barnett and Finnemore, “Power of Liberal International Organizations.”
- 37 Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*, 16–44; Barnett and Finnemore, “Power of Liberal International Organizations,” 169.
- 38 Barnett and Finnemore, “Power of Liberal International Organizations,” 171.
- 39 Ibid., 172; Kenneth Abbott and Duncan Snidal, “Why States Act through Formal International Organizations,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 1 (1998): 3–32.
- 40 Arguably, state delegation of authority to IOM may happen on a limited, ad hoc, micro level through the ongoing process of creating new projects. Project-level delegation is not necessarily conducive to the coherent expression of values and power by the organization, as it is pulled in many different directions, particularly as projects are typically negotiated at the field level, rather than through headquarters.
- 41 Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*, 172.
- 42 Ibid., 172–3.
- 43 Ibid., 173.
- 44 The issue of IOM taking on projects that undercut its potential moral authority in the humanitarian sector is perpetuated by its highly decentralized structures, whereby heads of mission have considerable independence in negotiating projects, and significant professional incentives to raise as much funding as possible, even if the projects are dubious from a protection perspective and endanger organizational efforts to cultivate greater moral authority in the humanitarian sphere.
- 45 Martin, *International Migration*, 135.
- 46 Barnett and Finnemore, “Power of Liberal International Organizations,” 173.
- 47 Ducasse-Rogier, *International Organization for Migration*, 60; Elie, “Historical Roots,” 354–5.
- 48 Martin, *International Migration*, 136, 140. As a fellow with the Brookings Institution, an independent policy research organization, I was involved in two studies undertaken by Brookings in partnership with IOM on the resolution of displacement following the Haiti earthquake and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. See Angela Sherwood, Megan Bradley, Lorenza Rossi, Rufa Guiam, and Bradley Mellicker, *Resolving Post-Disaster Displacement: Insights from the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda)* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution/IOM, 2015); and Angela Sherwood, Megan Bradley, Lorenza Rossi, Rosalia Gitau, and Bradley Mellicker, *Supporting Durable Solutions to Urban, Post-Disaster Displacement: Challenges and Opportunities in Haiti* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution/IOM, 2014).
- 49 Barnett and Finnemore, “Power of Liberal International Organizations,” 175.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 James Milner, “Understanding Power and Influence in the Global Refugee Regime” (background paper prepared for “Power and Influence in the Global Refugee Regime,” Carleton University, Ottawa, 23–25 September 2015), quoting Barnett and Duvall, “Power in Global Governance,” 14.
- 52 Barnett and Finnemore, “Power of Liberal International Organizations,” 176.
- 53 Ibid., 177.
- 54 Milner, “Understanding Power.”
- 55 Barnett and Duvall, “Power in Global Governance,” 15.
- 56 Barnett and Finnemore, “Power of Liberal International Organizations,” 177; Barnett and Duvall, “Power in Global Governance,” 16.
- 57 Ashutosh and Mountz, “Migration Management,” 34.
- 58 Martin, *International Migration*, 145.
- 59 Barnett and Finnemore, “Power of Liberal International Organizations,” 178.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Barnett and Duvall, *Power in Global Governance*, 20.
- 62 Barnett and Finnemore, “Power of Liberal International Organizations,” 179.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Milner, “Understanding Power.”
- 65 Martin, *International Migration*, 124; Ashutosh and Mountz, “Migration Management,” 21.

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