MOBILITY & POLITICS

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DEPOLITICISING MIGRATION

Global Governance and International Migration Narratives

Antoine Pécoud

Depoliticising Migration

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Mobility & Politics

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Human mobility, whatever its scale, is often controversial. Hence it carries with it the potential for politics. A core feature of mobility politics is the tension between the desire to maximize the social and economic benefits of migration, and pressures to restrict movement. Transnational communities, global instability, advances in transportation and communication, and concepts of 'smart borders' and 'migration management' are just a few of the phenomena transforming the landscape of migration today. The tension between openness and restriction raises important questions about how different types of policies and politics come to life and influence mobility.

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Depoliticising Migration: Global Governance and International Migration Narratives

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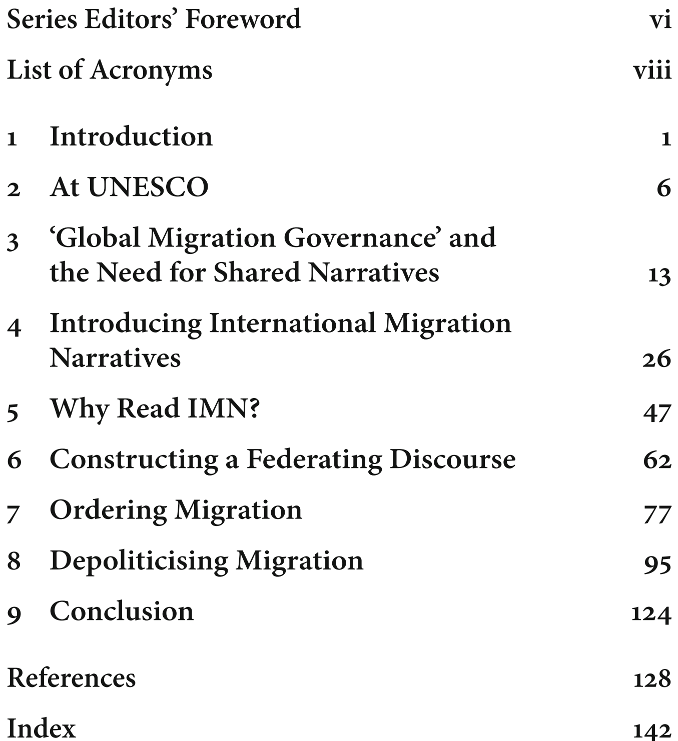

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Series Editors' Foreword

Politics and profits nourish the ever-thickening haze of infrastructures and discourses of migration management. *Depoliticizing Migration* showcases a more benign-seeming series of migration-related narratives that do not at first glance seem to capitalise on the hysteria, fear, and politics driving migration industries and policies.

Building on several years of experience as a researcher at UNESCO, Antoine Pécoud goes to the heart of international organisations that produce migration narratives in order to understand why they have turned recently to the treatment of migration as another development issue – a problem in need of a solution. Noting that 'IOs are institutions that talk and publish massively', Pécoud analyses 3000 pages, a cottage industry, of reports and statistics crafted to bring order to the chaotic field of human mobility. In exploring how international organisations design narratives to order the world, Pécoud identifies a proliferating series of definitions, typologies, organising principles, and budget lines that characterise contemporary forms of migration management. The presentation of these data inevitably calls for the collection of more data. Pécoud proposes a new term to capture the bread and butter technocratic discourses of these proliferating industries and experts: International Migration Narratives (IMNs). By IMNs, he refers to the shared narratives that have emerged in post–Cold War management discourses created to orient a policy-minded audience to migration as a problem that can be catalogued and then solved.

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Pécoud queries the authorship and audiences of these reports, while analysing their content and power to forge shared languages and viewpoints to govern mobility. In so doing, he confronts the simultaneous evasion of and capitalisation on the politics of migration. This depoliticising of migration, in fact, becomes the paradoxical force driving its contemporary governance through bureaucratic infrastructures and discourses. Put another way, Pécoud takes 'global governance' to task for bureaucratising, subsuming, and precluding political debate about mobility through detachment, ambivalence, and technocratic governance.

With the publication of Pécoud's book, the *Mobility & Politics* Series confronts some of the powerful forces driving the institutional migration industry that designs and capitalises on migration narratives. The brilliance of Pécoud's contribution is its exposure of the politics of erasing politics, as though governing migration is something achievable by cutting through the politics of mobility to get to the zone where governance operates through its own seemingly objective logic.

Alison Mountz, Wilfrid Laurier University
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List of Acronyms

GCIM	Global Commission on International Migration
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
GMG	Global Migration Group
HDR	Human Development Reports
HLD	High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development
IAMM	International Agenda for Migration Management
ICMC	International Catholic Migration Commission
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IGC	Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum, and Refugees
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMN	International Migration Narratives
IO	International Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PICMME	Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe
RCPs	Regional Consultative Processes
SID	Society for International Development
UN	United Nations

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UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WESS	World Economic and Social Surveys

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1
Introduction

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'International migration has risen to the top of the global policy agenda'. This is the first sentence of the report by the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM, 2005: vii). It also serves, in slightly different versions, as an introductory sentence to countless publications of both research and policy nature – and could also serve as the inaugural sentence of this book. Such a statement has today become so common that one almost feels embarrassed to formulate it once again. It is not that this sentence is wrong, but rather that it corresponds to one of these common sense claims that pervade much of one can read on international migration and makes this scholarship, at times, somewhat repetitive.

This dilemma is characteristic of what could be called the 'professionalisation' of migration studies. This topic is now on the agenda of many actors: researchers, but also governments, international organisations (IOs), NGOs, and so on. This leads to an increasing number of publications, making it difficult to follow all the developments in this field of study. It is always tricky to establish historical comparisons and to claim that one has never talked so much about migration. But what is clear is that migration is much talked about today, more than a few decades ago: Stephen Castles (2000) provides a striking account of the context in the 70s, marked by a lack of interest and a vacuum of studies; some 40 years later, he recalls the 'ambivalence' of the current interest in migration, particularly as far as researchers' independence is concerned (Castles, 2008).

One could discuss the reasons why migration is the object of so much discussion. The increasing number of migrants worldwide is often put forward: IOM publications, for instance, ritually mention new (and higher) figures, the last one being of 214 million migrants in 2013, with a forecast of 405 million in 2020. These numbers are almost as popular as the GCIM's first sentence, but may not exhaust the issue. After all, the percentage of migrants with respect to the world population has remained stable over the last century, at around 3 per cent. Other reasons have to do with the disproportionate impact of a relatively small number of (often undocumented) migrants in Western societies, or with the heightened sensitivity surrounding foreigners' presence.

Whatever the reasons, one of the consequences of this situation is the number of people and institutions that have become active in migration research and policy, sometimes without prior experience or knowledge of this issue. Between 2003 and 2012, I worked in UNESCO's migration

program, in a position that was created precisely to enable this UN agency to develop its activities in this field. As a young researcher with a PhD in migration studies, I was expected to strengthen the expertise of this organisation in this new area of work. UNESCO was not alone in this respect: for instance, most of the IOs that now compose the Global Migration Group had, until recently, little or no knowledge of migration issues; they nevertheless sensed that this is an emerging topic that must be addressed and therefore took it up (Pécoud, 2013). There is nothing wrong here: experts, bureaucrats, or politicians must adapt to emerging challenges and move from one issue to another.

Yet, a minimal knowledge of a topic is required to get involved, and this is where international migration narratives come in. I propose to call 'international migration narratives' (IMN) the growing corpus of international reports and publications on migration, by IOs and other international entities (like the GCIM). As I shall describe, IMN have proliferated since approximately 2000 and now comprise a relatively coherent body of knowledge and ideas, regarding both *what migration is* (trends, numbers, dynamics, etc.) and *what it should be* (through the elaboration of so-called policy recommendations). IMN are therefore a relatively new phenomenon, which mirrors the worldwide interest in migration. The objective of this book is to analyse their core arguments and understand the way they think about migration. Given my own experience as an international civil servant at UNESCO, and in light of the sustained connections between researchers and the institutions that produce IMN, this is a necessarily self-reflexive project. As will become clear, my interest in IMN is directly related to my experience as both a researcher and a staff member at UNESCO.

A core argument in IMN concerns the relationship between migration and development. Indeed, development is a long-standing field of activity for IOs and, to some extent, their recent interest in migration takes place within the broader framework of development thinking, and of the new paradigms that have regularly been emerging over the past decades (Rist, 2002a). Development discourses have been the object of critical analysis, and this scholarship will constitute a major source of inspiration for my work on IMN. In particular, critical development research has documented IOs' role in shaping the way both 'problems' and 'solutions' are constructed and, consequently, the potential influence of their narratives on the way development is thought about. While the focus is often on what IOs do 'on the ground' (and on the much-debated efficiency

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of their interventions), this should not hide the equally important (but perhaps less visible) role they play in conceptualising global issues.

At first sight, IMN face a nearly impossible task. Their ambition is to produce a global and consensual discourse on a topic that is the object of bitter disagreements (both between and within states) and that is governed through largely unilateral and ad hoc policies. They envisage an ideal horizon in which migration would contribute to achieve IOs' objectives, like development, but also human rights or peace. This stands in sharp contrast with today's realities and one can therefore have doubts on their political influence: can IMN really claim that they have 'solutions' to solve contemporary migration dilemmas? Or do they merely play with naïve ideas that will forever remain on paper? Alternatively, do IMN have the potential of diffusing new norms and beliefs in migration politics, thereby slowly reshaping the behaviour of governments? Understanding IMN thus implies understanding the complex role of discourses in politics and the multiple manners in which knowledge and ideas influence (or do not influence) political decisions.

The book is constructed in the following manner. I start by briefly presenting the professional experience that is at the origin of this book, namely the years I spent as an international civil servant at UNESCO (Chapter 2). I then discuss the context in which IMN emerged: in a post-Cold War era, migration has been the object of increased cooperation at the regional and international level; while the main objective of such cooperation is the control of borders, this has also spurred debates on the 'global governance' mechanisms that would enable states to go beyond the mere control of migration, to jointly organise human mobility and better take advantage of its benefits. The elaboration of specific narratives is central in this process, as they make clear why this is necessary and how this can be achieved (Chapter 3). The fourth chapter introduces IMN, by presenting the corpus of reports upon which my analysis is based and their key characteristics (in terms of the topics they address, of their language, authorship, audience, etc.). I then turn to the reasons why an analysis of IMN is, in my view, necessary and to the different ways in which their role and function can be conceptualised (Chapter 5).

The following three chapters present the main dynamics at play in IMN. The first is the elaboration of a federating discourse, which goes beyond the different views and interests that exist among states to propose a consensual and universal understanding of what migration

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is all about, and of what it should look like (Chapter 6). The second is an ordering process through which IMN make sense of the apparently chaotic and threatening nature of migration dynamics and propose categories to both think about human mobility and govern it (Chapter 7). The third main characteristic of IMN is their depoliticising treatment of migration issues and the different strategies through which they call for apparently new and innovative immigration policies while at the same time negating the political nature of their object and the political implications of their recommendations (Chapter 8).

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2
At UNESCO

Abstract: *This chapter provides a brief description of the author's professional experience as an international migration specialist at UNESCO. It explains the relevance of this experience for the author's interest in international migration narratives.*

Keywords: UNESCO; social sciences; migration policy; Global Migration Group

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I joined UNESCO in 2003, after completing a PhD in social anthropology on Turkish migration to Germany. After several short-term contracts, I became an international civil servant in 2005; I resigned in 2012 to take up a professorship position in a French university. Throughout these years, I was active in the international migration unit, at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. A small migration section had been set up in 2001 to address this emerging issue and, as a 'migration specialist', I was expected to contribute positioning UNESCO in the burgeoning field of international migration policy debates and projects. This is how I became interested in IMN and, given the importance of this professional experience for the arguments developed in this book, this chapter makes a few observations on my work at UNESCO.

My arrival at UNESCO coincided with the beginning of the work of the GCIM, and with a period of optimism. Many of my UN colleagues felt that, finally, migration was becoming a real issue for IOs. After decades marked by the reluctance to address this politically sensitive issue, as well as by the mixed record of UN activities in this field (like the UN Convention on Migrant Workers' Rights), migration became the object of increasing attention, and of ambitious initiatives and meetings. Part of my job was to follow these developments, including the 2006 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD), the subsequent Global Forums on Migration and Development (GFMD), or the creation of the Global Migration Group (GMG) (which UNESCO joined in 2007). On all these occasions, participants made an extensive use of IMN. This is how I became both sceptical of their content, and interested in the particular worldviews they contain. UNESCO's role in these debates was (and still is) relatively marginal, compared to, say, the role played by other IOs like the IOM, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), or the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), My own situation was therefore rarely a leading one, which enabled a nice mixture of participation and observation.

In parallel, I was involved in a number of research projects, leading to publications of an academic nature under UNESCO's auspices.[1] This was in line with UNESCO's self-proclaimed role as an 'intellectual agency'[2]: this organisation has its own publishing house (called UNESCO Publishing) and, from its creation, used to work with academics, intellectuals, artists, etc. On the other hand, this activity is at odds with the managerial and bureaucratic tasks that constitute the bulk of what UNESCO's employees do; it is also perceived as having an uncertain (and

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immeasurable) impact, which is difficult to conciliate with UNESCO's obsession with so-called results-based management. I mention this ambivalent attitude towards books and academic publications because it illustrates a broader attitude towards social sciences research, which in turn shed light on certain aspects of IMN. On one hand, IMN rely heavily on social sciences: like all technocratic discourses, they base their recommendations on the 'evidence' produced by experts and researchers. IOs also cooperate intensively with researchers, whose involvement increases the legitimacy of IMN. But IMN do not nevertheless belong to the realm of research; their primary purpose is to guide policy-makers, not to test hypotheses, play with ideas, challenge existing theories, exchange with peers, etc.

In practice, this means that IOs' staff members do not do research and, usually, do not perceive themselves as researchers. They rather 'outsource' research activities to external consultants, and concentrate on the elaboration and dissemination of policy-oriented (and, from academics' perspectives, 'simpler') messages, through reports, policy briefs, speeches, etc. This goes along with an emphasis on social sciences as providing positive and useful knowledge, or 'solutions' to 'problems'. As Richard Hoggart[3] writes:

> Social scientists [at UNESCO] are at one and the same time over- and under-valued. They are mistrusted as dismembers of society and authority... Almost no official loves a theoretical social scientist. On the other hand, the social sciences regarded as problem solvers are over-valued. They are cast as magicians or social plumbers, to be called in to fix whatever may be the latest social smell or leak, whether it be drugs or racism or teenage violence. (1978: 52–53)

As will become clear, IMN indeed aim at relying on research and evidence to find 'solutions' to migration 'challenges'. But the 'problems' themselves are hardly problematised. For example, a recurrent question asked during international conferences is 'how to make migration work for development?' It is unclear, however, why this specific question was selected. Moreover, once this question has been designated as central, the range of answers that can be provided becomes quite limited. As Apthorpe writes, policy discourses thus function as 'answers in search of questions' (1996: 32). Of course, there are many obvious political reasons for narrowing the scope of international migration debates and for avoiding questions that may prove too sensitive in an intergovernmental

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setting. But this nevertheless poses limits to migration research and ultimately leads to a frustration that motivated this book.

One of the reasons why IMN must provide a simplified and politically acceptable account of migration is that, unlike researchers, IOs are expected to go beyond discussion and actually translate this body of knowledge into practice. IMN must thus serve as 'blueprints' that can guide policymaking, in different settings and by different actors. This excludes analyses of migration that are too detailed, nuanced, or context specific. Faced with the complexity of migration, practitioners need (over)simplified representations of reality to make sense of the dynamics in which they are to intervene (Roe, 1991). There is no point, therefore, in blaming IMN for their simplicity, which is line with their purpose.[4] The point is rather to look at how they construct migration issues and at what they leave out of their scope.

Blueprints are all the more necessary because IOs' staff members do not always have a broad knowledge of migration issues. They often lack the time to read books and papers. Moreover, many of them were trained in other policy fields and, as their career progresses and as IOs address new topics, they must adapt and gather the necessary knowledge. Again, the implications (and risks) of this situation are well captured by Hoggart:

> When specialists are appointed to UNESCO's staff they are expected to be at the frontiers of their disciplines. As the years pass at their desks they become increasingly out of touch. A few become expert administrators as they also become more and more generalist, but useful generalists who have the respect of outside experts; they learn how to run a good programme. Others never learn how to manage a programme, refuse to recognise they are losing touch with their specialisms, and cling more and more to their jobs. (1992: 162)

IMN play a key role here, by providing a basic and standardised knowledge to newcomers in the field.

Finally, my interest in IMN was directly born out of professional experiences that, however anecdotal, nevertheless made very clear how narratives and research interplay with political concerns. In 2003, as an intern at UNESCO, I was tasked to write the first draft of a small document on the topic of migrants' rights. In order to emphasise the crucial importance of emigration for certain people in poor countries, I wrote that some migrants 'have no choice but migrating to survive'. This

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sentence was perceived as problematic by my colleagues and hierarchical superiors because it could be interpreted as a legitimatisation of irregular migration. It was changed into 'migrants *see* no choice but migrating to survive'. It was striking to observe how language could all of a sudden become politically sensitive. At a much larger scale, this sensitivity about words also pervades IMN. There is an important difference between *have* and *see* but, rather than discussing the 'real' issue of the more or less constrained nature of emigration decisions, the choice of words was based on their more or less sensitive nature. It was also striking to observe the self-censorship at play here: the document in question was of admittedly low importance and the risk of hurting powerful governments' sensitivities was very limited; but the text was drafted as if it would be scrutinised by state officials at the highest political level.[5] Hoggart had already observed this phenomenon:

> Faced with admittedly difficult and politically sensitive issues, staff members will often worry so much in advance about what this State or that bloc may do about them, are so anxious to anticipate criticism, that they extend possible reactions to some exaggeratedly gloomy distant point and then set about taking pre-emptive action against these imagined reactions by cutting out any reference in their...documents to this or that issue (important though it may be) or by editing a consultant's paper until it is disembowelled. (1978: 130)

Again, this is a tendency that characterises most of IOs' discursive production, including IMN. I will analyse below how IMN systematically try to qualify their statements, in order to avoid taking any clear position on some of the most pressing questions raised by migration.

Another anecdote took place a year later, as I was approaching authors for the edited book entitled *Migration without Borders* (Pécoud and de Guchteneire, 2007). I was in contact with a number of American scholars, who had agreed to contribute. But this turned out to be impossible. The United States had just rejoined UNESCO, in 2003, after having left this Organization in 1984 (see Imber, 1989). The atmosphere was tense: on one hand, the come-back of the United States was great news, both for UNESCO's political legitimacy and for its budget; on the other hand, staff members were unsure about (and fearful of) the US intentions, which resulted in mistrust and extreme caution in the US-UNESCO relationship. The planned cooperation of US scholars to a UNESCO book on migration was therefore examined at the highest hierarchical

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level. As a junior consultant, I was left out of the discussion, but eventually told that such cooperation could not be envisaged. The American scholars were somewhat upset, partly because they were excluded from this publication and (mostly) because they – rightly – perceived this as a political intervention in the field of scientific cooperation. Apparently, this was not an isolated case and other IOs faced the same problem. A few months later, the American Sociological Association indeed issued a statement in which one could read:

> The American Sociological Association (ASA)...has grave concerns about reports from a number of affected individual scientists...about the U.S. government's vetting of eminent scientists who have been asked by international bodies such as UNESCO and the World Health Organization (WHO) to contribute their scientific expertise...The ASA Council strongly urges the President of the United States...to ensure that the U.S. Delegation to UNESCO,...and other such U.S. government representatives, do not interfere with the choices made by international bodies seeking expertise and input from recognized U.S. scientists. As a professional and learned society, the ASA believes that demonstrated, peer-recognized scientific expertise rather than adherence to particular policy positions is the criterion of selection that will ensure international bodies of importance to the United States receive the most useful knowledge available from our country's scientific community.[6]

The clash between research and knowledge production, on one hand, and the political functioning of intergovernmental organisations, on the other, could hardly be made more obvious and explicit. IOs are both 'technical' bodies that promote research and debates, and political actors that respond to governments. The tension between these two roles is an inherent feature of international policy debates. This results in narratives of a complex nature, which should never be taken for granted and deserve critical scrutiny.

Notes

1 See Pécoud and de Guchteneire (2007), Cholewinski et al. (2009) or Piguet et al. (2011).

2 See https://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco

3 The British sociologist Richard Hoggart, known (among other things) for his book *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), worked at UNESCO between 1971 and

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1975. He later wrote a book on this experience, which is in many respect still relevant (Hoggart, 1978). He also devoted a chapter of his autobiography to his UNESCO years (1992: 145–175).

4 As Cooper and Packard write about development, 'the historian's or anthropologist's concern with context and complexity is neither more nor less separable from a self-serving professionalism than the development practitioner's concern with the replicability of project design, the desire for stable decision-making frameworks, and the need for a quick and readily graspable analysis of the specificity of each case in which action is taken'. (2005: 135)

5 The text discussed here can be found at http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001320/132090e.pdf. The sentence in question is on page 5.

6 *Statement of the American Sociological Association on the U.S. Government Vetting of Scientists to Serve on International Advisory Bodies*, 18 August 2004. See http://www2.asanet.org/media/advisory.html.

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3
'Global Migration Governance' and the Need for Shared Narratives

Abstract: *This chapter presents the context in which international migration narratives (IMN) have developed. It discusses the internationalisation, since the 1990s, of political debates on migration and the international initiatives that have been launched to foster cooperation between states and improve global migration governance. It is argued that this internationalisation needs to produce a shared vision of migration to overcome the divergences in states' views and interests. The function of IMN is therefore to provide the knowledge and ideas that make international cooperation possible.*

Keywords: Global migration governance; migration management; international organisations; United Nations; International Organisation for Migration

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The context in which IMN have developed is the internationalisation, over the last two decades, of political debates on migration. Since the end of the 1990s, migration has been the object of an unprecedented number of international initiatives that, while of different nature, share the common goal of fostering cooperation between states in order to improve the way it is governed. This chapter provides an overview of the main developments in this process. It argues that this internationalisation needs to overcome the divergences in states' views and interests and to produce a shared vision of migration. A major function of IMN is therefore to provide the knowledge and ideas that will make international discussion, and sometimes cooperation, possible.

In 1994, the Cairo Conference on Population and Development was one of the first occasions in which migration was discussed in an international setting.[1] During the years that followed, the idea of organising a world conference on migration was considered, but eventually rejected. Western receiving states, in particular, feared a clash over their restrictive migration policies and treatment of irregular migrants. It is only in 2006 that the UN organised the first High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (HLD), which was followed by a second Dialogue in 2013. While less ambitious than a world conference, the HLDs represent the most important meetings ever organised at the UN on this topic. On that occasion, states agreed to continue their 'dialogue', but were reluctant to give the UN the leading role.

The outcome was the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). The first was organised by the government of Belgium in 2007 and, in the following years, by the Philippines (2008), Greece (2009), Mexico (2010), Switzerland (2011), Mauritius (2012), and Sweden (2014).[2] The GFMD history has been somewhat chaotic: it was at times difficult to find states that volunteer to organise the meeting (and assume its costs), while the hand-over from one government to another does not facilitate continuity. There were also other initiatives. One can mention the Bern Initiative (2001–2004), launched by the government of Switzerland and that lead to an 'International Agenda for Migration Management' (IAMM)[3]. Also in 2001, the IOM launched yearly 'International Dialogues on Migration', with the objective of bringing together governments to discuss different aspects of migration policy. The Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) was set up in 2003 and released its report in 2005. In 2006, several IOs active in the field of migration established the Global Migration Group (GMG), with the purpose of ensuring

better coordination between them (Pécoud, 2013).[4] At the same time, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appointed a Special Representative for International Migration, a position occupied since then by Peter Sutherland. One can also mention the decision, by certain IOs, to make migration the focus of their work: for example, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) devoted its 2004 International Labour Conference to migration, while the UN Development Programme (UNDP) selected the topic of 'human mobility' for its 2009 *Human Development Report*.[5]

As this short list makes clear, the past 15 years have witnessed intense international discussion on migration. Each of these initiatives implies the production of discourses (background papers, conference proceedings, declarations, speeches, etc). Even in the so-called dialogues, spontaneity is limited; debates are quite formal and take place mostly in a written form, often before the event. The result is a considerable amount of discourses on migration, produced in a relatively limited amount of time.

IOs play an important role in these initiatives. Even if governments may formally wish to keep full control over the organisation of the debates (as in the case of the GFMD), IOs remain central in supporting these initiatives, and sometimes in taking initiatives and producing their own narratives. The internationalisation of migration policy debates thus make for a favourable context for IOs. Their main *raison d'être* is indeed to support governments in their efforts to consult each other and cooperate. As a consequence, IOs have been able to increase their involvement in migration-related issues: this is in particular illustrated by the substantial growth of certain IOs (like the International Organization for Migration (IOM)), by the creation of new organisations (like the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in 1993), or by the creation of novel patterns of cooperation between IOs (like the GMG). It is worth recalling, however, that international cooperation on migration – and, consequently, IOs' involvement therein – is not a new phenomenon. While post-Cold War international interest in migration is in many respects new, it also fits into a longer history, which is the object of the next section.

State sovereignty, immigration, and international cooperation: a short historical perspective

International migration is commonly represented as an issue closely associated with state sovereignty. States, the argument goes, would

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engage in international cooperation over a wide range of transnational issues but, as Saskia Sassen writes, 'when it comes to immigrants and refugees, ... the national state claims all its old splendour in asserting its sovereign right to control its borders'. (1996: 59) Historically, migration politics would be characterised by the 'tyranny of the national' (Noiriel, 1991) and by the persistence over time of unilateral and one-sided strategies, for instance in terms of border control (see e.g., Zolberg, 1997). IMN and the recent international interest in migration could, in this view, be interpreted as a turning point: they would indicate that states are slowly discovering the 'promise of cooperation' (Martin *et al.*, 2006) and that such cooperation is a future horizon that, while getting closer, has yet to be fully put into practice.

While the close connection between sovereignty and migration politics is unquestionable, it is worth noting that there have been earlier attempts to foster cooperation and develop international approaches. A landmark here is the creation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1919, whose Constitution already mentioned 'the protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own' (Haseneau, 1991). This resulted in the adoption of international law instruments for the recruitment and treatment of foreign workers. There was strong resistance, however: the pre–World War II context, characterised by economic crises and strong nationalist and protectionist tendencies, was unsupportive of the efforts to promote migrant workers' rights (Böhning, 1991). But early initiatives by the ILO nevertheless displayed some resemblance with today's situations (Rosental, 2006). For example, the ILO had to cope with parallel international initiatives in a way that recalls the current relationship between the UN and the GFMD. It also had to navigate between, on one hand, a protection mandate centred on labour rights and, on the other, employers' need for foreign workers: this tension remains very relevant today and is visible, for instance, in the way the emphasis on migrants' human rights coexists with the utilitarian aspiration to use migration as a development strategy.

The *longue durée* perspective thus highlights the long-standing tension between sovereignty and cooperation in migration politics. ILO's early initiatives did not arise out of nothing, but reflected the political concerns of the time in regard to the need to foster cooperation between governments, to strengthen the international legal framework of labour migration, or to treat foreign workers in a way that did not hurt the diplomatic relations between sending and receiving states. Importantly,

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these concerns were not born solely out of humanitarian or idealistic preoccupations, but displayed a mix of social, economic, and political imperatives (as, for instance, social rights could help monitor foreigners' presence and activities). This book does not develop a historical perspective on IMN, but it is worth keeping in mind that they are not without history and that their arguments have a deep political and ideological genealogy.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the development of human rights, along with the need for foreign labour in booming Western states, led to renewed interest in norms pertaining to migrants' rights. The ILO adopted two conventions, in 1949 and 1975.[6] In the late 1970s, Mexico and Morocco started a campaign for the elaboration of a UN Convention on the protection of migrants. These countries were reluctant to leave the issue to the ILO because of its tripartite organisation, which, for many governments, grants unions too important a role. This resulted in the adoption, in 1990, of the UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW), which is monitored not by the ILO but by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

States proved very reluctant to ratify and implement these treaties (Cholewinski *et al.*, 2009). For example, the ICRMW has so far been ratified by less than 50 states, and by no major receiving country in the Western world. The human rights of migrants have therefore not emerged as an object of genuine international cooperation. As discussions below will make clear, this remains a sensitive issue. IMN sometimes avoid emphasising human rights: IOM, for instance, speaks of the 'well-being' of migrants (see e.g., IOM, 2013) and is regularly criticised by NGOs for its lack of commitment to human rights. Most of the reports discussed in this book do not even mention the ICRMW, despite the fact that it remains the most ambitious international treaty pertaining to migration (Pécoud, 2009).

Another object of early international cooperation concerns asylum seekers and refugees. The position of a High Commissioner for Refugees was created in 1921 by the League of Nations, which marked the beginning of a process that culminated in the creation of the UNHCR in 1950 and the adoption of the 1951 Geneva Convention (Loescher, 2001). This also resulted in an institutional fragmentation that exists to this day. For historical and political reasons (framed by WW2 and the East-West confrontation), attention was mostly focused on the creation of a regime

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for refugee protection. The ILO nevertheless kept its labour migrants' rights mandate, which reflected a sharp discrepancy in the treatment of refugees and (labour) migrants by IOs and governments. To further complicate the picture, yet another IO was created in 1951, but outside the UN system: what is now the IOM was initially called the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME) and was designed as a temporary, Europe-centred organisation with a focus on logistics and transportation (rather than on protection). The IOM only became a permanent organisation in 1989 (Georgi, 2010).

These developments resulted in at least three different policy/legal categories, and in a kind of division of labour between IOs: migrant workers' rights (promoted by the ILO and later by the OHCHR), refugees and asylum (through the UNHCR), and logistical and other practical services to governments (by the PICMME/IOM). This configuration was the object and result of much debate. The ILO, as the oldest agency with experience in migration, was in favour of a comprehensive approach addressing the rights and protection of all those on the move. This was to some extent in line with Europe's reality in the post–WW2 context, which saw a high number of displaced people – but with no clear distinction between refugees and migrants. Yet some influential governments, including those of the United States and the United Kingdom, resisted the idea of giving too much influence to a single institution, particularly in light of the fears surrounding a 'communist influence' in UN institutions. This is also why, until today, the IOM remained outside the UN system. This resulted in a piecemeal approach and a (deliberately) fragmented situation (Karatani, 2005).

The post–Cold War context

From a functionalist point of view, the international nature of migration makes it amenable for international cooperation. Neofunctionalists, by contrast, argue that the 'problems' themselves and the interdependencies they create do not alone explain why cooperation becomes legitimate; the key point is the extent to which there is an agreement between states to foster political integration.[7] In this respect, the post–Cold War context saw a number of changes in the way governments perceive cooperation over migration issues. There were at least two interrelated dynamics at

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play: (1) the end of the East-West conflict raised hopes regarding the emergence of a consensus on certain transnational issues and the elaboration of new mechanisms to regulate them at the international level; and (2) the search for these new mechanisms simultaneously resulted from fears surrounding the decline of states' influence and capacities in a world that gradually became understood as a 'global village'. The collapse of Communist states, along with the penetration of capitalism and the intensification of market deregulation, created an environment in which sovereignty was perceived as under threat – hence the search for solutions to the 'crisis of the nation state' and for new modes of 'global governance' that motivated, among other things, the creation of the Commission on Global Governance in 1995.

International migration was one of the issues, even if not the focal one, which exemplified these concerns. It became understood, both by some analysts and by policy-makers, as a destabilising factor for states and societies. In Europe, fears over massive East-West migration, along with refugee flows from the Balkans, illustrated how human mobility could create security challenges. New types of migration emerged in academic and political discourses, including, for example, 'human trafficking' and the role of smugglers in facilitating irregular migration, or the impact of climate change in forcing people to migrate. These notions melded with preoccupations over a 'migration crisis' (Weiner, 1995) and in debates regarding the ability of states to control migration (Freeman, 1994).

International debates on migration started to display a dual and ambivalent nature. On one hand, most receiving governments established tougher legislation and increasingly repressive measures; in this respect, the interest in cooperation reflected the search for new strategies to control and limit migration. Mechanisms such as the Intergovernmental Consultations on migration, asylum, and refugees (IGC), Frontex, or new IOs like the ICMPD were designed for states to exchange information, join forces, and react rapidly to migration challenges (Oelgemöller, 2011). The 'internationalisation' of migration politics was above all a strategy to preserve national/sovereign control over human mobility. On the other hand, however, debates were also marked by the felt need to develop genuinely 'global' and concerted migration policies; the intention was to go beyond narrow, control-oriented concerns, and address broader imperatives (like the development of sending regions, the need for migrant labour in developed economies, or the rights of migrants), and therefore to move migration away from the security/control realm to

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'manage' it in a cooperative and comprehensive manner (Ghosh, 2000). Despite of (or thanks to) its ambivalent nature, interest in these issues translated into the initiatives listed above. In other words, international migration may be turning into a 'global' issue, not necessarily because it has become 'more international', but because it is being recognised by states as a topic worthy of attention at the international level.

In this respect, the 'migration crisis' (whether real or perceived) played a central role, by highlighting the limits of unilateral state interventions and the necessity for governments to cooperate in achieving their goals; this prompted a renewed interest in bilateral agreements (Adepoju *et al.*, 2010) and in multilateral initiatives, at the regional and international levels. IOs thus became a more important element in states' strategies, which in some cases meant readjusting their mandates: the UNHCR had to address the question of how to treat not only refugees, but also migrants, and particularly the so-called mixed flows (in which 'genuine' refugees are hard to distinguish from other categories of people on the move); the ILO (and the UN at large) have also been struggling to adapt their rights-based mandate to a more governance- and control-oriented context (Pécoud and de Guchteneire, 2007). As Kathleen Newland sums up, 'attention to international migration in the 1990s was sporadic and largely fruitless ... No UN agency had migrants or migration processes as priorities ... All of this changed quite suddenly around the turn of the millennium. Suddenly, migration was everywhere one looked in the UN system and beyond' (2010: 331–332).

It is finally worth stressing that IOs do not only change because of external pressure but also through internal dynamics. They can act as 'bureaucratic entrepreneurs' (Nay, 2011) and display agency in seizing opportunities in order to ensure their own development (or survival). For example, both the UNHCR and the IOM were originally supposed to work within the European context; yet, the scope of their interventions gradually became global, in a process that had much to do with these IOs themselves looking for work opportunities outside Europe (once this continent became more peaceful and less 'promising' in terms of the 'problems' IOs are tasked to address). At a smaller scale, other IOs whose formal mandate does not explicitly focus on migration were able to step in, by channelling their field of expertise (e.g., health, development, or transnational crime) to the cross-border movements of people; this is the case of most of the agencies that are currently part of the GMG. Discourse-production is an important element in such a

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strategy: by gathering data, developing expertise, or defending a specific position within international debates, IOs are able to step in a new field of activity, gain visibility, and justify why they are getting involved in the field of migration. IMN therefore have an inherently *pro domo* nature.

'Migration management' and/or 'global migration governance'

The notion of 'migration management' pervades international debates on migration and is at the heart of IMN. It refers to a presumably 'new' way of approaching migration, based on the assumption that it is a 'normal' reality that should be governed in a dispassionate fashion by governments, and perceived as an opportunity rather than as a challenge or a threat. It is also in line with the New Public Management philosophy, according to which governments should adopt a managerial logic to improve their cost-efficiency. It conveys a technocratic and predominantly economic objective, which aims at maximising the gains of migration while lessening its costs. This leads to a strong emphasis on migrants' economic contribution, while at the same time making clear that migration is 'managed' (and therefore under control). As Balch writes about the United Kingdom, 'the term "managed migration" provided the essential framework or narrative for communicating a new approach by incorporating ideas regarding positive economic benefits of migration, while also maintaining a dimension of control' (2009: 622).

This has prompted criticisms, regarding in particular the combination of security and economic considerations, which can be detrimental to migrants themselves. For example, Amnesty International writes that 'if a regime of "migration management" is to be effective, not only must it be credible to states but it must also be credible to migrants. To achieve this, it must respect the fundamental human rights of migrants, and indeed must actively seek to respect, protect, and promote the rights of all migrants' (2006: 25). Even the IOM, which has massively used the 'migration management' slogan, has acknowledged this weakness: 'The word "management" has occasionally been criticised as a euphemism for "restriction" or "control" and for giving insufficient attention to human rights' (2008: 1). As will be discussed below, another implication of this notion is the way it depoliticises policy-making and evacuates the

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existence of diverging political positions regarding migrants in society (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010).

Ghosh (2012) recalls that, in the early 1990s, 'migration management' was a 'dirty word', as it was associated with a loss of state sovereignty over migration. It took much time and efforts to popularise this notion and make it acceptable to governments. This unease applies today to the notion of 'global migration governance' that, while overall quite similar to 'migration management', is not used in exactly the same way. 'Governance' is a word that hardly appears in IMN: according to the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), it frightens states because it is perceived as paving the way for more ambitious and constraining rules in the field of migration policy. 'Management', by contrast, would be 'a more neutral term', which 'conveys positive intent without the problematic connotations' (ICMC 2009: 4).

Even if absent from IMN, 'global migration governance' has, in recent years, become a popular object of study for scholars and researchers. A key argument in this scholarship is that migration policy lacks proper governance mechanisms (Koser, 2010). While international by nature, migration would remain predominantly addressed through unilateral measures. Because of this lack of cooperation, states would prove unable to regulate migration or to take advantage of its benefits. Moreover, existing governance mechanisms would be fragmented; different sets of rules (like the ICRMW, the Geneva Convention, or other treaties such as the Palermo Protocols[8]) indeed apply to different categories of people. Fragmentation would be further reinforced by the competition between IOs, which each address specific migration-related issues (human rights, development, labour, refugees, etc.), with no overall coherent framework. Widgren (1994) observes that this institutional configuration dates back to the post–WW2 period and has not been adapted to recent migration realities. Because of this inappropriate governance framework, states and the international community would overall fail to successfully meet the challenges raised by migration: 'The global experience of migration may be long-standing; but few countries manage it well' (Spencer 2003: 1).

As will be documented below, IMN share these assumptions and, while they do not use the word 'governance', aim at proposing recommendations to remedy to this failure. In this view, 'governance' is something inherently good and useful that will enable states to find solutions to the problems they encounter. This point is, for example, made by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon:

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> We ... need global governance to face an array of new-generation challenges. There are now more than 200 million international migrants. The economic crisis has exacerbated their vulnerability. Yet even in places where unemployment is high, there is often a demand for foreign workers. We need to overcome fears, focus on rights, and figure out how best to reap the development benefits for all concerned, home and host countries alike. (UN, 2010)

But the word 'governance' can also be used, in a less-normative fashion, to describe existing patterns of cooperation. Betts (2011), for example, emphasises the loopholes and contradictions between the way different migration-related issues are governed. But, rather than concluding that this fragmentation is a problem to be solved, he argues that it is functional: it indeed enables governments to go 'venue-shopping' and to address different issues in different settings; they can, for example, talk about development or human rights in international conferences, while at the same time engaging in security-oriented agreements in bilateral meetings (see also Guiraudon, 2000a). The result is a weakening of these different venues. The question is then not the lack of 'good' governance, but the (voluntarily) fragmented governance framework that serves states' interests.

The notion of 'global governance' also conveys the idea that states are not the only actors to be taken into account. In the international arena, and on transnational issues, they cannot govern in a unilateral manner and must cooperate both with other states and with non-state actors like the private sector or NGOs. This leads to mechanisms that are often described as 'decentralised', 'multi-level', or 'non-hierarchical', and imply achieving cooperation not through the exercise of coercive state power, but through the adhesion to shared rules and principles. This in turn explains the need for repeated contacts between parties, which enable the emergence of these common orientations (Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992). International conferences, like the HLD or the GFMD, are examples of such consensus-making processes. IMN reflect the felt need for a shared framework, which would federate different actors (or 'stakeholders') and incite them to cooperate and converge over certain key principles.

The future of 'global migration governance'

After more than a decade of initiatives and debates, one can wonder whether the quest for 'global migration governance' mechanisms has

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progressed, and whether IMN have had an impact on migration policy. According to Newland (2010), very little progress has been made and states are still very far from any kind of genuine cooperation. Others stress that the repetition of the same ideas, without any 'real world' impact, leads to weariness: in Skeldon's (2008) view, participants in migration debates would already be fed up with the relationship between migration and development and would start turning their attention to other topics (like the consequences of climate change on migration); Feingold (2010) similarly notices a 'trafficking fatigue' owing to the constant emphasis on the issue of trafficking and on the need to combat this phenomenon. But Skeldon also notes that, despite all their weaknesses, international migration debates have managed to inject some optimism in the predominantly negative representations of migration. This may also be a matter of time: as Green and Thouez (2005) recall, debates on climate change took several decades to reach the stage of concrete measures; in comparison, migration debates are still in their infancy.

Migration theory has regularly made clear that migration flows are easy to start but difficult to stop (Massey *et al.*, 1993). The same could be said of international migration debates: once started, they tend to go on, even once they exhausted their topic. Several cumulative factors contribute to this self-perpetuating dynamic: the 'problems' raised by international migration are unlikely to be 'fixed' in the short term (if they can ever be), which calls for further discussion; the organisation of debates fuel a migration debate industry, as they create opportunities for participants who then have no interest in stopping the process; the recognition of migration as a topic worthy of attention opens up new questions and issues. For example, the relationship between migration and development used to be a new topic, treated in a general manner; today, the issue has become much more technical, with, for example, detailed studies on the impact of remittances or complex institutional discussions on how to connect migration with broader development efforts.

This recalls Rist's (2002a) account of over six decades of discourses and practices in the field of development. The initial objective was to help less-developed countries 'catch up' with developed regions. It was never met, but this did not stop experts and practitioners from going on, with always seemingly new ideas. It is difficult to know exactly what to expect regarding the future of IMN. They may be unlikely to continue their development at the same pace than over the past decade, during

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which every year saw the publication of one or more reports or the organisation of an ambitious meeting. But it would be surprising to see the production of IMN stop suddenly, as international migration debates have become quite well-organised and professionalised. The amount of efforts so far is nevertheless sufficient to step back, and analyse what has already been said.

Notes

1 The Cairo Declaration is one of the documents of my corpus.
2 No GFMD was organised in 2013 as the HLD already took place that year.
3 The IAMM is one the reports that comprise the corpus of this book.
4 The GMG currently brings together 16 agencies: the IOM, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the UN Development Fund for Women (UN Women), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN Regional Commissions, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization (WHO).
5 The report of the ILO and the 2009 UNDP report are part of my corpus.
6 These are the Convention Concerning Migration for Employment (Revised) and the Convention Concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers.
7 For a discussion of the main theoretical approaches to IOs, see Barkin (2006).
8 The Palermo Protocols refer to the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* and to the *Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air*. They are part of the Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, adopted in 2000 under the auspices of the UNODC.

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4

Introducing International Migration Narratives

Abstract: *This chapter describes the reports that compose international migration narratives (IMN), and which serve as the corpus for the analysis developed in this book. It explains the criteria upon which they were selected, and makes a number of observations on these publications, in terms of context, audience, language of publication, etc. The reports are the following: The Programme of Action of the United Nations Conference on Population and Development; the Declaration of the Hague on the Future of Refugee and Migration Policy; the International Agenda for Migration Management; the GCIM report; the seven World Migration Reports published by IOM since 2000; the World Economic and Social Survey 2004; the report of the UN Secretary General on Migration and Development; the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration. Non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration; and the UNDP Human Development Report 2009.*

Keywords: Hague Declaration; International Migration and Development; Multilateral framework on Labour Migration; World Economic and Social Surveys; World Migration Reports

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This chapter describes the reports that compose IMN. It explains the criteria upon which they were selected, and makes a number of general observations on these publications (context, audience, language of publication, etc.).

My study of IMN is based on the analysis of a corpus of international reports published on migration, which are the following:

- The Programme of Action of the United Nations Conference on Population and Development (held in Cairo in 1994)[1]
- The Declaration of the Hague on the Future of Refugee and Migration Policy (2002)[2]
- The Berne Initiative – International Agenda for Migration Management (2004)[3]
- The GCIM report, entitled *Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action* (2005)[4]
- The seven *World Migration Reports* published by IOM in 2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2013[5]
- The *World Economic and Social Survey 2004 – International Migration*, published by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)[6]
- The report of the UN Secretary-General on Migration and Development (2006)[7]
- The ILO *Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration. Non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration* (2005)[8]
- The UNDP *Human Development Report 2009. Overcoming barriers: Human Mobility and Development*[9]

These 15 reports comprise a corpus of approximately 3000 pages. With the exception of the early 1994 Cairo Conference report, they have all been published since 2000, with a peak between 2003 and 2009. This represents a substantial production of discourse in a short period of time. If one considers that hardly any report of this kind was published before 2000, this makes for a sudden proliferation of publications. This in itself constitutes a social phenomenon that deserves critical attention.

IOs are institutions that talk and publish massively. An analysis of all the documents they produce would therefore be difficult and my corpus is based on a selection. The first criterion is the international nature of the reports: they all emanate from international actors and have a worldwide scope. This excludes reports published by regional organisations (like the

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European Union or the OECD), as well as documents by international institutions but with a regional focus. This criterion makes sense because it implies that these reports must develop an analysis that is expected to be shared by all those interested in migration, wherever they are. IMN view migration as a genuinely global issue and aspire at a kind of universality in the way they address it. This contrasts with long-standing national or regional approaches, in which migration is viewed from the perspective of a specific country (or group of countries). It is precisely this construction of migration as a global topic that is relatively new and that will be analysed in this book.

The second criterion is the comprehensiveness of the reports. All of them propose a broad vision of migration, rather than a more sectoral perspective. This is why I have not included the World Bank's report on remittances (World Bank, 2005), or the UN report on migration as a strategy to counter ageing population trends (UN, 2001). These may be valuable, or even influential, but fail to propose a comprehensive view of what migration is all about. The third criterion regards the explicitly normative nature of the reports of the corpus, which all share the objective of outlining how migration should be governed; they therefore establish policy recommendations, targeting mostly governments, but also other 'stakeholders' (to use IOs' jargon), like the private sector, NGOs, or even migrants themselves. This excludes factual documents (like the statistical reports published by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs), as well as case studies, or articles and books by individual authors published by IOs.

Finally, the last criterion is about the 'flagship' nature of these reports, which all are supposed to embody and make visible the contribution of their institutional author to international debates. They are published online and are therefore easily accessible; they are often translated in languages other than English, and sometimes accompanied by communication strategies targeting the media. This excludes countless other documents, like internal reports, booklets or leaflets, web sites, speeches by high-level officials, etc. From a research perspective, this 'grey literature' can be of great interest; but for the sake of coherence, I limit my analysis to openly accessible reports with a worldwide and normative ambition.

These criteria can of course be criticised. The distinction between 'normative' and 'empirical' reports is, for example, fragile, as any 'factual' or statistical work is pervaded by often implicit political assumptions.

Minor internal reports may turn out to exert a strong influence, whereas ambitious flagship publications may go unnoticed. As the analysis below will show, I nevertheless believe that the corpus provides an overview of the core arguments contained in IMN. In what follows, I present in greater details these reports and their overall characteristics.

The reports

The *Programme of Action of the United Nations Conference on Population and Development* (hereafter *Cairo*) is the main outcome of this conference, held in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994. It is on that occasion that migration emerged in relation to development on the international agenda. The Cairo conference was one of the several world conferences that took place in the 1990s and marked a decade of aspirations towards 'global governance'; others include the UN Conference on Environment and Development (or Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), the 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the Millennium Summit (New York, 2000), the World Conference against Racism (Durban, 2001), to list the most important ones. These conferences bring together a wide range of actors, from head of states to private companies and NGOs, and usually lead to the adoption of a joint declaration. Even in the absence of binding commitments, these statements are supposed to reflect a consensus among all the participants and to steer their efforts towards common objectives. They are therefore hotly debated, and sometimes make for fierce disagreements.[10]

Singh (1998) describes the context in which the Cairo Conference took place. A major concern regarded 'new' post-Cold War types of conflicts (like the 1991 Gulf War and the crisis in the Balkans), and the flows of refugees they occasioned. The collapse of communist governments fuelled fears over uncontrollable East-West migration flows. International migration debates were in their infancy, but already started to turn around two political approaches: the first stressed state sovereignty and the need to reduce migration (through development in particular), while the second wanted to rely on migration to achieve development. Family reunification was also the object of disagreements: the principle according to which family is 'the natural and fundamental group unit of society' (article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) clashed with the objective of reducing migration flows.

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Migration is the object of a single chapter of the Cairo Declaration, and therefore not a major issue. But, despite the small number of pages devoted to migration, several of the core IMN arguments are already sketched: the benefits of migration, the need for more international cooperation, or the usefulness of temporary labour migration schemes, for example. These ideas are expressed in a short and simple version, which makes them particularly explicit – and sometimes quite audacious. One can, for example, read that 'Governments are encouraged to consider requests for migration from countries whose existence, according to available scientific evidence, is imminently threatened by global warming and climate change' (p. 69). This is a bold statement that is unlikely to be found in more recent reports, given the intense debates that have surrounded the need for protection of 'climate migrants' (Piguet *et al.*, 2011).

The *Declaration of the Hague on the Future of Refugee and Migration Policy* (hereafter *Hague*) was adopted in 2002 by the Netherlands Chapter of the Society for International Development (SID) and is the founding document of the Hague Process on Refugees and Migration. Based in Rome, SID is an international network that brings together politicians, experts, and practitioners in development.[11] Its Dutch section is at the origin of the Hague Declaration, but the Hague Process has since then become an autonomous entity. This Process self-describes itself as 'an independent, not-for-profit organization with a global network of over 4,000 individuals, public and civil society organisations and institutions that brings together stakeholders to seek policy solutions to migration and refugee challenges'.[12] It organises meetings and exchanges with governments, municipalities, civil society, etc. The 'Club of the Hague' is an advisory body, with a few high-level members, along with researchers, IOs' staff members, private sector representatives, etc.

The Declaration itself is a text written by 'a group of some 500 persons with different backgrounds from all parts of the world', belonging to 'governments, ... supranational bodies, intergovernmental organisations, academia, faith groups and civil society organisations', and brought together 'to think creatively about the future of refugee and migration policy' (p. 4). The Declaration has quite a visionary ambition, as the preamble makes clear:

> We believe that refugees and migrants matter enormously to the international community. Their future is an essential element in the notion of peaceful international cooperation, stability and economic security. Forced

> and voluntary movements of people are very different but nevertheless related phenomena. Concern for both has to be located within the context of economic and political globalisation, with all its potential for greater human development and prosperity on the one hand or alienation, disempowerment, impoverishment and polarisation on the other. (Hague, p. 4)

It is a short document, of some 20 pages, which establishes 'principles' on a wide range of migration-related issues: security, health, integration, gender, institutional arrangements, education, role of the private sector, conflict prevention, development, and so on. Unlike the other documents of the corpus, this Declaration is not of an intergovernmental nature, but rather of a broadly understood civil society origin.

The *International Agenda for Migration Management* (hereafter *IAMM*) was published in 2004 by the Berne Initiative. In its preface, this 'Initiative' is presented in the following way:

> The Berne Initiative, launched by Switzerland in June 2001 as a States-owned consultative process, has enabled Governments from all world regions to share their different policy priorities and interests in migration. It has offered to Governments and other stakeholders in migration the opportunity of developing a common orientation to migration management, based on notions of cooperation, mutual understanding, partnership, comprehensiveness, balance and predictability. (IAMM, p. 9)

The IAMM is the main outcome of the Berne Initiative (for which the IOM served as a secretariat). The subtitle of the report is 'Common understandings and effective practices for a planned, balanced, and comprehensive approach to the management of migration'; it is presented as a 'major product', which 'represents views of States throughout the world' and contains 'common understandings' and 'effective practices', which are 'designed to assist government migration practitioners in developing effective measures for the management of migration' (p. 4). In other words, the IAMM proposes a number of principles, which are supposedly shared by all the States involved in the process, and which should therefore inspire the elaboration of national migration policies. The Berne Initiative organised consultations between governments to identify which principles could be the object of such consensus. These principles are normative (as they are expected to guide governments in their political strategies), but non-binding (as states are not obliged to implement them). The Bern Initiative has ceased its activities after the publication of the IAMM.

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The work of the *Global Commission on International Migration* (hereafter *GCIM*) was quite influential in the elaboration of IMN. The Commission was set up by the governments of Sweden and Switzerland in 2003; it was not, strictly speaking, a UN initiative, even if the then Secretary General, Kofi Annan, was supportive. It was composed of 19 members, some of which with a high international profile. The launch of the GCIM was met with quite some enthusiasm and expectations were high. International commissions of this kind can indeed make important contributions to the international agenda, by elaborating, legitimising and/or diffusing ideas and principles, which in turn influence governments, IOs or NGOs (Cooper and English, 2005).[13]

The mandate of the GCIM was 'to provide the framework for the formulation of a coherent, comprehensive and global response to the issue of international migration'. Moreover, 'the Commission was more specifically requested to promote a comprehensive debate among states and other actors with respect to migration; to analyse gaps in current policy approaches to migration; to examine inter-linkages between migration and other global issues; and to present appropriate recommendations to the UN Secretary-General, governments and other stakeholders' (p. vii). Whereas the IAMM stressed that it merely identified ideas that were the object of an already-existing consensus among governments, the GCIM took a more proactive stance and aspired at proposing 'new directions' and at filling what it perceived as gaps in States' practices. Its report is also less state-centric: the GCIM organised consultations all over the world with government representatives, IOs, NGOs, unions, migrant associations, employers, academics, media actors, etc. Among the different documents of the corpus, the GCIM report is the one that was most debated, particularly among academics (see notably Chamie and Waters, 2006), even if its media impact was deemed relatively low (Papademetriou, 2006).

IOM has published seven *World Migration Reports* (hereafter *IOM*), in 2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2013. These are the organisation's so-called flagship publication, that is, its most visible and disseminated contribution to international migration policy debates. Like other reports of the same kind, they are quite substantial (around 250 pages); they systematically contain a foreword by the Director General and are accompanied by statistical annexes. The inspiration is to be found in 'milestones' reports like the UNDP *Human Development Reports* (published every year since 1990) or the World Bank's *World Development*

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Reports (since 1978). Rist (2002b) underlines the ritual nature of these publications, through which IOs continuously and solemnly reiterate their views and progressively acquire an authority whose main source is the constant repetition of the same message.

The ambition of these reports is to provide both an overview of the main migratory trends worldwide and a discussion of their political implications. As the preface to the first 2000 report makes clear:

> The purpose of the World Migration Report is to provide an authoritative account of contemporary trends, issues, and problems in the field of international migration. For the first time, a comprehensive review of trends in international migration in each major region of the world is presented together with a discussion of some of the main migration policy issues now facing the international community. (IOM, 2000, p. viii)

These reports are in some respect akin to academic publications; they feature the contributions of academic researchers, and are even sometimes coordinated by academics working outside IOM. But IOM staff members also contribute, with insights from their field activities or examples from the organisation's projects. This leads to awkward, and sometimes disturbing, coexistences as, for example, a chapter by a reputed academic is interspersed with boxes praising the success of IOM activities. As Russell King writes, 'there is a tension between the main objective of providing good documentation on international migration trends around the world, and the temptation for IOM to use the report as a propaganda vehicle for its own activities' (2004: 216, see also Campillo Carrete and Gasper, 2011).

Just like UNDP or World Bank reports, the *World Economic and Social Surveys* (hereafter *WESS*) are part of a series published annually, under different names, since 1948 by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The 2004 report is devoted to international migration; it is a long and detailed document of some 300 pages. It was published before some of the most notable reports of my corpus, which probably explains why it is largely ignored in international policy debates.

The report entitled *International Migration and Development* (hereafter *UN*) was submitted by the then Secretary General Kofi Annan to the UN General Assembly in 2006. According to UN rules, the Secretary General submits every year reports to the General Assembly, on a very wide range of topics – including development and migration. This is therefore a routine document, but with a particular flavour given the year in which

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it was published. It is indeed in September 2006 that the UN organised the first HLD. This year's report is therefore longer than usual (some 100 pages instead of 20), and was expected to constitute a background document for the HLD debates. Its content is hardly original (even according to the standards of my corpus, already marked by heavy repetitions), but this is one of the rare UN reports on migration (as the other documents of my corpus emanate from specialised agencies or other international sources).

The ILO *Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration* (hereafter *ILO*), subtitled *Non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration*, is the product of a 'Tripartite Meeting of Experts' held in Geneva in 2005. The word 'tripartite' refers to the specificity of the ILO in the UN system, namely its membership, composed not only of governments but also of representatives of unions and employers. Whereas most IOs are accountable only to their Member States, the ILO also works with social partners and thus has greater legitimacy to address work-related issues. It is also because of the tripartite nature of the ILO that this report is concerned almost exclusively with labour migration. The preface indicates that this document 'represents a considered response to widespread demands for practical guidance and action with a view to maximizing the benefits of labour migration for all parties' (p. vi). The report is therefore of a practical nature; it does not produce new data or original analyses, but aims at 'guiding' governments and social partners interested in recruiting foreign labour. The 'non-binding' nature of this 'framework' contrasts with earlier normative efforts by the ILO. As noted in the previous chapter, the ILO was indeed the first IO to address migration-related issues in 1919, and adopted several international law treaties to this end. But today, the trend is towards 'non-binding' documents, which reflects the difficulty of promoting 'hard' international migration law instruments.

The UNDP report, entitled *Human Development Report 2009. Overcoming barriers: Human Mobility and Development* (hereafter *UNDP*), was published in 2009 and is part of another well-known series of international reports. *Human Development Reports* (HDR) have become one of the most influential UN publications; the ambition is to apply the concept of 'human development', inspired by the work of Amartya Sen, to a wide range of issues (growth, security, gender, climate change, culture, etc.). Like IOM reports, the UNDP document owes much to the work of researchers; as Gamlen notes, the 2009 report reads like a 'who's

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who of contemporary migration and development researchers' (2010: 415). The report is both empirical (with lots of data, case studies, and examples) and normative: it proposes what it calls a 'package' of reforms, to be implemented by governments. But these recommendations are based neither on consultations with governments or other 'stakeholders' (e.g., as in the IAMM), nor on discussions between high-level personalities (like in the case of the GCIM), but on the analysis of the relationship between migration and 'human development'. The report aims at 'scientifically' documenting (or 'proving') that its policy recommendations are beneficial.

Content

IMN address a wide range of migration-related issues. As an examination of the tables of content of the reports indicates, the topics that are most frequently discussed are the following:

- Dialogue, cooperation, partnerships and capacity-building (12 reports out of 15)
- Migrants' integration (11/15)
- Migration and development, diasporas, skilled migration and remittances (10 /15)
- Temporary labour migration programs (9/15)
- Irregular migration, including human smuggling and trafficking (9/15)
- Asylum and refugees (6/15)
- Human rights (5/15)
- Non-labour temporary migration/mobility: student migration, business, family visits, tourism (3/15)
- Migration and health (3/15)
- Research and data collection (4/15)
- Migration and the environment (2/15)
- Gender/migrant women, children and families (3/15)
- Internally-displaced people (2/15)

This list is imperfect because not all reports are structured in the same way. For example, 'human rights' can not only be the object of a distinct section, but can also be discussed in the framework of migrant integration. But it nevertheless highlights the most popular topics within IMN.

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The first regards how states and other actors should work together and is therefore directly connected to the search for governance described above. This can be deemed disappointing: after more than a decade, international migration debates are still largely concerned with patterns of cooperation, rather than with actual political orientation (Maas and Koser, 2010). This would also indicate that IMN are inward-looking and that IOs speak to themselves through these reports. This confirms that the 'global governance' of migration is extremely fragile and still needs to be justified and organised.

The four following sub-issues unsurprisingly correspond to governments' major concerns. Integration and irregular migration are central political preoccupations, particularly in Western receiving states. Development is a core priority for sending countries. Temporary labour migration is at the intersection of these different problems, as they should reduce irregular migration, lessen migrants' integration difficulties, and foster development. The topic of asylum is quite particular, as it is sometimes voluntarily excluded from the scope of IMN: some reports stick to the distinction between economic/voluntary and political/forced migration, whereas others claim that this separation is outdated and address both. Human rights are mentioned in all reports, even if their weight varies. The other topics tend to remain marginal within IMN.

As this list also indicates, most reports tend to address the same topics and IMN are therefore characterised by a high level of convergence. One could have conceived a situation in which different institutions would have addressed different topics. For example, UNDP would have talked about development, ILO about labour migration, the UN or IOM about governance and cooperation, and so on. But this is not what happens: most reports talk about everything and, as will become clear, develop almost identical arguments. This homogeneity is a source of repetitiveness: it is indeed difficult to publish every year a new, original analysis of, say, the relationship between migration and development. The number of ideas, the amount of empirical research, or the availability of experts are not unlimited. Differences between reports rather lie in their audience (see below) or in the level of details: the GCIM report, for example, displays a high level of abstractness and generality, whereas other reports are full of case studies, data, tables, graphs, etc.

Another characteristic of IMN is the lack of continuity from one report to the next. Each report does as if it was starting from scratch and

contains almost no references to its predecessors. As Maas and Koser write, 'a lack of consistency between the reports illustrates an apparent lack of 'institutional memory' and sense of evolution from one to the next' (2010: 8). They further note that even the terminology is not consistent from one report to another: for example, reports speak of 'irregular migrants', of 'undocumented migrants' or of 'migrants with undocumented status' to refer to the same category of people.

The homogeneity within IMN does not only concern the topics that are discussed, but also the key political orientation of the reports. There are cases of slight divergences: as noted above, the topic of migrants' rights, for example, is sometimes emphasised through a chapter of its own, and sometimes more briefly mentioned within the discussion of other topics. This echoes the long-standing debates between those who stress the economic dimension of the 'migration and development nexus' (through remittances notably) and those according to whom development can only be fostered through the promotion of human rights (Böhning, 2009). I will discuss these different positions with more details below. But overall, they do not question the convergence of IMN on all key political questions, like states' sovereign right to control migration, the need for 'managed' migration (as a third way between open borders and 'zero immigration' political objectives), the respect for liberal principles (like human rights, but also free market), the connection between migration and development, and so on. In other words, IMN stress the need for 'open' debates on migration, while at the same time avoiding disagreements.

Analysing the GCIM report, Escobar Latapi (2006) argues that it brings together market-friendly orientations with the promotion of human rights and that this fits directly into the so-called post-Washington consensus. Whereas the Washington consensus privileged a neoclassical/liberal economic approach to growth and development, the post-Washington consensus incorporates 'social' factors, like civil society, poverty, institutions, gender, empowerment, etc. It is the result of what Utting (2006) calls a 'compromise' between IOs: in a post-Cold War context, characterised by the absence of alternatives to liberal democracy, Bretton Woods institutions like the World Bank or the IMF took these social factors into account, while IOs with a human rights focus (like the ILO or the OHCHR) recognised the predominance of capitalism and stopped pointing to the structural contradictions between free market, human rights, or social protection. The ideological convergence between

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IMN reports is therefore in line with broader evolutions in ideological and political debates among IOs.

Language

IMN display a linguistically complex nature. English is clearly the dominant language. Most of the preparatory work (early drafts, background reports, experts' meetings) is done in this language. All reports are available in English and, in some cases, no other linguistic versions exist. When reports are translated, the English version serves as the original version. On the other hand, however, international debates are not monolingual. Within the UN, official meetings take place in the six official languages (English, but also French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic), with simultaneous translations. But this multilingualism is obviously costly, which confirms English as the *lingua franca*. In my corpus, IOM reports and the WESS exist only in English. Other reports have been translated, but not necessarily in all six UN languages. Some reports were translated in other languages, like German for the GCIM or Portuguese for the UNDP. International debates on migration are thus confronted to a double imperative: they have to facilitate the quick and easy circulation of knowledge and ideas across the world (which makes a shared language like English necessary), while also respecting the diversity of sensitivities and experiences (which, among other things, requires adapting to peoples' linguistic practices and translating IMN in as many languages as possible).

A consequence of this situation is the frequent occurrence of English terms and notions, even in other languages. Words like 'capacity-building' or 'mainstreaming' are central in IOs' jargon, but difficult to translate. They regularly end up appearing in their English version inside French or Spanish texts, for example. Such words are examples of what Cornwall (2007) calls 'buzzwords', but even this notion of buzzwords does not exist as such in other languages! The domination of English is often accused of narrowing the scope of international debates by closing them to inputs from other languages or cultures. According to Powell (2006), 'international' debates are unable to incorporate worldviews from non-Western intellectual traditions. As far as IMN are concerned, Asis *et al.* (2010) argue that they systematically ignore research findings written in languages other than English.

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The question of language is therefore directly related to the issue of the claimed universality of IMN. Words and concepts are embedded in specific linguistic and cultural contexts, and the massive reliance on English would therefore be incompatible with the global aspiration of international reports. In a study of the EU, Abélès (1999) shows that this institution needs translatable concepts, to support the creation of common categories and transcend the differences between countries' social and political traditions. This reduces the range of terms that can be used and eliminates those concepts that are too deeply rooted in a specific cultural or national context. Ultimately, this leads to a textual impoverishment and to a highly limited, almost schematic language, as all notions must be easily transferable to other languages. English is the dominant language, but in a simplified way that excludes all the words that are too closely linked to English-speaking societies.

As far as IMN are concerned, these linguistic difficulties start with the most basic term of the corpus, namely 'migration'. In English, IMN speak of 'migration' in the singular form. French translations use both singular and plural forms ('*les migrations*' or '*la migration*'); this may look unimportant but nevertheless reveals the domination of English, as no standard terminology has emerged in French. According to Betts (2011), the word 'migration' does not exist in Arabic, and IMN use 'mobility' in their translations into this language. Another outcome of this situation is the poor quality of IMN, at least in the French translations I had access to. English readers can observe that several IMN reports are already badly written with regard to their language, but the situation is even worse in French: at times, the mistakes in syntax and grammar make some sentences almost unintelligible.

Authorship

As the description above makes clear, IMN are the result of a complex thinking and drafting process, in which a wide range of actors and people are involved: government representatives, senior staff members from IOs, experts and researchers acting as consultants and advisors – not to mention all the interns and junior employees who, more often than not, end up writing parts of the text. These different people are sometimes mentioned but not as authors in the traditional sense; they are usually listed in annexes or in the acknowledgement section. This

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leaves the text almost anonymous and raises the question of authorship in IMN.

In the absence of a clearly defined author, one could associate a report with the institution that produces it. Indeed, international reports are often understood as reflecting the ideological and political position of the organisations they emanate from. Through these publications, IOs would not only present their activities but also expose their worldviews and explain what they do, and why it matters. To paraphrase Mary Douglas (1986), a report by, say, the UNDP report would tell 'what the UNDP thinks'. According to Abélès (1999), the words and narratives produced by an institution constitute a privileged way of accessing its institutional culture. International institutions would then have a culture of their own, defined as a set of worldviews that determine a specific way of looking at reality. This culture cannot be analysed in the traditional, anthropological way; it is disconnected from observable social practices and exists only in its written and oral forms. In this view, IMN would testify to the existence of a distinct international culture, which shapes IOs' understanding of what migration is, and determines their interventions in the field (see Broome and Seabrooke, 2012).

These connections between an institution and the views contained in a report are questionable, however. IOs indeed display an important diversity in their publications. As noted above, the reports of my corpus coexist with many other documents of different natures (including formal resolutions, speeches by senior staff members, books, academic journals, policy briefs, magazines, or internal reports). The views expressed in these different documents do not necessarily converge. IOs can express different positions, on different supports and in different settings. This may be a strategy: an IO can stick to prudent views in a formal context (like meetings with Member States), while proposing more audacious arguments through the publication of books or journal articles by independent academics. The existence of an institutional culture is therefore problematic because IOs' worldviews would be heterogeneous, or even contradictory. In this view, IOs tend to act as 'brokers' and to play with different sets of ideas (and with the different actors that develop them: governments, experts, researchers, civil society groups, etc.), without necessarily taking a firm position in the debate (Müller, 2011).

One can further note the distance that IOs establish between themselves and their own publications. Most reports feature the usual disclaimer, according to which the arguments developed therein 'do

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not necessarily reflect' the views of the IO or of its Member States. This is a standard precaution to avoid diplomatic or legal problems. But disclaimers also reflect a more fundamental reality: the 'secretariat' (as IOs' staff members are called) cannot talk in the name of the institution; only Member States can establish the formal position of an IO. In the case of the HDR, for instance, this is made explicit by the UN General Assembly, which 'affirms that the Human Development Report is a separate and distinct exercise which is not an official document of the United Nations and that the policies governing the operational activities for development of the United Nations system will continue to be set by Member States'.[14]

The separation between a report and IOs' formal positions usefully guarantees the free presentation of research and ideas, regardless of governments' political considerations. But it leaves the authorship question unanswered: IMN reports do not reflect IOs' views, nor do they express the arguments of the actors and individuals who contributed to the thinking and drafting process. One is therefore left wondering who is actually speaking through these reports. This question may seem secondary: after all, one could argue, the key issue is the content and possible novelty of these reports, rather than the actual people or institutions that should be credited for them. But it is actually quite crucial. Indeed, the authority of a text cannot be disconnected from its authorship; by avoiding any clear reference to a source (whether individual or institutional), IMN claim a specific status, situated above the diverging arguments put forward by authors with different views. The anonymity of a text is a way of extracting it from the controversy that characterises 'normal' debates: if 'nobody' has written a report, 'nobody' can criticise it. This is to some extent in line with what Maingueneau (1999) calls 'self-constituting discourses', whose authority is not linked to an authoritative source but only to themselves: such discourses self-proclaim their relevance and, in the case of international reports, their universality.

From a more concrete perspective, this is also a real problem for IOs' staff members, especially at a lower level of responsibilities. While at UNESCO, I met many colleagues who were regularly solicited to intervene in conferences or other venues, but who were not in a position to talk on behalf of their organisation, while also fearing to develop their own ideas (as these could then be erroneously or ill-intentionally interpreted as the formal views of their employer). There were anecdotes of staff members who, for having spoken too openly about a sensitive

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topic, had provoked Member-States' irritation and had been sanctioned. This can lead to self-limitation in IOs' discursive production. This also raises the role of 'real people' in IMN. As Mary Douglas (1986) recalls, 'institutions cannot have minds of their own': even if they are anonymous, institutional reports are always written by individuals. This raises far-reaching issues regarding not only the sociology of ideas but also the interactions between, on one hand, the institutional context in which people work and in which collective thinking emerges and, on the other, the ways in which individuals think about migration. A thorough discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this book, but there are a few observations that can be made.

A core argument in Mary Douglas' book is that collective thinking is not specific to 'primitive' societies. Institutions provide individuals with ideas and categories that shape the way they think; inversely, institutions can only last if they rely on a cognitive framework perceived as legitimate by individuals. This implies that even in modern and rational societies, people renounce part of their intellectual autonomy and adhere to collective patterns of thinking. Mary Douglas' definition of institutions is far broader that what one refers to when one speaks of an IO. Nevertheless, the questions remain: what is the relationship between the way an organisation thinks and the ways individuals think? Do IMN reflect the personal views of certain influential actors? To what extent do they shape the way people comprehend migration, whether within IOs or in other professional milieus?

In research on the UNHCR, Fresia (2009) argues that the core narratives and ideas promoted by this IO structure the collective identity of its staff members. UNHCR employees would share a number of collective beliefs, centred on the Geneva Convention and on the need to protect refugees, and this corporate identity would play a key role in ensuring coherence between the people and projects of this organisation all across the world. In this line of thinking, IMN shape the ideas and worldviews of IOs' staff members (and of the other people IOs are in contact with, like civil society partners or researchers). The adherence to IMN would then be a key factor in ensuring IOs' influence and lasting presence in the field of migration policymaking. Rist (2002a), by contrast, is more sceptical: working on development, he argues that 'development' narratives amount to a kind of religion; professionals and practitioners may be faithful in public but have doubts in private. The adherence to development discourses would be nothing more than a professional obligation

for all those who work in this field. IOs can therefore go on with their activities, even if no one believes in their worldviews.

Of course, adherence and scepticism can coexist; different people may have different opinions. Some enthusiastically agree with IMN and may be at the origin of their arguments, acting as 'political entrepreneurs' who promote new worldviews. Others disagree, in more or less a vocal way, while still others can be indifferent. From a sociological perspective, one could investigate the roles of these different individuals and groups, their interactions, the conflicts between them, etc. – to show how ideas are born out of the social relationships at play in the production of reports. Fresia further underlines the internal divides that exist among UNHCR staff, especially between those who call for legal, 'rights-based' approaches and others who favour humanitarian interventions. But these divergences do not question the overall commitment to the mandate and worldviews of the organisation.

As noted in the previous chapter, discourses may precisely constitute the space in which such disagreements can be surmounted. On paper at least, compromises can be found, through texts that balance different positions and make a 'shared vision' possible. The history of development discourses makes this clear. Concepts such as 'empowerment', 'gender', 'civil society', 'social capital', or 'participation' used to vehicle fierce criticisms of the dominant *doxa* and of the way in which organisations such as the World Bank failed to involve local populations in their projects. But these notions have subsequently been incorporated in mainstream development narratives (Gardner and Lewis, 2000), illustrating how international narratives manage to overcome controversies and bring diverging views under a single discursive roof. It follows that very few people are likely to fully recognise themselves in IMN, as these are the product of a compromising process that seeks to satisfy a wide range of political positions.

In an anthropological vein, one can recall that belief in collective narratives is complex. People can believe while having doubts; they can also believe in a myth while developing practices that are at odds with it. There are many ways of being influenced by a narrative. This can take the form of a deep and entire adhesion, but this is probably an exception: a migration researcher or professional in complete agreement with IMN would probably be deemed foolish, or at least naïve, by his or her colleagues. But this is not the only way of being influenced: one can pick up a few elements from IMN in one's own thinking; or one can adhere to the

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general ambition of IMN but not to all their arguments. To some extent, even the most critical position amounts to a kind of indirect influence. In this book, for instance, I attempt to criticise IMN: it is tempting to present this endeavour as the indication of autonomous thinking; but 'thinking against' is also an acknowledgment of how collective narratives pervade individuals' thinking.

Audience

What is the audience of IMN? Just like authorship, this apparently straightforward question proves quite complex. The reports of my corpus do not have the same status and do not target the same public. The GCIM, for instance, is an independent commission that primarily reports to the governments that have set it up. By contrast, the Hague Declaration is an *ad hoc* document that has no pre-established audience. The UN report is formally addressed to the members of the UN General Assembly; and so on. Despite these differences, a few general observations can be made.

Governments constitute the most obvious target of IMN. Reports indeed aim at outlining the way migration should be governed, or 'managed', which implies first and foremost to speak to governments as the key actors in migration politics. This corresponds to a core mandate of IOs, which is to provide analyses and policy recommendations to their Member States. But governments are not the only audience of IMN. The GCIM had 'to present appropriate recommendations to the UN Secretary General, governments, and other stakeholders' (p. vii). As the reference to the UN Secretary General indicates, IMN also target IOs and the way they address migration-related issues. This may appear puzzling, as one could observe that IOs speak to themselves. But as noted above, IOs' interest in migration is recent, and there is much uncertainty regarding what they should actually do, in what institutional configuration, with what objectives, etc. Hence, the kind of 'brainstorming' that sees international reports reflect on how international actors should address international migration.

The next question regards the nature of the 'other stakeholders' mentioned by the GCIM (apart from IOs and governments). The UNDP is more specific and announces that its proposed reforms 'speak not only to destination governments but also to governments of origin, to other key

actors – in particular the private sector, unions and non-governmental organizations – and to individual migrants themselves' (p. 4). The 'other stakeholders' would then refer to social partners (employers and unions), NGOs (or 'civil society'), and migrants. This potentially very-large audience is in accordance with the universal aspiration of IMN, which emanate from international entities, address worldwide issues, and propose their recommendations *urbi et orbi*. This is also in line with IOs' working methods: the UN and its specialised agencies are used to working with NGOs, while the ILO's membership is composed not only of governments, but of unions and employers.

The reference to migrants is more difficult to understand. Their interest in IMN is indeed far from guaranteed. The GCIM nevertheless speaks directly to them, in the following way:

> The Commission ... calls on all migrants to respect the obligations they assume when they are admitted to other states, especially the obligation to desist from any activity which poses a threat to public order, which is in violation of the law and which infringes upon the rights of other people. (p. 48)

This somewhat surrealistic statement underlines the limits of IMN's universality. While they aspire at developing a global understanding of migration that would appeal to a wide range of people, they actually remain quite limited in their outreach.

Notes

1 United Nations (1995). Text available at: https://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2004/icpd_eng.pdf
2 United Nations (2002). Text at http://thehagueprocess.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Declaration-English.pdf
3 FOM/IOM (2005). Text at http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/IAMM.pdf
4 GCIM (2005). Text available at http://www.queensu.ca/samp/migrationresources/reports/gcim-complete-report-2005.pdf
5 IOM (2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2013). See http://www.iom.int/cms/wmr
6 United Nations (2004). Text at http://www.un.org/esa/policy/wess/wess2004files/part2web/part2web.pdf
7 United Nations (2006). Text at http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/hld/Text/Report%20of%20the%20SG(June%2006)_English.pdf

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8 International Labour Organization (2006). Text at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_146243.pdf
9 United Nations (2009). Text at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/269/hdr_2009_en_complete.pdf
10 For example, the Vienna Conference was the scene of intense discussions regarding the more or less universal nature of human rights, while the Durban conference saw governments and NGOs disagree violently on issues such as compensation for slavery and Zionism.
11 See http://www.sidint.net/
12 http://thehagueprocess.org/about-us/
13 The notion of 'sustainable development', for example, owes much of its popularity to the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (or 'Brundtland Commission'). The same can be said of the notion of 'global governance', which took off after the 1995 Commission on Global Governance report, entitled *Our Global Neighborhood*.
14 Resolution A/RES/57/264 (2003)

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5
Why Read IMN?

Abstract: *This chapter provides the theoretical background for the analysis of international migration narratives (IMN) and discusses the role of discourses and narratives in politics. It outlines five possible answers to the question of why IMN exist, which in turn determine five different ways of conceptualising them as a research topic: (1) narratives and research as a tool to inform governments and inspire policymaking, (2) the realist argument about the lack of influence of discourses on politics and power relations, (3) the social function of ideas as supporting coalitions and networks, (4) the role of narratives in constructing reality, and (5) the anthropological approach to political discourses as modern myths.*

Keywords: political discourses; realism; constructivism; epistemic communities; myths

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IMN are not, at first sight, an attractive research topic. They are often poorly written and rarely contain new or stimulating ideas. Moreover, their impact on 'real world' realities and on governments' political orientations is uncertain. It is therefore sensible to wonder why they were produced in the first place and, even more so, why they should be read, let alone analysed. It is indeed tempting to dismiss IMN as marginal or irrelevant, or even to develop what Gardner and Lewis (2000) call a 'rhetoric of sarcasm', which would joyfully make fun of the shortcomings and ingenuity of these reports.[1] On the other hand, the role of discourses in politics raises far-reaching questions. It has been the object of diverging interpretations, from those who claim that they are completely irrelevant to others who see them as fundamental in constructing social problems and steering governments' behaviours. While a thorough review of this scholarship is beyond the scope of this book, this section outlines five possible answers to the question of why IMN exist, which in turn determine five different ways of conceptualising them as a research topic.

Informing and inspiring governments

The first answer is the one that IMN themselves provide. Their stated purpose is to make policy recommendations that will improve governments' response to migration challenges. In line with the well-known aspiration to 'evidence-based' policy-making, reports propose facts and data to help decision-makers take informed decisions. In this view, knowledge and narratives support successful policy-making. Stone and Maxwell (2005) call this a 'romantic' idea, in which research and policy would go hand in hand. But as they further note, this usually fails: politics and policy-making dynamics tend to be more chaotic than what 'policy-relevant' research foresees, while 'problems' will remain even if properly researched and understood. This 'romanticism' is nevertheless at the heart of the mandate of IOs that, since their creation, have produced thousands of reports and policy recommendations to governments, on almost any possible topic.

It is fairly easy to develop a critical, and sometimes cynical, perspective on this aspect of IOs' work. The UN system was created to achieve largely unrealistic objectives (peace, development, human rights, etc.), with limited resources and a strong dependence upon a small number

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of powerful countries. This automatically leads to failure and disillusion. IOs' recommendations, in particular, are at high risk of being ignored. One can even go one step further and accuse IOs of 'talking' rather than 'doing': their reports would not only be useless, but would also indicate their powerlessness and their tendency to hide their lack of influence behind a discursive inflation. In other words, if one takes the claimed objectives of IMN literally, the question is whether or not they succeed in modifying migration politics: if yes, then they make sense; otherwise, they are not even worth reading.

A realist argument about the uselessness of discourses

This criticism echoes the traditional realist argument on the role of ideas and discourses in politics, according to which governments only follow their interests. Knowledge and narratives cannot change anything, no matter how convincing and well-documented they may be. Only 'real world' structural trends (like changes in economic conditions or power relations) can influence governments. In a connected argument, ideas may become influential, but only if this influence fits into governments' pre-established strategies. It follows that IMN will have an impact only if their recommendations correspond to what governments want to do; governments could then rely on IMN to justify a policy that would have been implemented anyway.

At first sight, this realist interpretation makes sense. It is indeed difficult to understand why a government would modify its migration policy simply because an IO has published a report. Even if IMN call for, say, increased protection of human rights or for admitting more migrants for the sake of development, there is no reason for governments to follow this recommendation if it does not suit their interests. There is also evidence that IMN can (intentionally or not) be used to legitimate governments' ambitions: IOM's calls for 'orderly' or 'managed' migration, for example, can justify increased border-control strategies, while IOs' emphasis on cooperation can actually lead to security-oriented agreements between states (Adepoju *et al.,* 2010, Geiger and Pécoud, 2010).

On the other hand, the influence of narratives is arguably very difficult to assess. If the absence of a direct or mechanical implementation of

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IMN is easy to observe, ideas and values can also have slower, progressive, and much less visible consequences. They may also exert an influence on certain segments of societies (like NGOs), which in turn will lobby governments. IMN alone may have little or no impact, but may legitimate and support much more concrete interventions by IOs, for example in the training of civil servants. It is also worth recalling that influential ideas are often those that are no longer considered as ideas, or whose origin has been forgotten. Thus, the success of an idea may actually go unnoticed, as it is precisely no longer perceived as an idea, but as a kind of 'truth'.

The social function of ideas

A third option is to consider ideas not as direct sources of political change, but as conditions for changes in social and institutional configurations. In particular, narratives may federate people and actors: 'It is, in part, through adopting shared vocabularies, theories and explanations, that loose and flexible associations may be established between agents across time and space' (Miller and Rose, 1990: 10). This is especially relevant at the international scale, as IOs attempt to bring together actors from all over the world. This is also particularly the case when these actors would otherwise have little in common; the existence of shared narratives can then constitute the cement of relationships that would not exist otherwise.

As discussed above, migration has often been too sensitive an issue to be the object of international initiatives. States have diverging views and interests, which makes it difficult to bring them together. The non-organisation of a world conference on migration, for example, had much to do with receiving states' reluctance to discuss migration policy with sending states; they feared finding themselves in a minority of developed states, and accused by a majority of poor emigration countries of mistreating their migrants. A first condition to bring states together is therefore the existence of shared ideas, to make discussion possible. This is quite exactly what IMN are here for: they provide a broad and consensual understanding of what migration is all about, thereby pre-defining what can (and also what cannot) be said during international meetings on the topic. Critical research on the relationship between migration and development, for example, has highlighted the numerous issues that are

left outside this framework – and therefore ‘forgotten’ by policymakers (Geiger and Pécoud, 2013a; Raghuram, 2009).

It follows that IMN actually create a consensus where no consensus previously existed. IOs regularly claim that they merely ‘describe’ migration trends or ‘reflect’ the views of governments. Being formally expected to listen to their Member-States and to follow their instructions, they tend to emphasise their technical or facilitating function, rather than their creative role as producers of narratives. But this does not do justice to their actual role: IMN would not exist if IOs had not actively identified those ideas that have the potential of federating states and other ‘stakeholders’. For example, Thouez and Channac (2006) describe how Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) create a consensus that did not exist before their intervention. RCPs are usually presented as forums in which governments can exchange views and identify what they have in common; but this obscures the search, by RCPs’ organisers, of the ideas that are suitable for such a consensus. In this respect, IMN are almost performative: while they do not change reality, they nevertheless create the conditions for states to meet and discuss migration. Thanks to these narratives, something new happens, which in turn can have an impact on the politics of migration. The common opposition between ‘talking’ and ‘doing’ is no longer valid here, as talking may be a strategy to actually do something.

Constructing reality

A fourth possible answer to the question of why IMN exist is to develop a constructivist argument around the centrality of discourses in politics. There are many interrelated observations that can be made here. First, ‘ideas are always present in policy discussions since they are a condition for reasoned discourse’ (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993: 11). Particularly (but not only) in democratic countries, any political choice is the object of discussions that oppose different ways of interpreting reality and constructing problems. In this respect, politics is largely about the confrontation of ideas; governments would be surrounded by different actors that each produce and ‘sell’ their own narrative and thereby try to influence the decisions that will be made. Even if a political decision is taken irrespective of any idea or discourse, it must be justified, and this implies the elaboration of a narrative that explains what is done, and why this is done.

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The issue then regards the reasons behind the influence of successful narratives: why do governments follow a specific way of looking at things, and ignore the others? As far as immigration policy is concerned, governments can not only be influenced by IOs, but also by employers, unions, political parties, public opinion, etc. Each of these actors has a distinct way of understanding migration and will lobby governments accordingly. Why would IOs and IMN prove more successful than other narratives in steering states' strategies? A first option is to consider that the most persuasive narratives will be more appealing; this points to the eloquence of a discourse, its solidity in terms of facts and data, the coherence of its arguments, etc. – factors that will make it credible and influential. By contrast, Bourdieu argues that 'authority comes to language from outside' (1991: 109): the narratives of powerful actors will be influential, no matter how convincing they are (as the power of institutions will translate into their discourses). The question would then concern the actual influence of IOs, rather than the quality of their narratives.

Radaelli (2000) writes that narratives can not only function as 'resources' (used by actors as strategies to influence political decisions), but also as 'cognitive structures': as such, discourses limit what is thinkable, and therefore doable. Actors would be so deeply influenced by certain core narratives that they would be unable to think 'outside the box'. This echoes what Ruggie calls an '*episteme*', defined as 'a dominant way of looking at social reality, a set of shared symbols and references, mutual expectations and a mutual predictability of intention' (1998: 55). Goldstein and Keohane also note that 'actions taken by human beings depend on the substantive quality of available ideas, since such ideas help to clarify principles and conceptions of causal relationships, and to coordinate individual behavior' (1993: 5). As both quotes indicate, a key factor behind the influence of ideas lies in the fact that they are shared by many actors (and therefore sometimes institutionalised) – thereby making social life possible.

In this view, narratives not only spell out what reality is all about and how it should be governed; they also spell out what it is not and contribute to put aside alternative interpretations. What narratives do *not* say may be just as crucial as what they say. As will be illustrated below, IMN simply ignore whole aspects of migration reality. It is for instance noteworthy that, throughout the 3000 pages of my corpus, almost no single reference to notions like *citizenship* or *class* can be found. At first sight, it

seems difficult to propose a comprehensive analysis of migration without these two words. But this is what IMN achieve and, while there might be understandable intellectual or political reasons behind these omissions, they make clear that analysing political narratives always include looking at what is missing, at the aspects of reality that are marginalised by discourses, as if they did not exist.

The fact that readers of IMN can notice the absence of certain terms indicates, however, that IMN do not really function as a source of '*episteme*'. A really powerful narrative would indeed make certain aspects of reality truly invisible, but IMN are too marginal and contested to structure our fundamental constructing of migration realities. But there are examples of worldviews promoted by IOs that have proven cognitively influential. Analysing their human rights discourses, for example, Manokha (2009) argues that, while the very idea of human rights used to be strongly contested, this is no longer the case. Human rights now serve as an unquestionable reference, not only for states, but also for civil society groups and even private companies, to the extent that they steer and pervade debates on a wide range of topics. Importantly, this cognitive success does not mean that human rights are perfectly implemented: even if they lack direct influence on states' practices, human rights discourses can structure the ways in which reality is perceived, apprehended, and discussed. From this perspective, international narratives can have slow, quiet, and sometimes invisible consequences that, while hard to observe or measure, remain important. One cannot exclude that, in the long run, IMN will exert this kind of long-term influence.

This aspiration to define how reality should be interpreted and, consequently, how it should be changed is at the heart of IOs' work. As Barnett and Finnemore write, 'armed with a notion of progress, an idea of how to create a better life, ... many IO elites have as their stated purpose a desire to shape state practices by establishing, articulating, and transmitting norms that defines what constitutes acceptable and legitimate state behaviour' (1999: 713). Again, this qualifies the standard distinction between 'talking' and 'doing', as well as the contrast between IOs' ambitious ideals and lack of resources: 'even when they lack material resources, IOs exercise power as they constitute and construct the social world' (ibid.: 700). IOs themselves claim this capacity to produce influential narratives. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan thus argues that 'ideas are a main driving force in human progress, and ideas have been among the main contributions of the United Nations from the

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beginning' (2001: xi). Examples of such influential ideas include *development* (with its *human* and *sustainable* variants), *human security*, or *human rights*. Even if not strictly emanating from the United Nations, these notions largely owe their influence to the support they have enjoyed from IOs.

IMN as myths

A final way of conceptualising IMN borrows from the anthropological analysis of myths. Myths are understood as shared stories, which are largely disconnected from 'real world' realities, but still display internal coherence. The purpose of myths, therefore, is not to guide behaviours in a literal way; they are too abstract and detached from day-to-day constraints to do so. Rather, myths serve as the cement of social life, by providing a set of fundamental assertions regarding key questions, like 'who we are', 'where we come from', 'where we are going', 'why we do what we do', and so on. Myths are important because these questions cannot receive rational and definite answers. Myths thus reduce uncertainty and fill in a gap, by addressing and 'solving' issues and problems that cannot be solved otherwise.

The problems that IOs are tasked to address are close to the unanswerable questions tackled by myths. One could perhaps conceive a world in which problems like underdevelopment, human rights violations, or conflicts could be solved. But this is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future. Humanity is therefore forced to acknowledge these problems without being able to solve them. In this context, the purpose of IOs' narratives is not necessarily to identify what should be done; they rather appear as ritual texts that explain why these problems occur, and outline a kind of mythical horizon in which they would disappear, and in which the world would look like what we ideally want it to be. Molle speaks of 'nirvanas' to describe international policy narratives:

> Nirvana concepts are concepts that embody an ideal image of what the world should tend to. They represent a vision of a 'horizon' that individuals and societies should strive to reach. Although, just as with nirvana, the likelihood that we may reach them is admittedly low, the mere possibility of achieving them and the sense of 'progress' attached to any shift in their direction suffice to make them an attractive and useful focal point. Nirvana concepts usually take the form of a 'photo-negative' of the real world. (2008: 132)

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In this view, IMN do not constitute recipes for action, but outline a broad vision of where we should be heading to. They thus fit into the broader history of development discourses: over the past 60 years, development narratives have repeatedly explained why underdevelopment persists, while at the same time describing an ideal world in which it would no longer exist. Analysing IMN as myths is potentially fruitful. It explains, for example, the endless reiteration of more or less the same arguments; this repetitiveness makes little sense from an intellectual or political perspective, but is inherent to ritual texts like myths. The above mentioned uncertainties over the authorship and audience of IMN also recall mythical discourses, which have no identifiable author and an equally indefinite audience.

A tricky issue raised by the conceptualisation of IMN as myths concerns the validity of their arguments. Myths do not respect real-world constraints, nor do they have to do so. They invent a language of their own, often marked by magic and irrationality. If IMN are myths, they should therefore not be confronted to empirical evidence or existing theoretical frameworks about migration. They should on the contrary be viewed as texts that are detached from reality, with no obligation of being in line with empirical evidence. To put it differently, the issue is not whether IMN are 'right' or 'wrong', as their *raison d'être* does not pertain to the correctness of arguments but rather to the social function performed by myths. In their analysis of international development narratives, Cornwall and Brock observe that the content of the discourse is not central: 'Good argument has its place here, but is secondary to something that is of quite a different order: a feeling of rightness, backed by the creation of normative instruments, ... which serve an almost ceremonial function in bolstering a feeling of togetherness and purposefulness, of a visionary goal towards which to strive' (2005: 1055).

Existing work on IMN tend to discuss their arguments in a literal way. Scholars read the reports and criticise their content in light of their own findings or ideas. Martin Ruhs, for example, disagrees with IOs' call for both more migration and more human rights; he argues that these two objectives are irreconcilable, as more rights for migrants imply more costs, and therefore less migration (2013: 189–196). According to Coleman (2006), the GCIM report overestimates the economic benefits of migration. Hansen (2006) contests the possibility of reaching a political consensus on more liberal immigration policies and argues that

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IMN's emphasis on consultations with citizens, unions, political parties, employers, etc. can actually undermine the success of immigration policies (which would be more migrant-friendly if set up behind closed doors; see also Guiraudon, 2000b). Boucher criticises IMN for being too capitalist as, he argues, 'in these global policy reports, the structure of the global capitalist system in its neoliberal form is taken for granted, and not taken as part of the problem' (2008: 1462).

All these criticisms see IMN as a specific set of views on migration that can (or should) be confronted to other competing views. The assumption is that IMN may be right, but also wrong, and that specialised readers can therefore agree or disagree with them. But this kind of 'scientific' reading of IMN leads to a dead-end. Practically, even the most knowledgeable reader cannot realistically claim to know all the available evidence that would confirm (or infirm) IMN claims. More fundamentally, such an approach establishes a misleading parallel between IMN and research. It is crucial to stress that, even if inspired by researchers, IMN have nothing to do with research. IOs do not ask questions or formulate hypotheses; they know (or claim to know).

In other words, if one looks at IMN as myths, they should not be analysed in terms of the correctness of their arguments, but of their internal logic and of the social functions they perform. On the other hand, policy narratives cannot be entirely disconnected from reality. To be credible, they need to rely on 'expertise' and must therefore incorporate some knowledge of the topics they address. Shore and Wright (1997) argue that policies are 'cultural texts' that are nevertheless grounded in 'legal-rational' knowledge. IMN thus combine two partially contradictory characteristics. On one hand, they aspire at grasping reality and are therefore full of data, facts, evidence, while also being backed by well-known researchers and experts. On the other hand, they 'take off' and detach themselves from this evidence, by outlining a 'nirvana' horizon that is very far away from reality. What is probably missing is the intermediate *political* level, which sees the opposition of different interpretations of reality and of different possible strategies to transform it. IMN jump from (seemingly) neutral, and often anecdotal, empirical evidence to a broad, ideal, and consensual description of what reality should look like. This leads to a depoliticisation process that has often been associated to IOs' interventions, and that will be further discussed below.

Finally, an analysis of IMN as myths also sheds light on the interactions between discourse and power. In a classical ethnography of

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political oratory in non-Western societies, Bloch (1975) argues that political speech is almost entirely laid down by tradition: not only the content of the discourse, but also the context in which it is enunciated, hardly change, and the purpose of political oratory is therefore not to convey information or to convince, but to ensure social control. The discourse indeed serves to legitimate the power of the orator and, by agreeing to listen, the audience also indicates its obedience and its acceptance of the hierarchy. This may seem far away from IOs and IMN. But when one takes part in an international conference, one is struck by the irrelevance of what is actually expressed: most of what participants say is known in advance; there is no surprise and one can easily leave the room and return without losing much or feeling disoriented. But this is not to say that the meeting itself is irrelevant: the fact that it takes places shows the power or influence of its organiser (IO or government) and participants' readiness to sit at the same table and listen to each other implies an acceptance, if not of every position, but at least of the overall objective of the conference.

Conclusion: researchers and the complex relevance of IMN

The influence of ideas and narratives on politics can be approached in different ways, according to different theoretical frameworks. This book does not take a firm position in this debate. Given that it aspires at a critical reading of IMN, it is obviously sceptical of the first conceptualisation (which sees IMN as IMN see themselves). To make sense, the analysis of IMN also needs to reject the second conceptualisation, which posits the irrelevance of narratives. I therefore borrow from the last three conceptualisations, which have in common a very broadly defined constructivist perspective on political narratives.

Overall, two major sources of ambivalences emerge from this discussion, which have important implications for the study of IMN. The first concerns the nature of the arguments contained in these narratives: are they grounded in reality, or do they amount to a mythical language with no direct connection to the real world? In the first case, IMN can be confronted with alternative interpretations of reality and criticised for their possible mistakes; in the second case, whether IMN are right or wrong is not the issue and IMN should be approached as a kind of

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(political) fiction. The second ambivalence is about the importance of what is actually said. Does the content of IMN matter, or do they merely support power relations and political strategies that take place outside narratives? In the first case, it makes sense to understand the arguments and the logic of IMN, as these can inspire policy-making or at least constitute a political position of its own. In the second case, the content of IMN is meaningless, as the key developments take place outside reports, in IOs' actual interventions or in the negotiations that precede meetings and conference. Without taking a clear position in this debate, this book assumes that IMN are neither totally useless, nor highly influential, but somewhere in-between. It would be naïve to read them as literal guidelines for policy-makers, but it would be simplistic to dismiss them as completely irrelevant: there are indeed many ways in which IOs' narratives can play a role in influencing politics or in shaping the way we perceive reality and in which we think it should be changed.

Another observation that can be made at this stage regards the position of researchers in this debate. As noted, IMN are often written in cooperation with professional idea-producers, like academics, experts, researchers, etc. Many of these individuals are known for the quality and relevance of their work, which is precisely why they were solicited by IOs. Of course, they may contribute to IMN for reasons that have nothing to do with intellectual life (they can be attracted by the money, the travel, the prestige, etc.). But overall, one can assume that they would not lose time and energy if the whole IMN enterprise was pointless. By extension, it follows that all those whose work consists in analysing migration should be concerned with IMN because they all play a role – however small it may be – in what is known about migration. As such, all researchers contribute, directly or not, to the arguments contained in IMN. To put it differently, it is difficult for people who work with ideas to disregard the relevance of ideas; as Goldstein and Keohane write, 'if we really thought ideas were irrelevant, our lives as social scientists would be meaningless. Our exploration of the impact of ideas ... is also a search for personal meaning and relevance in our own lives' (1993: 30).

Despite this structural connection between researchers and IOs' reports on migration, there are relatively few critical works on IMN. There may be several reasons for this. Many researchers tend to work *with* or *for* (rather than *on*) IOs. The lack of research on IMN may also have to do with their recent emergence and it is probable that, in the eyes of some researchers, IMN may not even be worth analysing. But

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the absence of studies on IMN may also result from the difficulty of developing a critical perspective on the content of these reports, as well as from a broader unease in critically examining IOs' narratives and practices. Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore argue that 'surprisingly few ... students of IOs have been critical of their performance or desirability' (1999: 701). This 'optimism' surrounding IOs' work is based on the assumption that they do what they are mandated to do (i.e., solve problems and foster cooperation between states), which is arguably preferable to confrontation, conflict, or war. Moreover, when it comes to IOs' discourses, it may at first sight be hard to frontally disagree with their arguments. In a review of the GCIM report, Crawley makes this point very clearly:

> It is difficult to be critical of the Commission's analysis. The conclusions and recommendations in its report are based upon an extensive and wide-ranging consultation process involving a large number of regional hearings, stakeholder consultations, and expert meetings. The report is underpinned by a comprehensive evidence base, including a number of commissioned thematic and regional studies and an extensive working paper series that addresses a wide range of issues and topics from a variety of perspectives. The report powerfully articulates the problems and inconsistencies in the way in which international migration has been managed – or, more accurately, mismanaged – over the past 50 years and how many governments have as yet failed to rise to the many opportunities and challenges that international migration presents. As a result, its analysis and conclusions resonate strongly with much that academics and practitioners working in the area of migration policy and practice have been saying for many years. (2006: 21)

The same could be said of the entire IMN corpus. Again, research on development discourses serves as a useful source of inspiration. As Cornwall and Brock observe, it is tempting to be convinced by IOs' rhetoric: 'It is easy enough to get caught up in the emotive calls for action, to feel that, in the midst of all the uncertainties of the day, international institutions are working together for the good, and that they have now got the story right and are really going to make a difference' (2005: 1044). The risk (or the temptation) with international narratives, therefore, is to agree too much with them, to be convinced by their tone or arguments – and, progressively, to start thinking like them. Apthorpe nicely speaks of development narratives as 'a quarry to be captured: otherwise it would capture you' (1996: 21); if one does not critically assess the content of

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these narratives, one will eventually be 'contaminated' and absorbed by them.

The difficulty of critically analysing IMN also reflect the challenge of developing an independent research agenda on the role of IOs in the politics of migration. At first sight, this should be obvious: there are many good reasons to criticise states and their inappropriate or unsuccessful migration policies (see, e.g., Castles, 2004); given that these states are the primary instruction-givers of IOs, it logically follows that IOs should be the object of the same kind of criticisms. But this is not what happens. Writing about the IOM, Rutvica Andrijasevic and William Walters note that 'despite the fact that [it] has become a major operator in the field of international borders and migration governance, there is surprisingly very little academic research that has interrogated this agency. Migration scholars routinely use IOM material as data, and often participate in IOM research and policy programmes. But rarely has it been the subject of critical scrutiny itself.... It is high time that the IOM [is] made an object of inquiry in its own right' (2010: 980). It is indeed striking to observe that, despite the influence of this organisation, only a small number of articles were published on its activities, and only in very recent years. A similar lack of research concerns other IOs' activities on migration, as well as other regional or international entities, like the IGC, the ICMPD or RCPs (see Geiger and Pécoud, 2014).

It is worth noting here that the case of the UNHCR is quite different. This agency has been the object of much more research, especially on its history and on the political, legal, and humanitarian dilemmas that characterise its agenda (see, e.g., Loescher, 2001). Although there is no room here for an overview of this literature, one can nevertheless observe that, while the UNHCR is regularly criticised for failing to protect refugees and for betraying its founding ideal in the face of the political pressure put on by developed receiving states, this is usually interpreted as a 'challenge' stemming from the environment in which the UNHCR operates, and not from the UNHCR itself. The agency tends to be viewed as inherently well intentioned and as simply trying to do its best in a difficult setting. Bhupinder Chimni (1998) underlines the close ties that exist between the UNHCR and the research community, to the extent that debates on this organisation often take the form of sympathetic comments rather than of criticism (see also Hyndman, 2000).

It may well be true that the UNHCR and other IOs are genuinely aiming at improving the way migration is governed throughout the world.

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But this is worth checking and, above all, even good intentions may hide darker realities. It may also be true that IOs find it difficult to translate into practice their good intentions, and that this calls for a critical analysis of their projects and interventions. But even before examining what IOs do, it makes sense to examine what they think and to critically analyse the 'ideological software' behind their practices.

Note

1 Gardner and Lewis criticise the researchers who, like Escobar (1995) or Ferguson (1990), for example, approach development merely as a discourse to be deconstructed, rather than as an actual socioeconomic issue to be analysed.

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6
Constructing a Federating Discourse

Abstract: *This chapter examines how international migration narratives (IMN) construct a federating representation of their topic. Their core arguments are the following: (1) migration is a normal phenomenon in a globalising world, as well as a central process in the functioning of the global economy; (2) states currently fail to properly address the challenges raised by migration; (3) given that migration is a global reality that concerns all countries, state cooperation is a condition for the success of immigration policy; (4) this is all the more the case because migration plays a key role in achieving global objectives, such as development and the respect for human rights.*

Keywords: human rights; development; international cooperation

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International migration debates are relatively recent. As such, they need a kind of cement that brings participants together. Debates do not imply a full convergence of views between all participants (in which case there would be no point in discussing), but they require a basis for discussion, a set of shared assumptions that enable the dialogue to take off. At the most basic level, this is a matter of terminology; as the IAMM observes, 'participants often noted that to develop a "common language" on migration, a commonly understood terminology on migration terms is needed' (p. 20). It is also in this spirit that IOM published a 'glossary' on migration, in which one can read:

> Migration is increasingly being acknowledged as an issue that needs a global approach and coordinated responses. States are not only discussing migration issues at the bilateral level, but also regionally and lately in global arenas. A commonly understood language is indispensable for such coordination and international cooperation to be successful. This glossary attempts to serve as a guide to the mire of terms and concepts in the migration field, in an effort to provide a useful tool to the furtherance of such international cooperation. (IOM, 2004: 3)

This federating ambition is crucial for IOs because they cooperate with a wide range of actors (government, NGOs, etc.), which each have different views, strategies, and interests, come from all over the world, and work at different levels (from local to global). This implies a common language and a shared set of assumptions, in which migration is made legible as a genuinely international process of concern to all. The need to federate is all the more relevant given the heterogeneity of actors: in a small group of like-minded people, the circulation of ideas can be implicit or informal; but in a large and loose network of people and institutions, the effort to construct a common vision of the issues at stake requires a substantial effort. Moreover, the greater the differences between members of the group, the more crucial the production of shared idea: in a context marked by disagreements, narratives may represent the only bridge between diverging positions. Their main feature, then, is their flexibility and their capacity to host the (often contradictory) ideas of the participants of the debates. Vagueness, rather than being a weakness or a symptom of intellectual failure, becomes a strength. This also means that IOs, far from merely writing down the ideas shared by states, actively create a consensus where no consensus previously existed.

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This feature of IMN is quite different from notions such as 'epistemic communities' (Haas, 1992) or 'discourse coalitions' (Schmidt and Radaelli, 2004). Both refer to groups of people and institutions that are bound by common worldviews and that aspire at putting them into practice. It would perhaps be possible to apply these notions to refer to the 'international migration managers' (Munck, 2008: 1232), that is, the experts, academics, NGO representatives, and IOs' staff members who constitute the driving forces behind the production of IMN. But this would obscure the compromising nature of these narratives and their capacity to federate actors and positions that have little in common. Pian (2010) provides an empirical example of this process, by showing how, in Senegal, the 'migration and development' framework is mobilised by governments (of Senegal and of European states), as well as by local and international NGOs. This shared narrative is the product of power games, as weak actors (like local NGOs) must articulate their positions in this framework to be heard and funded. The reliance on a specific discourse is therefore a strategy, but also a constraint. The common 'migration and development' language does not stem from the existence of an epistemic community, but from power imbalances, which are reflected by discourses (as dominated actors adopt dominant narratives) while also hidden by them (as shared narratives create an apparent convergence of views).

Centrality, normality, and respectability

In their construction of shared views on migration, the first objective of IMN is to establish the centrality and normality of human mobility. IMN must legitimate their object and explain why we should care about migration. History is frequently relied upon here, as it would show that 'migration has been a constant and influential feature of human history' (GCIM, p. 5). Some reports even go all the way back to prehistory: 'human movement has been a pervasive phenomenon throughout history, present in nearly every community for which historical or archaeological evidence is available. Recent DNA tests support previous fossil evidence that all human beings evolved from a common ancestor from equatorial Africa, who crossed the Red Sea into Southern Arabia approximately 50,000 years ago' (UNDP, pp. 28–29). This argument makes little sense; connecting today's migration with mobility in a planet

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without states, borders, or labour markets is indeed absurd. But this reflects the search for legitimacy within IMN and, indirectly, the doubts that still persist about the normality of migration.

Migration would be all the more normal in a globalisation context. It would be both inherent to human nature and particularly salient in today's context: 'The human race has always been curious, and eager to visit different places, gain new experiences and encounter unfamiliar cultures. As a result of the globalization process, much larger numbers of people can realize those ambitions' (GCIM, pp. 6–7). The IAMM also notes that 'the continuing movement of people across borders is an integral feature of a rapidly globalizing world' (p. 23), while the UN speaks of a 'new era of mobility' (p. 5).

But IMN sometimes have doubts: 'In looking at the causes of international migration, the key question is why certain people move when human nature appears so strongly to mitigate against uprooting' (IOM 2000, p. 18). Eight years later, the same organisation has still not found the answer: 'Should migration be considered an entirely "natural" part of human behaviour that has occurred throughout history, or rather as "unnatural", in the sense that it involves painful uprooting of individuals from their place of birth and their equally difficult relocation in other countries?' (IOM, 2008, p. 2). IMN at times seem to believe that there is something wrong about migrating and, as will become clear, this existential doubt pervades many of their arguments. It echoes Bakewell's (2008) observation on the 'sedentary bias' in development thinking, according to which mobility would be a symptom of a problem rather than a 'normal' pattern of behaviour. Yet, whether migration is normal or not, it has to be taken into account: 'It is essential to understand migration as a normal fact of life for individuals, families, communities, and states' (The Hague, p. 5).

It follows that IMN envisage ever more multicultural societies: 'Most societies are now characterized by a degree (and often a high degree) of diversity' (GCIM, p. 42) and 'in future, it seems likely that a growing number of people will have more than one nationality, will identify with more than one culture and will divide their time between more than one country' (ibid., p. 48). On migrants' incorporation in receiving societies, IMN call for the respect of migrants' fundamental rights, and sometimes make relatively audacious statements.[1] But they hardly address the tensions and conflicts that arise in multicultural societies, or do so in a superficial and stereotyped manner. According to the UNDP,

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for example, 'many societies welcome new cuisines' (p. 91), but 'some find it harder to open the door to new religious and social customs such as the wearing of headscarves by women and the payment of dowries' (p. 92). IMN views on the attitude of receiving populations towards foreigners will be discussed with greater details, but overall, they tend to believe that 'people are generally tolerant of minorities and have a positive view of ethnic diversity' (UNDP, p. 92).

If migration is a normal and central process, it also follows that it deserves more attention than it currently receives. A core ambition of IMN is to increase the respectability of migration-related issues, which have long-been nearly absent from the international agenda. IMN repeatedly regret the lack of attention devoted to migration, compared to other global issues: 'International migration, like trade and finance, is a fundamental feature of today's world system. And like trade and finance, migration demands attention at the global level' (UN, p. 10). The UNDP makes the same point: 'The potential of enhanced national and international mobility to increase human well-being leads us to expect that it should be a major focus of attention among development policy makers and researchers. This is not the case. The academic literature dealing with the effects of migration is dwarfed by research on the consequences of international trade and macroeconomic policies, to name just two examples' (pp. 10–11). This neglect of migration also applies to data collection, which is a shame in IMN's evidence-based perspective: 'Migration data remain patchy, non-comparable and difficult to access. Data on trade and investment are vastly more detailed. Many aspects of human movement simply remain a blind spot for policy makers' (UNDP, p. 28).

States' failure and the need for international cooperation

Once migration has been established as a normal, central, and respectable issue, the second step in IMN reasoning is to show that governments are not up to the task. The mandate of the GCIM was quite explicit in this respect, as it had to 'analyse gaps in current policy approaches to migration' (p. vii). According to IOM, 'the understanding of migration, and how to take advantage of it, live with it and manage it has not kept pace with the growth of the phenomenon' (2003, p. viii). Moreover,

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some states lack experience: 'For many States, migration is a new field of governmental activity, and they face the challenge of having to set up or improve their legislative frameworks, as well as their administrative infrastructures' (IAMM, p. 29). IMN diplomatically avoid blaming states too directly, however, and criticisms remain soft, with exceptions when it comes to less-developed regions: 'Africa faces enormous difficulties with the management of international migration: the issues are sensitive and give rise to heated debates, all too often swayed by negative attitudes and an excessive tendency towards protectionism' (IOM, 2005, p. 27). Among the recurrent arguments, one can notably mention the *ad hoc* nature of policies:

> Most States have pursued a primarily unilateral approach to migration, with the general tendency to develop ad-hoc strategies on migration issues to respond to domestic needs and interests. As a result, different or even contradictory national migration policies and practices have sometimes been developed and put into practice. (IAMM, p. 16)

> Historically, governments have reacted to changing migratory trends and pressures in an ad hoc way, responding to the "issue of the day", often without considering the broader implications. (IOM, 2003, p. 52)

This criticism of states' migration policy record is logical. For IMN to be relevant, there needs to be a 'problem' that they can help solving. This is a general trend in IOs' narratives, which paint a very negative picture of current realities while simultaneously describing an ideal ('nirvana') future. The darker today's world, the brighter the world promised by IOs – and the greater the claimed 'added-value' of their interventions. But states' failure does not, in itself, justify IOs' interventions. There is a need to demonstrate that an international and comprehensive approach is a useful alternative. As noted above, the 'migration crisis' of the 1990s, while it fostered the search for 'global governance' mechanisms, mainly lead to reinforced security-centred measures. IMN must therefore show that their approach, which is not the dominant one today, can prove useful. Several arguments are mobilised to this end. The first concerns the shared situation of all countries, which would face common challenges:

> Migration is a multifaceted and complex global issue, which today touches every country in the world. All 190 or so sovereign states of the world are now either points, of origin, transit or destination for migrants; often all three at once. (IOM, 2005, p. 13)

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The idea here is that old-standing divides, between 'sending' and 'receiving' countries, or between the 'North' and the 'South', are no longer relevant. States would stop opposing each other along these lines and would face similar problems:

> We can no longer divide ourselves so easily into "countries of origin" and "countries of destination" since, to one degree or another, many countries are now both. These distinctions, together with the perceived demarcation between the global "North" and "South", are being blurred, and in some cases have disappeared completely. (UN, p. 6)
>
> International migration affects countries at every level of economic development and of every ideological and cultural persuasion. Migrants now depart from and arrive in almost every country in the world, making it increasingly difficult to sustain the distinction that has traditionally been made between countries of origin, transit and destination. Many states now fall into all three categories. (GCIM, p. 5)

The IAMM refuses to speak of countries of emigration or immigration, and prefers the term 'country of migration':

> As most countries are now countries of migration, they are showing greater willingness to focus on what unites them rather than on what divides them in this realm and, as a consequence, areas of consensus are emerging. (p. 19)

When differences are recognised between states, they are mentioned as something of the past, as if they were fading away: 'countries that are very different in other respects now face surprisingly similar migration challenges, which need no longer divide them into adversarial camps' (UN, p. 7). As a consequence, countries would now have 'shared goals':

> Member States now share a core set of migration-related goals that include: enhancing the development impact of international migration; ensuring that migration occurs mainly through legal channels; ensuring the protection of the rights of migrants; preventing the exploitation of migrants, especially those in vulnerable situations; and combating the crimes of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons. (UN, p. 16)

These 'shared goals' support the well-known 'triple-win objective'. Not only do states find themselves 'in the same boat' with similar problems and challenges, but they can all benefit from migration. IMN are eager to demonstrate that their recommendations are in the interests of all parties (sending and receiving countries, and migrants themselves), which is indeed a condition for their universality: 'The starting point

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for future refugee and migration policy is the shared interests and all relevant actors involved' (Hague, p. 5). The Cairo Declaration already stated that 'orderly international migration can have positive impacts on both the communities of origin and the communities of destination, providing the former with remittances and the latter with needed human resources' (p. 67). The issue is therefore to identify the strategies that will make the most of migration: 'The present report suggests many ways in which Governments and others could shape the nature of international migration and the distribution of its costs and benefits, thereby making migration work better for everyone' (UN, p. 9).

The 'in the same boat' and 'triple-win' arguments pave the way for the sensitive argument concerning the need for cooperation. IMN are prudent here, as this is often interpreted as interference in states' sovereign right to control migration. They constantly reaffirm their respect for sovereignty, and stress that cooperation does not constitute an objective in itself, but a pragmatic strategy to increase the efficiency of migration policy. The key idea is that states alone would be unable to make it: 'While the primary responsibility for asylum and migration policy lies with states, no state can any longer act alone' (Hague, p. 5). This is because 'the world is increasingly interdependent; the policies and practices of one State with respect to population movements necessarily affect other States and regions (ibid., p. 9). The GCIM writes that 'the very nature of transnational migration demands international cooperation and shared responsibility' (p. 66).

It follows that cooperation does not challenge sovereignty. It would on the contrary enable states to better respond to their own interests. 'All States share a common interest in strengthening cooperation on international migration in order to maximize benefits' (IAMM, p. 23) and, therefore, 'the management of migration is a sovereign right and responsibility and, consequently, migration policies have traditionally been developed at the national level. Given the transnational nature of migration and the many common challenges that confront States, national migration strategies and policies developed cooperatively among States are more likely to yield effective and sustainable results' (ibid., p. 28). The ILO agrees:

> Issues related to the movement of workers across national borders cannot be effectively addressed when countries act in isolation; hence, international cooperation in managing labour migration can be valuable in addressing national interests. (p. 3)

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The same organisation adds that:

> While acknowledging the sovereign right of States to develop their own labour and migration policies, it is important to direct attention to the need to adopt coherent and comprehensive national policies to effectively manage labour migration and to protect migrant workers. (p. 3)

The UN makes almost exactly the same point:

> I have no doubt that, through strengthening multilateral cooperation, States can find rational, creative and principled ways to protect the rights of migrants, and promote their shared interest in the better management of emigration, immigration and transit. (p. iii)

The IMN establishes a complex and dialectical relationship between international cooperation and national policy-making. There is an interdependence between the two levels, as successful national policies imply successful international cooperation: 'Effective migration management calls for comprehensive approaches at all levels: national, regional and global' (IAMM, p. 9). Moreover, international cooperation reinforces national policies: 'Dialogue and partnership between States enrich existing unilateral, bilateral and regional approaches' (ibid.). This is why international meetings like the HLD can help states and 'be a catalyst for Governments to improve their internal coordination on migration and development issues' (UN, p. 9). Inversely, good national policies enable and support successful international cooperation: 'Coherence begins at home, and if states cannot define clear objectives for national migration policies, it should not come as a surprise that overlaps and contradictions sometimes occur at the multilateral and institutional level' (GCIM, p. 67). In sum, the international and national levels can mutually reinforce each other.

Given the interdependence between internal national policymaking and international cooperation, all states must be up to the task – as, otherwise, the failure of some governments may hinder cooperation, which in turn will weaken policymaking in all states. The countries that are thought to display this threatening weakness are those that are less developed, which makes it necessary to 'help' them:

> It is in the shared interest of the international community to support those countries that need to strengthen their capacity in the area of migration policy, whether through the provision of technical and financial resources, the sharing of appropriate expertise or the establishment of training initiatives. (GCIM, p. 69)

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> The implementation of comprehensive and coherent national migration policies is key to effective international migration policies and cooperation in this field. Support for capacity building in those States lacking adequate resources, structures or expertise can make a useful contribution in this regard. (IAMM, p. 23)

Cooperation should also include non-state actors: 'Cooperation and dialogue among all interested stakeholders, in particular Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society, including migrant associations, employer and worker organizations, and the media, are important elements for effective migration management partnerships and the development of comprehensive and balanced migration management policies' (IAMM, p. 24). The GCIM 'considers it essential to ensure that migration issues are addressed by a wide range of governmental and non-governmental Stakeholders' (p. 61) and calls for 'a comprehensive debate among states and other actors with respect to migration' (p. vii).

Another key feature of international cooperation as called for by IMN is its non-binding nature. The IAMM presents itself as a 'blueprint' (p. 10), with the purpose of identifying 'effective practices' (p. 4) that would lead to 'the creation of an informal international reference system or framework of guiding principles to facilitate the management of migration' (p. 9). The non-binding nature of IMN contrasts with earlier standard-setting efforts by the United Nations and with the adoption of several legally binding international conventions on labour migration. Thus, while the ILO historically played a key role in the promotion of migrants' human and labour rights, it now prefers formulating non-binding recommendations and listing 'best practices'. One can further mention the absence of any reference to the ICRMW: this Convention has become a bone of contention between the North and the South (with the former refusing to adopt a treaty backed by the latter) and, while it strives towards more or less the same goals than IMN (establishing universal terminology, standards, and practices), IMN carefully avoid supporting, or even mentioning, this legal instrument (Pécoud, 2009).

Connecting migration to development and human rights

As noted above, IOs' legitimacy on migration-related issues is weak. One of the main purposes of IMN is therefore to justify why they intervene

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in this field, and how they can be useful. This is why IMN tend to avoid talking about migration *per se*, and strive to systematically 'graft' migration onto other issues in which IOs' legitimacy is greater. Two of these issues are particularly obvious: development and human rights.

It is hardly necessary to recall the centrality of the so-called 'migration and development nexus' in contemporary research and policy-making (Geiger and Pécoud, 2013a). This connection between migration and development is at the heart of IMN. It is not without ambiguities, however. Without engaging in a thorough analysis (de Haas, 2010), this section briefly outlines the key arguments contained in IMN. The first is the connection between underdevelopment and emigration, and the need to foster development to enable would-be migrants to stay at home. This standard argument[2] pervades IMN and was already mentioned in the Cairo Declaration: 'The long-term manageability of international migration hinges on making the option to remain in one's country a viable one for all people' (p. 67). Underdevelopment as a push factor often goes beyond the socioeconomic living and working conditions to encompass broader legal, security, and political issues: 'too many people continue to live in countries characterized by poor governance, low levels of human security, corruption, authoritarianism, human rights violations and armed conflict... Given these conditions, it is not surprising that many people are looking for a future beyond the borders of their own country, both within their own region and, if they have the means to get there, to more distant parts of the world' (GCIM, p. 6).

This leads to an overall sympathetic approach towards migrants, which are portrayed as understandably leaving 'bad' countries and as trying to improve their living conditions: 'Our world is very unequal.... For many people in developing countries moving away from their home town or village can be the best – sometimes the only – option open to improve their life chances' (UNDP, p. 1). It also follows that properly 'managing' migration implies tackling these root causes:

> A first responsibility in managing international migration flows requires an improvement in conditions and opportunities for potential migrants in their home countries and a reduction in the enormous gap between the well-being of the average individual in a developed country and that of most inhabitants of poorer countries. The international community's overall development agenda is therefore one essential component of the overall effort to manage international migration. Improving human well-being in the developing countries by achieving the Millennium Development Goals

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> should, for example, reduce the large numbers of people who would emigrate if they had the opportunity. (WESS, p. xxii)

While obvious, this is nevertheless problematic for IMN. Indeed, if successful migration policy is ultimately about development, it follows that IMN are pointless, or at least of secondary importance compared to development policy. The GCIM is aware of this:

> As an entity specifically established to consider the issue of international migration, the Commission has focused its conclusions and recommendations on policies that have a relatively direct bearing on the cross-border movement of people. Even so, the Commission is firmly convinced that migration policies have little chance of producing positive outcomes unless they are complemented by appropriate policies in the many other areas that have an impact on, and which are impacted by, international migration. (p. 9)

Moreover, if migration stems from underdevelopment, it embodies a problem and should ideally not exist (in line with the sedentary bias mentioned above). This runs directly against IMN's ambition to confer centrality and respectability to migration issues. Faced with this dilemma, the GCIM puts forward the idea of migration as a voluntary process. 'Migrating out of choice' was the first 'principle of action' of the Commission and, according to Grant (2006: 15), was designed to constitute the main slogan of the Commission. Ottonelli and Torresi (2013) observe that the voluntary/involuntary opposition is central to migration research and policy (and particularly to the distinction between 'forced' refugee flows and 'free' economic migration), but that it rests upon extremely problematic and ill-defined assumptions. One should add that it tends to depoliticise migration, as the decision to leave one's country is no longer the symptom of global socioeconomic or political imbalances, but only the result of an individual decision, made by people who could have stayed at home if they had wished to.

Another way to address this dilemma is to accept that migration policy is of secondary importance compared to development policy, but to reclaim the importance of migration as a tool to foster development. This is another well-known leitmotiv in IMN. The Cairo Declaration called for 'more cooperation and dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination in order to maximise the benefits of migration to those concerned and increase the likelihood that migration has positive consequences for the development of both sending and

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receiving countries' (pp. 67–68). Proclaiming this objective is also a way of qualifying, to some extent, state sovereignty:

> Sovereign States have the right to decide who is allowed to enter their territory, subject to the international treaty obligations they have assumed. But this right should not prevent us from working together to ensure that international migration helps to meet our development goals. (UN, p. 6)

The ways in which migration may foster development include 'remittances, investments, skills transfer, brain circulation (reducing the impact of brain drain) and diaspora networks' (IAMM, p. 58). This calls for introducing migration-related issues into development policy: 'To date, national development and poverty reduction strategies in developing countries have tended not to recognize the potential of mobility' (UNDP, p. 82). Connecting migration to development was therefore a precondition for migration to be discussed at the international level, as Skeldon observes:

> If migration was to be considered at the multilateral level,...it had to be linked with development. Developed countries saw immigration...as a matter for state policy alone, with no interference from any outside power. Nevertheless, if the management of migration could be shown to promote development in some way, then a role for multilateral involvement could be justified. Migration itself was off the agenda, but migration linked to development was the backdoor way of discussing the issue of migration in the international arena. (Skeldon, 2008: 4)

Yet, to come up with a federating approach, IMN must bring together two partly contradicting agendas, centred on 'development instead of migration' and on 'more migration for development', respectively. The 'migration and development' relationship is therefore ambiguous, as it calls both for fostering development to diminish (or suppress) the need to migrate, and to foster migration to contribute to the development of sending countries. This is an example of 'buzzwords', defined by Cornwall as follows:

> Policies depend on a measure of ambiguity to secure the endorsement of diverse potential actors and audiences. Buzzwords aid this process, by providing concepts that can float free of concrete referents, to be filled with meaning by their users. In the struggles for interpretive power that characterise the negotiation of the language of policy, buzzwords shelter multiple agendas, providing room for manoeuvre and space for contestation. (Cornwall, 2007: 474)

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A second argument that legitimates migration as an issue of international relevance is the relationship between migration and human rights, and the human rights violations that occur in the migration process:

> The Commission has collected considerable evidence that states which have ratified international and regional human rights treaties do not always respect them in practice and do not apply them in an equitable manner to international migrants. (GCIM, p. 55)

Again, the idea is that states have human rights commitments that qualify their sovereignty and justifies IOs' interventions: 'States have a right to determine their own policies with respect to the situation of migrants in society, but in doing so must ensure that such policies are consistent with international human rights principles to which most states have formally agreed' (GCIM, p. 43). This particularly applies to the security measures put in place to control migration:

> While fully recognizing the right of states to control their borders and to protect the security of their citizens, the Commission call upon governments to ensure that their efforts to attain these objectives are aligned with their responsibility to uphold the human rights of people who are moving across international borders. (GCIM, p. 59)

The UN phrases this argument in a similar way, by stressing the 'quality' or 'security' of migration flows:

> It is for Governments to decide whether more or less migration is desirable. Our focus in the international community should be on the quality and safety of the migration experience and on what can be done to maximize its developmental benefits. (p. 8)

Human rights are also given a strategic or utilitarian role, as they would enhance the contribution of migration to development: 'for the full benefits of international migration to be realized, the rights of migrants must be respected' (UN, p. 17). The ILO adds:

> All States have the sovereign right to develop their own policies to manage labour migration. International labour standards and other international instruments, as well as guidelines, as appropriate, should play an important role to make these policies coherent, effective and fair. (p. 11)

IMN thus strive to connect migration to development and human rights, as part of a strategy to increase their legitimacy. This is also a way of justifying IOs' role and of 'selling' the added value of their interventions.

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This *pro domo* nature of IMN is usually implicit, but sometimes emerges in quite explicit formulations:

> The book illustrates the nature of international migration and the enormous challenges and opportunities that current migration trends pose for governments. IOM, with a global network of over 100 offices in source, transit, and destination countries, seeks to assist governments in meeting these challenges by providing a range of services that address current migration problems and emerging migration opportunities in a practical and human manner. (IOM, 2000, p. viii)

The UN also valorises its role in international policy cooperation:

> Each of us holds a piece of the migration puzzle, but none has the whole picture. It is time to start putting it together. We have a unique opportunity to do this by identifying, assessing and sharing the many experiments in managing migration now being tried around the world. The United Nations is the most valuable venue for this exchange of ideas, experience and lessons learned. (p. 6)

IMN thus regularly underline their value and the role of the institutions that produce them. The IAMM calls its reports a 'major product' (p. 4), while the ILO calls for 'promoting the role of the ILO as a leading agency on labour migration' (p. 8). The UNDP writes that 'Governments can benefit significantly from technical advice given by expert bodies' (p. 110) – like the UNDP.

Notes

1 For example, the GCIM calls for 'giving local voting rights to authorized and longer-term migrants' (p. 47), which is far from a consensual idea even in the most migrant-friendly countries.
2 This causal relationship between underdevelopment and migration has been much discussed, and contested, particularly in the light of the evidence according to which development itself promotes migration (Massey et al., 1993).

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Ordering Migration

Abstract: *This chapter argues that a core objective of international migration narratives (IMN) is to order migration. Faced with what they perceive as a chaotic reality, they aim at disciplining migration and at transforming it into an orderly process. This ordering effort is twofold: on a discursive or cognitive level, IMN provide a comprehensive analysis of migration that supports a global and orderly picture of what migration is all about and of how it should be governed; then, on an operational level, IMN aim at influencing states' behaviours to translate this 'paper order' into reality.*

Keywords: migrant categories; temporary migration programmes; data; policy recommendations

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The second core objective of IMN is to order migration. Faced with what they perceive as a chaotic reality, they aim at disciplining migration and at transforming it into an orderly process (Geiger and Pécoud, 2013b). This is in line with the quest for 'global governance' described above, which is about addressing the complexity of global issues and bringing together the different actors involved, to harmonise their interventions, and pave the way for a more predictable, coherent, and stable world (Muldoon, 2004). This ordering effort is twofold: on a discursive or cognitive level, IMN provide a comprehensive analysis of migration that supports a global and orderly picture of what migration is all about, and of how it should be governed; then, on an operational level, IMN aim at influencing states' behaviours to translate this 'paper order' into reality. This is not specific to IMN: language is fundamentally about ordering reality and creating the categories that enable its perception; moreover, political language is specifically about proposing an interpretation of reality, with the purpose of subsequently transforming existing reality in this direction. This chapter examines how these dynamics are at play in IMN.

Today's disorders

This quest for order logically presupposes the existence of disorders in today's world. As noted in the previous chapter, IMN believe that states are currently mismanaging migration, with the result that peoples' flows are chaotic, threatening – and therefore unintelligible. A chapter of the UN report is for instance entitled 'Disentangling the complexity of international migration'. The Hague Declaration states that 'in a disorderly world, all too often characterised by the exploitation of migrants, it is highly desirable to seek to achieve more orderly migration' (p. 11). Among the words that pervade IMN, and that describe what migration realities should look like (and what they currently lack), one can mention 'orderly', 'predictable', 'regulated', 'coherent', 'rational', 'planned', 'balanced', or 'transparent'. According to IOM's well-known slogan, 'humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and societies' (IOM, 2005, p. 11), while the IAMM worked in a spirit of 'comprehensiveness, balance and predictability' (p. 9) and concludes that 'humane and orderly management of migration benefits both States and migrants' (p. 23).

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The Hague Declaration is similarly in favour of a 'calm and reasoned deliberation' (p. 5) and adds that 'coherent orderly migration programmes are key instruments in a new approach to migration ... Communicated in a clear and open way such programmes will contribute to channel migration in a predictable manner' (p. 5). The ILO calls for 'formulating and implementing coherent, comprehensive, consistent and transparent policies to effectively manage labour migration in a way that is beneficial to all migrant workers and members of their families and to origin and destination countries' (p. 11), as well as for an 'orderly and equitable process of labour migration' (p. 23).

Identifying sub-themes

A first step in this quest for order is the identification of sub-issues within migration dynamics. Taken as a whole, migration is a complex, enigmatic, threatening, and uncontrollable process. But if decomposed into neatly defined sub-themes, migration becomes both more intelligible and more manageable. In *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Bauman (1991) argues that one of the key features of modernity is the quest for order; in the absence of an order from above, emanating from a divine or transcendental source, modern societies must constantly think about themselves and about how to get organised. This leads to the identification of 'solvable little problems' (1991: 13), for which specific strategies and solutions can be found: 'The world that falls apart into plethora of problems is a manageable world' (1991: 12).

The IAMM provides an example of this process, as its table of content distinguishes 17 migration-related issues (sometimes further decomposed into sub-issues), which are each the object of a chapter:

Entry and Stay (1)
Visa Requirements
Border Control
Residence

Regular Migration (2)
Temporary Migration
Migration for Educational or Training Purposes
Migration for Business and Tourism
Family Visits

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Permanent Migration
Immigration Programmes
Family Reunion
Humanitarian Resettlement

Labour Migration (3)

Irregular Migration (4)
Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants
Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Persons

Human Rights of Migrants (5)
Principle of Non-Discrimination
Principle of Non-Refoulement
Statelessness
Internal Displacement

Asylum and International Protection of Refugees (6)

Integration (7)

Naturalization and Nationality (8)

Return (9)
Return Policy
Assisted Voluntary Return
Mandatory Return
Temporary Return
Reintegration of Migrants

Capacity Building (10)

Migration and Development (11)
Cooperation in Migration and Development
Diaspora Support
"Brain Drain" or "Brain Gain"
Remittances

Migration and Trade (12)

Migration Health (13)

Migration and Environment (14)

International and National Security (15)

Public Information (16)

Research and Data (17)
Research
Collection and Analysis of Data

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Exchange of Information and Data
Data Protection

In an overview of IMN's recommendations, Maas and Koser (2010) identify ten recurring issues:

1. Root causes
2. Labour migration
3. Human rights and protection
4. Migration and development
5. Circular, temporary, and return migration and reintegration
6. Irregular migration
7. Social cohesion and integration
8. Gender
9. Governance and cooperation
10. Evidence, research, and data

The typology is not always exactly the same, as reality can be decomposed in different ways. 'Human trafficking', for example, is sometimes apprehended as an issue of its own, while other reports discuss it within broader chapters, on 'human rights', but also on 'irregular migration' – thus reflecting indecisions over the exact nature of this 'problem'. But overall, reports are organised along roughly the same lines. Thanks to such typology, complex realities turn into simple, reassuring and comforting concepts, which give the impression of a neatly defined problem, and raise the hope of equally neatly defined solutions. This also makes discussion much easier: recent years have witnessed the emergence of standardised expressions, which are found in countless reports, speeches, PowerPoint presentations, etc. The GCIM explains why people migrate through the '3D' factors (*d*emocracy, *d*emography, and *d*evelopment). The same acronym also refers to migrants' jobs (*d*irty, *d*angerous, *d*egrading, but also *d*ifficult or *d*emeaning). Martin and Straubhaar (2002) argue that sending countries are confronted to the '3R' challenges (*r*eturn, *r*emittances, and *r*ecruitment), while successful migration policy supposedly requires the '3C' (*c*ooperation, *c*oordination, and *c*ommunication).

The obvious obstacle to typologies is what Bauman calls 'ambivalence', namely the possibility of placing an element in more than one box (like the 'human trafficking' example cited above). IMN are aware of this problem and, while identifying sub-themes, also call for holistic approaches to migration. The notion of *mainstreaming*, which pervades IOs' jargon,

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echoes this felt need to establish connections between sub-themes and to avoid their contradictory treatment by different government entities: 'Close cooperation among the numerous Government agencies involved in the management of migration, such as ministries of interior and justice, of foreign affairs, of social security as well as trade and health ministries is a top priority' (IAMM, p. 30). The ILO also calls for 'establishing a mechanism to ensure coordination and consultation among all ministries, authorities, and bodies involved with labour migration' (p. 12). In a related manner, the GCIM would like to bring together the different international standards applying to migration:

> As outlined earlier, the legal and normative framework affecting international migrants is dispersed across a number of treaties, customary law provisions, non-binding agreements and policy understandings ... The Commission sees the value of articulating the legal and normative framework in a single compilation of all treaty provisions. (p. 55)

In addition, mainstreaming also refers to the need to harmonise migration policy with other policies. According to the ILO, this implies 'integrating and mainstreaming labour migration in national employment, labour market and development policy' (p. 29). This is necessary because 'international migration is relevant to a broad number of policy issues, including foreign relations, development, trade, labour, human rights, gender equity, health, security and border control' (GCIM, p. 68). This should break with past practices:

> In the past, States and the international community formulated and implemented separate policies on poverty reduction, globalization, security, refugees and migration with sometimes different or even conflicting objectives. As the symbiotic relationship between migration and other global issues becomes more apparent, it is important that the issues not be dealt with in isolation. (IAMM, p. 58)

This 'policy coherence' – to use another term of IOs' jargon – is nevertheless difficult to achieve. Martin and Abella (2009) mention, for example, the contradictions between agricultural and immigration policies in Western states, as state support to the agricultural sector in developed countries penalises farmers in the South and contributes to emigration. Yet, IMN hardly mention this kind of incoherence, which are politically sensitive; the GCIM is the only report to briefly raise the issue, without taking position:

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> The world's richer countries spend over $300 billion a year in agricultural subsidies, more than six times the amount they spend on overseas aid. By depressing world prices for agricultural commodities, those subsidies make it more difficult for small farmers to stay on the land and thereby contribute to the migration of people within and from developing countries. (p. 21)

In other words, while IMN establish connections between migration and other policy fields ('migration and development' or 'migration and human rights'), they omit other possible connections ('migration and agricultural policy'). This is certainly due to the political sensitivity that surrounds these neglected connections. But this nevertheless qualifies the claimed comprehensiveness of IMN, as it obscures potentially important aspects of migration policy debates. Like most political discourses, IMN matter not only for what they say, but also for what they do not say – and for the different ways in which they actually produce ignorance.

The 'international migrant' and its variants

Ordering migration also implies a typology of migrants themselves. The same tension between holism and particularism can be observed here. On one hand, IMN establish the 'migrant' as their main figure and as a relevant actor in world politics, with a specific role to play in terms of fostering development, filling in labour market gaps, etc. On the other hand, the figure of the migrant is decomposed into several sub-figures, which should each deserve a distinct treatment. The first IOM report thus establishes the 'international migrant' category:

> The highly skilled worker from Australia working in Singapore, the refugee from Afghanistan in Iran, the woman from Nigeria trafficked to Italy, and the agricultural worker from Mexico working illegally in the United States are all examples of international migrants. (IOM, 2000, p. vii)

This figure is associated with different, and partly contradictory, characteristics. As someone who leaves his/her country, moves abroad, and takes risks, the migrant is brave and represents a kind of hero: 'Throughout human history, migration has been a courageous expression of the individual's will to overcome adversity and to live a better life' (UN, p. 5). In so doing, the migrant also displays dynamism and ambition: 'Most migrants are characterized by an entrepreneurial spirit

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and are motivated by a determination to succeed in life' (GCIM, p. 48) – hence 'the need for the international community to maximize these benefits and to capitalize on the resourcefulness of people who seek to improve their lives by moving from one country to another' (ibid., p. 5). According to the Hague Declaration, 'Refugees and migrants have skills, knowledge, experience and strong aspirations for a better life. These must be harnessed to productive and enriching endeavours, not wasted by exclusion from the normal life of the community in which they live' (p. 7). It follows that 'new efforts will need to be made to raise public awareness of [migrants'] entrepreneurial energy and the potential contribution to build a just society' (ibid., p. 15). The UN sees business creation among immigrant communities (so-called ethnic economies) as an example of this dynamism (pp. 165–174).

Overall, however, IMN rarely delve into migrants' psychological intimacy. The GCIM explicitly announces that it does not address 'the psychological and health dimensions' (p. viii) of migration. The UNDP nevertheless provides some further details on the psychology of the migrant, who would experience contradictory feelings: 'When people move they embark on a journey of hope and uncertainty' (p. 1). Fortunately, most often everything goes well and migrants are 'happy': 'Most migrants ... reap gains in the form of higher incomes, better access to education and health, and improved prospects for their children. Surveys of migrants report that most are happy in their destination' (p. 2). But there are also sad stories: 'But not all [migrants] do succeed. Migrants who leave friends and family may face loneliness, may feel unwelcome among people who fear or resent newcomers, may lose their jobs or fall ill and thus be unable to access the support services they need in order to prosper' (p. 1). And even if migrants find themselves 'happy' and better off, they still suffer from the separation from their families:

> Despite these financial rewards, separation is typically a painful decision incurring high emotional costs for both the mover and those left behind ... The fact that so many parents, spouses and partners are willing to incur these costs gives an idea of just how large they must perceive the rewards to be. (p. 72)

This is particularly the case for those who leave their children behind them. Even if they benefit from their parents' improved socioeconomic situation, there are still 'emotional' consequences: 'Offsetting the potential gains in consumption, schooling and health, children at home can

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be adversely affected emotionally by the process of migration' (p. 75). It is therefore a relief to read that new technologies can be of some help here: 'The advent of cheap and easy communication, for example, by cell-phone and Skype, has eased the separation of family members and has greatly helped the maintenance of ties and relationships in recent years' (p. 76). In sum, courage and dynamism come along sufferings and pain.

On the other hand, IMN quickly feel the need to go beyond the general characteristics of migrants to establish sub-groups. The first issue here regards the distinction between asylum and migration, which is one of the very few on which IMN do not speak with one voice. The UN excludes refugees from the scope of its reports, because they would not pertain to the relationship between migration and development: 'Because the report focuses mainly on the migration and development nexus it does not cover some important aspects of the movement of people. In particular, it does not discuss forced migration or issues related to the protection of asylum-seekers or refugees' (p. 23). The GCIM also refuses to consider forced migration (p. viii). The IAMM, by contrast, 'attempts to view the movement of all persons, including refugees in a comprehensive way' (p. 19). The Hague Declaration also notes that 'forced and voluntary movements of people are very different but nevertheless related phenomena' (p. 4).

Another criterion that supports distinctions within the migrant category is vulnerability; while IMN see migrants as in particular need of protection, they also recognise that not all migrants are concerned:

> It would be highly misleading to give the impression that international migrants are invariably or inevitably mistreated once they arrive in their country of destination... Even so, the Commission has been concerned to hear of the extent to which migrants are at risk of discrimination and exploitation. (GCIM, p. 60)

IOM proposes a typology of migrants based on the following groups: asylum-seeker, economic migrant, irregular migrant, displaced person, refugee, frontier worker, migrant worker, and seasonal worker (IOM, 2003, p. 10). Other reports further mention student migrants, temporary migrants, migrants under family reunification scheme, etc. Recent debates have also seen the emergence of new categories such as 'climate migrants', 'trafficked migrants', 'forced migrants', 'internally displaced people', 'transit migrants', 'stranded migrants', and so on.

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The objective is always to improve policies by better identifying which people deserve what treatment. Existing policies would fail partly because they rely on outdated and misleading categories: 'the existing international migration system is organised around ideal constructs that are dated and disturbingly binary' (Papademetriou, 2003: 42). Dichotomies such as sending/receiving countries, forced/voluntary migrants, temporary/permanent migration, skilled/unskilled migrants, regular/irregular would no longer apply – hence the need to forge new concepts to better make sense of complex realities. This would enable better policymaking:

> As the number of migrants has increased, so too has the number of legal and administrative categories into which they are placed by governments and international organizations ... In principle, a coherent and comprehensive migration policy should address the particular circumstances of each of these different groups. (GCIM, p. 7)

The risk here is to create more and more categories. And the more categories exist, the more the 'in-between-ness' (or ambivalence) of people's situations becomes obvious and problematic. For example, the line between categories like 'smuggled', 'trafficked', or 'irregular' migrants is often difficult to draw. This has not, however, prevented the establishment of new policy tools in this field, and the constant production of data and norms, which therefore coexist with a weak conceptualisation of the realities they aim at documenting and fighting (Feingold, 2010). In other cases, the blurring of boundaries call for yet other notions (like 'mixed flows' to overcome the migrant-refugee distinction) and to an almost endless process of categorisation and labelling (Zetter, 1991). IMN are aware of this: 'It is important not to overemphasize the distinction between categories of migrants, as many migrants shift between categories' (UNDP, p. 26). IOM goes even further and seems to radically negate the very possibility of creating categories: 'Ultimately, there are as many types of migration as there are migrants' (2003, p. 12).

Gasper and Apthorpe write that development policies are based on categories that are 'at once overdeterminate ... and under-descriptive' (1996: 7). IMN multiply categories, but in so doing rely on an essentialised assumption, according to which migrants exist as a group of their own that would share no common characteristics with non-migrants. They discuss the criteria around which the 'migrant' category should be internally organised, but never address the very construction of

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this category, the ways in which people are included in (or excluded from) 'national' communities, or the grey zones in which 'denizens' can find themselves (Hammar, 1990). Moreover, IMN never envisage that migrants and nonmigrants alike could share certain attributes. Early efforts by the ILO used to concentrate on improving labour standards, and migrant workers' rights were understood as part of a strategy to protect all workers, whether foreign or national. This kind of argument seems to have disappeared from IMN, which are exclusively preoccupied by 'migrants', as if this was a category of its own, with its distinct characteristics.

The need for data

Once boxes, or labels, are established, the next step is to fill them in with data. IMN constantly stress the need for more and better data on migration: 'In order to improve the necessary analysis and policy formulation, data on migration need to be improved' (WESS, p. xxii). This is a standard application of 'evidence-based' policy-making, premised on the assumption that successful policies require an appropriate knowledge of their object: 'Knowledge and information are critical to formulate, implement and evaluate labour migration policy and practice, and therefore its collection and application should be given priority' (ILO, p. 9).

Without data, migration realities remain unknown and difficult to order: just like IMN disentangle migration into smaller – and more easily 'manageable' – problems, they see data as making migration more transparent and intelligible. The more complex the reality one wishes to address, the more necessary the data:

> Precisely because international migration is a complex process, involving not only the migrants themselves but also their relationship to their States of origin and of destination, it is necessary to develop better ways of gathering, processing and disseminating relevant information in order to understand the process itself and disentangle the dynamic interactions between State regulation, the aspirations of migrants and the choices they make. (UN, p. 44)

The fear is that, because of a lack of information, governments may not only fail to govern migration, but also prove unable to envisage certain

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problems: 'The availability of meaningful data on migration stocks and flows is a key element of effective migration management. At present, much of the statistical and documentary information required for sound decision-making is simply not available or does not reach policy makers in a timely way' (IAMM, p. 68). The UNDP makes the same point: 'For the most part, migration data remain patchy, non-comparable, and difficult to access. Data on trade and investment are vastly more detailed. Many aspects of human movement simply remain a blind spot for policy makers' (p. 28). As this quote makes clear, the idea is – again – that migration is a 'poor cousin' and is not as well treated as other (more 'noble') fields of international cooperation, like trade. The lack of data is particularly problematic in less-developed countries, which therefore need to be assisted:

> There is a need to build the capacity of developing countries to generate, collect and disseminate data on international migration, as well as to train personnel to conduct systematic and comprehensive research on the policy relevant aspects of international migration and development. (UN, pp. 20–21)
>
> As data become more widely available, it is necessary to build capacity and train personnel to analyse and interpret the data. Developing countries, in particular, need to develop the statistical and research capacity to carry out policy-relevant analyses. (UN, p. 44)

Data must therefore become an area of cooperation between states, which would exchange information to make migration dynamics as clear as possible. Researchers are understood as playing a key role in this process:

> Migration research may contribute strongly to policy development, for example, when a government is actively looking for policy solutions, commissions a piece of research and acts on some or all of its findings. Or, research may increase awareness about a particular policy issue and by influencing public attitudes may lead to policy changes. The challenge for all States, whether of origin, transit or destination, is to define their migration research needs and to find ways to develop their research capacities. (IAMM, p. 67)

Data ultimately enable what IMN often call 'sound' policies, namely policies that are not based on irrational passions, but on facts and evidence: 'The time has come to move from policies based on hunches and anecdotes to policies built on evidence' (UN, p. 9).

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Filtering migration

According to Bauman, 'the other of order is not another order: chaos is its only alternative' (1991: 7). IMN could propose a migration order that would constitute one option among many others; other actors (governments, unions, employers, etc.) would each propose their own migration order and countries/societies would thus be faced with alternatives, each equally coherent and orderly. But as noted, IMN rarely confront themselves to other perspectives or arguments; they rather tend to present their recommendations as the only possible strategy. IMN emphasise the failure of states' strategies, and normatively present their solutions as the only alternative. This 'chaos or order' vision of the world is regularly phrased in terms of 'challenges and opportunities', or similar wording: 'The book illustrates the nature of international migration and the enormous challenges and opportunities that current migration trends pose for governments' (IOM, 2000, p. viii). The UN similarly writes: 'We cannot ignore the real policy difficulties posed by migration. But neither should we lose sight of its immense potential to benefit migrants, the countries they leave and those to which they migrate' (p. iii).

Faced with the dual nature, IMN aspire at filtering migration, or favouring 'positive' (or orderly, beneficial, etc.) migration while suppressing 'negative' (disorderly, chaotic, threatening, etc.) migration. This filtering process is at the heart of the quest for order. The GCIM writes that 'today's challenge is to formulate policies that maximize the positive impact of migration on countries of origin while limiting its negative consequences' (p. 23) and adds: 'In every part of the world, there is now an understanding that the economic, social and cultural benefits of international migration must be more effectively realized, and that the negative consequences of cross-border movement could be better addressed' (p. vii). This is where 'migration management' comes in. This notion refers to a situation in which the issue is not whether migration should happen or not, but how it should take place in order to be 'positive' (Geiger and Pécoud, 2010). Management is thus to a large extent about filtering migration: 'Migration, if properly managed, is great positive potential of migration for countries of origin and destination, as well as for migrants and their families. The challenge for States is to maximize the positive effects while minimizing the negative implications of migration for States, societies and the migrants themselves' (IAMM, p. 15).

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One of the obvious manifestations of disorderly migration is irregular migration, which must therefore be combated. According to the Hague Declaration, irregular migration is 'disorderly' and 'disruptive' (p. 12). The UN claims that 'a major challenge in managing migration is to prevent irregular or unauthorized migration' (p. 43). Governments have the responsibility to stop such migration: 'Prevention and reduction of irregular migration is a shared responsibility among all States' (IAMM, p. 24). A common argument in the anti-immigration rhetoric is that irregular migrants are unwanted migrants who should not get in. But for IMN, the problem with irregular migration is not that people migrate, it is that they migrate in a disorderly fashion. One of the early promoters of 'migration management', Jonas Widgren,[1] writes that 'movement will probably take place anyhow, if not in an orderly, then in a disorderly fashion' (1994: 3). This calls for what he calls a 'new global migration order' in which migration will be well organised. This also leads IMN to express some sympathy for irregular migrants: 'It is worth recalling that in most cases, migration, forced or otherwise, is a rational human response either to deal with an intolerable situation or to fulfil aspirations for a better life' (Hague, p. 12). In other words, IMN have nothing against migrants themselves; the problem rather lies with the disorder they create if they do not migrate as planned.

Apart from irregular migration, UNDP mentions three other types of migration that stem from what it calls 'negative drivers': (1) insecurity-driven migration (linked to conflict and violence, and encompassing refugees), (2) development-induced migration (caused by the construction of large infrastructures, like dams, or by agricultural expansion, for example), and (3) human trafficking. In such cases, migration is expected to have negative 'human development' outcomes and should therefore be prevented. Mobility can be 'good' and foster development – but only if it obeys to certain rules and takes place in an orderly fashion.

Temporary migration programmes

This normative separation between good and bad migration, and the political ambition of filtering migration in order to make sure it remains on the 'good' side, motivate IMN's call for temporary labour migration programs. All reports favour this policy option, without exception. The Cairo Declaration already noted:

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> Governments of countries of destination are invited to consider the use of certain forms of temporary migration, such as short-term and project-related migration, as a means of improving the skills of nationals of countries of origin, especially developing countries and countries with economies in transition. (p. 68)

Such programs are perceived as the ideal way to order migration: 'Immigration programmes can help to address the consequences of demographic trends and labour market needs in a planned, balanced and predictable way' (IAMM, p. 38). The GCIM agrees: 'States and the private sector should consider the option of introducing carefully designed temporary migration programmes as a means of addressing the economic needs of both countries of origin and destination' (p. 16), while the UNDP wishes 'to expand schemes for truly seasonal work in sectors such as agriculture and tourism' (p. 96). The UN lists the advantages of such programmes:

> Temporary migration programmes are becoming more numerous. They are a response to the rising demand for labour in receiving countries. Although the number of migrants admitted under the more recent programmes is modest, there is potential for these programmes to result in beneficial synergies for migrants, countries of origin and countries of destination. Under such programmes, migrants benefit from having a legal status and countries of origin gain from remittances and the eventual return of migrants, provided the experience they gain abroad can be put to productive use at home. Receiving countries secure the workers they need and may enhance the positive effects of migration by allowing migrants to stay long enough to accumulate savings. (p. 18)

The WESS develops the same arguments, and adds that temporary migration also lessens the problems raised by migrant integration:

> One possibility for reducing the gaps between the demand and supply of labour in developed countries would be to increase temporary migrant flows. For destination countries, temporary migration might present fewer difficulties of social integration. For countries of origin, temporary work could reduce domestic unemployment and be a source of remittances (and, possibly, also of a capital gain in the form of repatriated assets); it might also reduce the impact of the brain drain if temporary migrants returned to their country of origin and use their newly acquired skills there. (p. xx)

Such programmes would pave the way for the triple-win objective discussed above, while also helping combat irregular migration: 'The great

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advantage in successful migration management strategies is that they provide policies to strengthen legal migration by labour migrants…, thereby reducing the incentives for unauthorised migration, smuggling and trafficking' (Hague, p. 11). According to this 'communicating vessels' logic, migrants who move through regular and temporary migration schemes also move from chaos/disorder to order. IMN recognise the limits of this policy option, which 'do not constitute an effective response to the global jobs crisis' (GCIM, p. 20), while also contributing to marginalise migrants:

> Temporary migration programmes do not, however, provide a full solution to the challenges of migration. In particular, their temporary status makes the adaptation of migrants more difficult, and may lead to their marginalization. Furthermore, given the structural needs for additional migrants in industrialized countries, which are associated to their economic, demographic and social trends, filling such needs exclusively with temporary migrants may turn out to be problematic. (UN, p. 18)

IMN do not go any further and remain silent on their contradictions. It is indeed difficult to call for temporary labour migration while also stressing the imperative of integrating migrants and respecting their rights (Lucas, 2006; Martin, 2006). These programmes also imply a complementarity between sending and receiving countries that contradicts the 'in the same boat' argument described above. One can also observe that, while IMN aim at 'new' approaches to migration, they advocate policy measures that are far from new and that already constitute the main pillar of immigration policies in many countries (like the Gulf states).

Analysing migration and prescribing migration policies

As argued, IMN aspire at a double order: first making migration dynamics transparent and intelligible, through data and research, and thanks to policy categories that transform indistinct flows of people into separate policy problems and issues; and second transposing this proper understanding of migration into reality and 'managing' migration in a way that is 'orderly', 'predictable', 'balanced', etc. This double aspiration is inherent to political discourses, which always connect a specific assessment of reality and a set of political prescription. This points to the deep

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relation between knowledge and power, as describing reality cannot be dissociated from the way in which one wishes to modify it. Yet, unlike other ideologically loaded political discourses, IMN do not acknowledge their normative efforts. They indeed claim that they merely 'reflect reality' and that their political recommendations stem directly out of their 'objective' descriptions. In a typically technocratic and managerial fashion, the normative dimension of IMN is hidden behind a 'technical', 'evidence-based', or 'scientific' assessment of the 'problems', as well as behind the universal – and therefore apparently consensual – nature of their approach to migration. As a result, IMN never explicitly support a political position.

To put it differently, IMN do not smoothly go from 'evidence' to 'policy' (as their evidence-based philosophy claims). They constantly mix the research and political levels; their two-fold quest for order makes up for a situation in which what they observe is inseparable from what they want to prescribe. What is therefore problematic with IMN is that they present both orders (analytical and political) as straightforward, whereas there are always different and plural ways of ordering and governing reality. As argued, IMN rely on a reified understanding of the 'migrant' as essentially distinct from non-migrants or nationals. This option makes sense, but could just as well be challenged. As already noted, there are words that are completely absent from IMN; this is the case of *class*, for example: such a notion displays a 'leftist' nature that makes it unsuitable for IMN, but its absence also indicates that they never envisage situations in which migrants and nationals would share certain interests because of a shared social position. This word would also emphasise the diverging interests that exist within (sending and receiving) societies, in a way that directly questions 'triple-win' objectives. But in the absence of this word, such an alternative ordering of the world is impossible.

It follows that different policy options are available, depending upon the way one assesses reality. By negating the existence of competing understandings of migration-related issues, and by claiming that their interpretation is universal, scientific and therefore objective, IMN negate the plurality of political strategies to govern migration. Only one kind of policy is envisaged, because only one kind of labelling is acknowledged. Of course, 'a non-labelled way out cannot exist' (Zetter, 1991: 59): labels and categories are necessary, both to understand reality and to intervene and design policies to change reality. But IMN obscure the multiplicity of ways in which migration can be conceptualised – and therefore the

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multiplicity of political strategies. In so doing, they depoliticise migration, which is the object of the following chapter.

Note

1 Jonas Widgren was a Swedish politician and the founder of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

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8
Depoliticising Migration

Abstract: *This chapter argues that international migration narratives (IMN) depoliticise their topic and examine the strategies through which this is achieved. These include: (1) the reliance on ambiguous terms and notions that support different and sometimes contradictory interpretations; (2) the consequent development of arguments that remain at an abstract level and avoid taking clear positions in the key debates raised by international migration; (3) the technocratic reliance on expertise and empirical evidence to avoid political controversies; and (4) a naturalisation of the global socioeconomic and political context in which migration takes place, which is taken for granted and therefore unchallenged.*

Keywords: migration debates; medias; capitalism; migration control

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IMN address a politically sensitive topic. In both sending and receiving countries, issues such as irregular migration, the brain drain, migrant integration, etc. are the object of often intense controversies. But the tone of IMN always remains calm and distant, as if they were unaffected by the political, and even emotional, nature of their topic. Moreover, IMN propose an ideal – and very ambitious – vision of what migration should look like. Given that very few (if any) states match these standards today (Martin, 2006), this amounts to fundamentally challenging the way migration is governed. But again, this is done in a surprisingly concrete, pragmatic, and down-to-earth manner. IMN's grand vision could have translated into a vigorous and frontal criticism of today's politics. The emphasis on human rights, for example, could easily support a vehement denunciation of the ways in which states treat irregular migrants. The call for more migration could also lead to a sharp rejection of current efforts to control borders. But what IMN propose instead is a catalogue of seemingly technical, simple, or common-sense recommendations. This odd combination of a radical message with a modest tone is a general characteristic of IOs' narratives. These organisations indeed address some of the worst problems in the world but always in a soft way – so as not to hurt states' sensitivities. This leads international narratives to nullify their political nature. This chapter examines some of the strategies at play in this depoliticising process.

Words and their meanings

A first mechanism regards the words used by international narratives, and the meanings they are given. IOs' reports have a jargon of their own, composed of words of different political origins, whose meaning has been gradually transformed. The notion of *civil society*, for example, was born in the context of totalitarian regimes and used to refer to non-violent patterns of resistance (Chandhoke, 2007). The word *capacity-building* finds its roots in attempts, by social movements, to empower disadvantaged groups and help them challenge power relations (Eade, 2007). Today, these notions pervade international narratives but have lost their radical meaning: *civil society* merely designates NGOs, while *capacity-building* usually refers to the creation of institutions in less-developed states or to the training of government officials. One could also mention the word *cooperation*, 'the sweetest and seemingly entirely unproblematic of words'

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(Apthorpe, 1997: 53), which tends to place so-called stakeholders on an equal footing and obscures the power imbalances between, for example, governments and NGOs, or between governments in different regions of the world.

In IMN, an example is provided by the notion of *circulation*. This term (and others such as *circular migration*) refers to the back-and-forth movements of migrants across international borders; it is in line with research on transnational migration, according to which migrants do not simply settle down permanently or return, but maintain long term and permanent connections with both their countries of origin and of destination. The GCIM thus 'concludes that the old paradigm of permanent migrant settlement is progressively giving way to temporary and circular migration' (p. 31). This has become a catchword in much of current policy debates on migration (Vertovec, 2007). What is unclear, however, is who decides that migration should be 'circular'. As discussed above, IMN strongly support temporary migration programs in which, indeed, migrants are expected to circulate. Yet, this can amount to imposed patterns of short-term (or seasonal) migration, which have little to do with the more spontaneous and less-regulated patterns of circulation that have long characterised migration dynamics. The word *circulation* attractively envisages a world of easy cross border mobility, with people smoothly moving from one country to another. In practice, however, it can also trap people, who become locked in forced patterns of labour migration that may easily favour exploitation. The popularity of this word is thus largely due to its ambivalence, and to the way in which its meaning has progressively changed.

Another related example is the notion of *freedom*, as used by the UNDP. *Freedom* is obviously an ambitious word, with a far-reaching normative meaning. In a world in which the possibility to cross-borders is so carefully monitored, the use of this word could signal a fundamental rethinking of the politics of migration. At first sight, this is what UNDP does: it claims that 'being able to decide where to live is a key element of human freedom' and consequently 'lays out the case for governments to reduce restrictions on movement within and across their borders, so as to expand human choices and freedoms' (p. 1). But at the end of the day, this celebration of freedom leads to a call for more (temporary) labour migration, embedded in an overall utilitarian framework that aims at increasing the usefulness of migration for development purposes. This is quite far away from the full implications of the word *freedom*. There are

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obvious political reasons at play here, which makes it easy to understand that IMN cannot call for 'open borders' or the free circulation of people. But the result is a strong dichotomy between the words used and the policy recommendation.

This can interpreted as disappointing, or even cynical. IOs would invoke grand ideals and values, which would then boil down to much less ambitious policy recommendations. But this is also an indication of the plasticity of IMN's language, which can – at first sight – federate diverging views. By associating the word *freedom* with standard labour migration recommendations, IMN aim at satisfying both those who aspire at fundamental changes in immigration policies and those who more modestly call for greater access to foreign workforce. By playing with words, and by misusing them or transforming their meaning, IMN thus hope to get rid of the disagreements and divergence in migration politics.

In his *Nineteen Eighty-Four* novel, George Orwell conceives the idea of a 'newspeak': in Oceania's totalitarian regime, the government has created a specific language, with the purpose of shaping the way people think. In particular, the newspeak eliminates words that could support a criticism of the regime – and therefore the possibility of conceiving a reality different than the one imposed by the government. Even if comparing IMN to *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is arguably a bit excessive, IMN rely on a different strategy: as the examples above show, they do not eradicate words with a strong critical potential, but rather misuse them and change their meaning so that they become innocent and unchallenging words. But at times, IMN seem to function like Orwell's newspeak and to reject the concepts that do not fit into their understanding of migration.

This is the case of the 'brain drain', for example. This is a difficult topic for IMN: it refers to some of the most negative outcomes of migration and is incompatible with 'triple win' objectives and the overall synergy between migration and development (Levatino and Pécoud, 2012). The GCIM thus rejects this notion:

> The notion of 'brain drain' is a somewhat outmoded one, implying as it does that a migrant who leaves her or his own country will never go back there. In the current era, there is a need to capitalize upon the growth of human mobility by promoting the notion of 'brain circulation'. (p. 31)

This sentence is nevertheless confusing. It mixes empirical evidence, according to which skilled migrants would return to their country of

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origin, and a prescriptive call for policies that favour 'circulation' (with its 'good' development impact) and combat 'bad' brain drain dynamics. The notion of 'brain drain' is rejected, not really because evidence would show that skilled migrants do return, but rather because it does not fit into the GCIM's optimistic worldviews. Logically, the GCIM should first look at the available evidence regarding the behaviour of skilled migrants, and then decide whether or not the 'brain drain' concept is relevant. But this sentence rather condemns this notion on the basis of what the GCIM wishes skilled migrants should do. Rather than 'evidence-based policy-making', this is 'wishful thinking' – as policy recommendations are based on what one wishes evidence to look like. The result is the elimination, or at least marginalisation, of a word – and of the disturbing reality it describes.

Abstract and contradictory arguments

The style of IMN is abstract and vague. Abstraction enables IMN to remain at a very general level and to avoid going into the details, while vagueness makes it possible to reconcile different – and sometimes contradictory – arguments. The result is a text that, while apparently concrete and often full of facts and details, manages to leave unanswered some of the key political questions.

One can for instance observe the strong reliance on terms such as *in general* or *often*, as well as the systematic reference to 'research', 'evidence' and data, whose origin is nevertheless unclear (emphasises added):

> While *research* has found that migration can, in certain circumstances, have negative effects on locally born workers with comparable skills, the *body of evidence* suggests that these effects are *generally* small and may, in some contexts, be entirely absent. (UNDP, p. 3)
>
> Migrants who move from lower to higher income economies are *often* able to gain an income that is *20 or 30 times* higher than they would be able to gain at home. (GCIM, p. 12)
>
> New migration networks are appearing almost every day. *Most often*, these networks circumvent government control of flows and draw on a wide range of transnational channels. These channels can be economic, cultural, sociological, political, ethnic, religious, or even criminal in nature. At the same time, *more and more people* have been involved in organizing migration for some years now. The emergence of a veritable migration industry is

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> noteworthy. Accordingly, migrants are both assisted and *often* exploited by a disparate body of agents, traffickers, smugglers, and recruitment agencies. (IOM, 2003, p. 16)
>
> *Mounting evidence* indicates that international migration is *usually* positive both for countries of origin and of destination. (UN, p. 13)
>
> There has been much debate about whether migrants compete or complement native workers, but *empirical research* shows that, although migrants may cause some reduction of wages or higher unemployment among low-skilled native workers and among previous migrants, these effects are very small and are certainly smaller than the positive effects migration has in promoting additional demand for goods and services and hence economic growth. (UN, p. 22)

In addition, IMN rely on general trends (*more and more*, etc.), which reflect a kind of one-way course of history. In an analysis of WTO rhetoric, Siroux (2008) underlines their 'linear metaphors', according to which international trade is a rectilinear process that can perhaps stagnate, temporarily slow down, or accelerate, but that will never modify its trajectory. This is further linked to the detachment of IMN from time and space. IMN aspire at universality and at a message that would transcend geographical boundaries and apply everywhere in the world. They almost never mention a specific country, but speak of 'states', 'societies', or 'governments' without any further reference. This has to do with an intergovernmental context in which states are reluctant to be singled out or criticised. But this also has to do with the voluntary construction of migration as a 'global' issue. As Amaya-Castro (2012) observes, migration is not automatically a 'global' phenomenon; it has to be constructed as such. IMN bring together a wide range of different realities, from different places and different times and aim at transforming these bits and pieces into a single, coherent, and 'global' trend. Abstraction is part of this strategy, as it avoids going into the details of specific situations and enables a schematised and universalised presentation of the topic.

In the same way, IMN seem to be largely unconcerned about history. The socioeconomic and political changes in the broader context in which migration takes place are rarely mentioned. An example is the 2008 economic crisis, which is mentioned in the following terms in the 2009 UNDP report:

> At the time of writing, the world is undergoing the most severe economic crisis in over half a century. Shrinking economies and layoffs are affecting millions of workers, including migrants...With recovery, many of the

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> same underlying trends that have been driving movement during the past half-century will resurface, attracting more people to move. It is vital that governments put in place the necessary measures to prepare for this. (p. 3)

The crisis may have an impact on migration, but only in that it temporarily suspends, or interrupts, the unchanged progression of migration. The reference to the 'last fifty years' also evacuates the changes that have taken place since the end of the WW2, from the oil crisis to the deregulation of labour markets or the end of the Cold War. In the same way, one finds no reference in IMN on the colonial roots of labour migration and on the ways in which former colonial dynamics have contributed to shape today's migration. This intemporality also enables IMN to forget the context in which they have themselves emerged: IOs could for instance reflect on their long-standing (and partly unsuccessful) efforts to promote the human rights of migrants, or on the factors that have enabled them to step into migration policy debates since the 1990s. But reports never do so; as noted, they do not even mention each other and thus emerge out of a contextual vacuum.

When IMN leave this abstract level, they immediately go down to very concrete examples. States are then named, as examples to follow, but in a largely anecdotal manner. This is, for example, clear with so-called good or best practices. The identification of these practices is a standard activity for IOs and is expected to highlight successful policy measures, which should then influence other governments. The idea is not to directly prescribe policies, but to give stimulating examples to governments in search of inspiration. This is quite problematic, not only because of the often unclear criteria according to which 'good' practices were singled out but also because they hardly address the context in which they were designed and their subsequent transferability from one country to another (Feek, 2007). As far as migration is concerned, the ILO provides a long list of such practices. For France, for example, one can find a reference to the general philosophy of the 'codevelopment' concept that supposedly inspire policymaking in this country (see Lacroix, 2010, for further details), as well as the description of local initiatives, concerning, for example, the recruitment, by a supermarket in Marseilles, of young unemployed people of migrant origin (p. 86). This hardly contributes to a better understanding of French immigration policy. Information is either too general, or too detailed.

The same pattern can be observed when reports attempt to give local flavour to their recommendations. The UNDP report starts with

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the story of two young people, Juan (who migrated from Mexico to Canada) and Bhagyawati (who leaves her Indian village to settle down in Bangalore). IOM reports are also full of 'real world' stories, which are often about migrants who were 'helped' by this organisation, and who are therefore expected to illustrate its usefulness and the relevance of its message. One can easily understand the media or educational reasons for IOs to cite such 'concrete' examples. But these nevertheless contribute to dehistoricise migration experiences; one knows nothing of the political, economic, or social context in which these anecdotes take place. What is absent is the intermediary level, which would look both at how general principles are implemented and at how concrete stories are embedded in broader contexts.

Malkki (1995) argues that the idea according to which forced migrants and refugees should be protected in the name of universal principles like human rights, while apparently relevant and even generous, is actually problematic. Situations of vulnerability are not only abstract situations of human rights violations but also specific social realities embedded in a larger context:

> Involuntary or forced movements of people are always only one aspect of much larger constellations of sociopolitical and cultural processes and practices. Nationalism and racism, xenophobia and immigration policies, state practices of violence and war, censorship and silencing, human rights and challenges to state sovereignty, "development" discourse and humanitarian interventions, citizenship and cultural or religious identities, travel and diaspora, and memory and historicity are just some of the issues and practices that generate the inescapably relevant context of human displacement today. In many studies of refugees, however, these are the kinds of "background information" or "root causes" that sometimes have been considered, for many reasons, "beyond the scope of study". (1995: 496)

Omitting this context, and jumping to general trends and universal standards, amounts to a form of violence, as it negates the singularity of peoples' experience and transform them into speechless, anonymous, and dehistoricised 'victims'.

Unclear political positions

One of the outcomes of IMN vagueness and abstractness is the near impossibility of understanding their political positions on certain issues.

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On paper, IMN aspire at guiding states and at formulating recommendations to governments. But a policy maker who would take IMN seriously and carefully read the reports with the hope of finding help and advice would probably feel confused, as he/she would be confronted to a plurality of often contradictory ideas. This section provides two examples of such ambiguities.

The first regards irregular migration. IMN address this issue, but in ambiguous terms. They refer to general principles and call for the respect of irregular migrants' rights: 'It is clearly important that, where individuals with irregular status are identified, enforcement procedures should follow the rule of law and basic rights should be respected' (UNDP, p. 99). Two options are then envisaged: 'States should resolve the situation of migrants with irregular status by means of return or regularization' (GCIM, p. 80). The Hague Declaration is slightly more specific as it limits regularisation opportunities to 'humanitarian' criteria: 'For unauthorised migrants who meet specified humanitarian criteria, access to legal procedures, including regularisation, should be considered' (Hague, p. 6). The UN considers a broader set of criteria for regularising migrants (work, housing, etc.) but seems reluctant to acknowledge the political nature of the problem, which would rather have to do with 'administrative' problems: 'One strategy to manage irregular migration, particularly when it results from administrative inefficiencies, is to permit the regularization of foreigners in an irregular situation, provided they meet certain conditions, such as holding a job and having housing and the means to support themselves' (p. 43).

When it comes to the return option, IMN argue that 'all returns should be undertaken in a manner that is safe, dignified, and humane, with full respect for fundamental human rights' (GCIM, p. 38). Their preference goes to the so-called voluntary or assisted return, which apparently conciliates states' right to expulse unwanted foreigners with migrants' rights and 'freedom'. Here again, language appears as the only context in which a consensus can be found; a concept such as 'voluntary return' may well be meaningless as it may refer to a reality that never, or hardly, exists. Yet, its existence contributes to hiding the power imbalances and the situations of violence and vulnerability that characterise such practices. Thanks to such a slogan, IOM has, for example, succeeded in becoming a provider of such services to governments (Collyer, 2012).

A second example is the 'brain drain' and the negative consequences of skilled migration. As noted, IMN are unhappy about this and reject

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the term, with the hope that the absence of the concept will lead to the disappearance of the phenomenon. When addressing this issue, IMN navigate between several contradictory arguments (Levatino and Pécoud, 2012). One can find calls for limiting the out-migration of skilled professionals from less-developed regions: 'High-income countries should refrain (directly or through recruitment agencies) from actively recruiting skilled personnel in countries that are already experiencing skill shortages or, more positively, support the formation of human capital in those countries' (UN, p. 19). The ILO also calls for 'adopting measures to mitigate the loss of workers with critical skills, including by establishing guidelines for ethical recruitment' (p. 30). This 'ethical recruitment' objective is in line with the WTO Code of Practice, adopted in 2010, to introduce non-binding norms in the recruitment of health workers (Merçay, 2014).

But this political orientation coexists with other statements, according to which human mobility should not be constrained. The GCIM thus expresses doubts on these 'ethical recruitment' standards: 'It is ... doubtful that the codes of conduct some destination countries have formulated in an attempt to introduce a degree of self-regulation in the recruitment of foreign professionals are effective' (p. 25). The Commission indeed 'has serious doubts about quick-fix solutions that would seek to bar professional personnel from leaving their own country and finding employment elsewhere' (p. 25), and even calls for more skilled migration: 'Governments and employers should jointly review current barriers to the mobility of highly educated personnel, with a view to removing those which are unnecessarily hindering economic competitiveness' (p. 20). The UNDP makes more or less the same point: 'Blaming the loss of skilled workers on the workers themselves largely misses the point, and restraints on their mobility are likely to be counter-productive – not to mention the fact that they deny the basic human right to leave one's own country' (p. 3).

IMN also reject compensation mechanisms, like those that underpin the so-called Bhagwati tax, for example: 'Calls for states that recruit foreign professionals to provide direct financial compensation to the countries from which those personnel come are not practicable' (GCIM, p. 25). This leaves IMN with two options. The first is to encourage skilled migrants to promote development in their country of origin: 'Skilled migrants who have settled in other countries, especially the more

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advanced economies, are to be encouraged to share their knowledge and other resources for the development of their country of origin' (Hague, p. 13). The second is to encourage governments to invest in education and leave the door open if educated people want to move abroad:

> All countries should make substantial investments in the education and training of their citizens in order to increase the competitiveness of their economies. If those economies are unable to absorb all of the people who have acquired professional skills, then such people can contribute to the development of their own homeland by migrating, sending remittances home and returning to their country of origin on a temporary or longer-term basis, bringing the knowledge they have gained while living and working abroad. (GCIM, p. 24)

IMN contradictions reflect their uncomfortable situation and the extreme difficulty of elaborating federating and global messages given the deep disagreements between states (Duncan, 2006). In this respect, contradictions are a weakness of IMN, but an unavoidable and somewhat useful weakness that enables them to circumvent oppositions and promote a debate despite the multiple reasons that make it unlikely to happen. Discourse again emerges as the only place in which contradictions can be accommodated and moulded into a single narrative. This is one of the factors behind the peaceful tone of IMN, which cover violent divergences with a 'gloss of harmony' (Müller, 2013).

IMN thus strive to elevate themselves above partisan debates. They aim at transcending the antagonisms and dilemmas that are at the heart of migration politics. In so doing, they display what Roland Barthes (1972) called 'neithernorism', namely 'a mythological figure, which consists in stating two opposites and balancing one by the other to reject them both'. They consider different political options and reject them all to seek refuge in a higher – but unintelligible – position. This is further reinforced by the absence of counter-debates, or counter-positions, to IMN. As noted, reports do not quote each other and stand in isolation, without having to oppose their arguments to alternative views. This makes debate completely impossible (even if, as will be showed below, IMN constantly call for debates). In the context of 'normal' political debates, political discourses struggle to be more convincing than other competing discourses. IMN do not need to do so, as they embody an 'evidence-based' common sense that has no enemy and that cannot be attacked because of its claimed neutrality and objectivity.

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Rationalising and 'debating'

A frequent criticism of 'global governance' mechanisms is that they would be confiscated by elites. Governance would suffer from a democratic deficit, as key actors (like the private sector, NGOs, IOs, or even government representatives) would exchange behind closed doors and reach agreements without taking into account the views and preferences of the concerned population. One can indeed observe that IMN appear quite disconnected from the way in which migration is discussed in most societies. Mary Kritz writes that the GCIM's 'optimistic picture of international migration stands in glaring contrast to the negative image portrayed in much of the media, public opinion surveys, and policy circles in the United States and the European Union' (2006: 57). It is also true that IMN are produced by elites (international civil servants, experts, etc.), which may find it difficult to understand the way other social groups think about migration:

> The [GCIM's] recommendations ... represent the views of the elites. The Commission does not seem to have collected much in the way of information about the opinions of mass publics in the many countries it discussed and visited, preferring instead to consult with elites in such countries and to address its recommendations to broader elites, including governments, NGOs, and the ... United Nations. (Teitelbaum 2006: 118)

This criticism should be qualified, however. The elites behind IMN are indeed disconnected from the negative views on migration that are commonly associated with public opinions. But they are also disconnected from the views of the elites that make migration policy, especially in Western countries. In Germany for instance, IMN key arguments (like the 'migration and development nexus') hardly affect the security-oriented way in which dominant governmental actors treat migration (Hilber and Baraulina, 2012). Even when European states incorporate IMN ideas about the need to coordinate development and migration policies, they do so in a way that may not be faithful to IMN spirit. Adepoju *et al.* observe, for example, that 'it is worrying that under the cover of "co-development", an increasing part of Europe's official development aid is spent on migration control' (2010: 63).

It remains that, for IMN, the distance between their recommendations and what Western populations are thought to think about migration is a source of concern. IMN often acknowledge that the majority of people

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in receiving societies are not in favour of migration, let alone of more migration: 'Migration not infrequently gets a bad press. Negative stereotypes portraying migrants as 'stealing our jobs' or 'scrounging off the taxpayer' abound in sections of the media and public opinion' (UNDP, p. v). The GCIM also writes that 'in many societies, citizens are expressing concerns, both legitimate and unfounded, about the arrival of people from other countries and cultures' (p. 10). The GCIM wording – 'legitimate and unfounded' – is a nice example of 'neithernorism' and reflects IMN hesitations. The Hague Declaration recognises that 'there can be genuine social stresses associated with refugee and migration movement' (p. 11). But on the other hand, 'some of the resistance to migration is shaped by popular misperceptions of its consequences' (UNDP, p. 110). Whatever its relevance, the negative opinion regarding migration must be taken into account as it contributes to influence policymaking: 'these fears are exaggerated and often unfounded. Nevertheless, these perceptions matter because they affect the political climate in which policy decisions about the admission and treatment of migrants are made' (UNDP, p. 71).

The dilemma is clear. There is a need for more open immigration policies, based on the benefits of migration. But such policies risk being blocked by public hostility:

> While the evidence on mobility points to significant gains for movers and, in many cases, benefits also for destination and origin countries, any discussion of policy must recognize that in many destination countries, both developed and developing, attitudes among the local population towards migration are at best mildly permissive and often quite negative. (UNDP, p. 108)

The objective of IMN is to convince governments and policymakers of the necessity of reforms in immigration policies. But even if governments were convinced, they could hesitate to run counter to their electorate:

> The understanding of migration issues in migration management has broadened and deepened, and the examples of good practices have increased significantly. It has become increasingly clear, however, that public perceptions of migration and migrants play a critical role in determining the policy choices available to governments. (IOM, 2005, p. 11)

Public opinion, then, is the major obstacle to proper migration management. It can sometimes block much-needed labour migration policies: 'Even where labour shortages are generally recognised to exist, political

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factors and the need to manage conflicting and competing migration policy concerns will determine whether, and to what degree, shortages call for the admission of foreign workers' (IOM 2008, p. 292). The issue, therefore, is not whether there is a need for migrant workers, but whether or not governments will be able to convince their public opinion of the existence of this need. IMN recognise 'political factors', but 'politics' here does not concern the labour market or the economic organisation of societies; it is only about selling policies to public opinions that do not approve them. According to the UNDP, governments wishing to implement its recommendations will need a 'political courage' (p. v): 'Forging that new deal and selling it to the public will require political vision and committed leadership' (UNDP, p. 95).

To put it differently, the battle is between reason and passion, between objectivity and subjectivity. Sensible governments should be convinced by the 'evidence' that proves the benefits of migration, but need to address the irrational and ungrounded fears that dominate the public opinion. 'Who will win?', asks the UNDP:

> Policy makers in countries with large migrant populations face conflicting pressures: significant levels of resistance to increased immigration in public opinion on the one hand, and sound economic and social rationales for the relaxation of entry barriers on the other. How can we expect policies to evolve in the next few decades? Will they evolve in ways that enable us to realize the potential gains from mobility, or will popular pressures gain the upper hand? (p. 46)

Needless to say, IMN firmly stands on the side of reason:

> We recognize that the formulation of policies towards human movement must contend with what can at times look like formidable political opposition to greater openness. However, having considered issues of political feasibility, we argue that a properly designed programme of liberalization – designed so as to respond to labour market needs in destination places while also addressing issues of equity and non-discrimination – could generate significant support among voters and interest groups. (UNDP, p. 18)

The challenge, therefore, is to convince people and explain how and why they will benefit from migration. This is a matter of pedagogy for governments:

> Public attitudes in a number of countries remain hostile to migrants. In several States, policies and programmes addressing migrants are unclear, enabling the issue of migration to become highly politicized and spurring the

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> formation of anti-immigration movements. Governments should actively seek to reverse this trend by highlighting the benefits that migrants bring to the host country, promoting tolerance and understanding, and combating all forms of xenophobia. (WESS, p. xx)

> Against a background of popular scepticism about migration, a critical issue is the political feasibility of our proposals ... Reform is possible, but only if steps are taken to address the concerns of local people, so that they no longer view immigration as a threat, either to themselves individually or to their society. (UNDP, p. 108)

IMN further argue that negative views on migration are linked to today's unsuccessful policies. If policies were improved according to their recommendation, they would enjoy greater success, which would in turn bring them public support:

> When would-be migrants and traffickers are able to violate immigration policies with impunity, the credibility of legal admission systems suffers. A public that perceive immigration to be out of control may react negatively to all forms of migration, not necessarily distinguishing between legal and unauthorized migration. (IOM, 2000, p. 45)

IMN envisage a virtuous circle in which governments both better educate the masses and better reach their policy objectives:

> Migration and refugee policies which are not fair, transparent, openly debated and consensually grounded are likely to generate suspicion and resentment amongst the citizens of destination countries ... Governments must explain to the public why they are admitting migrants and refugees, how many are being admitted and what support they will receive from the state. (GCIM, pp. 45–46)

This is why 'dialogue' and 'debates' are necessary conditions for proper migration 'management':

> Open dialogue is critical if progress is to be made in the public debate about migration. In this debate, the benefits should not be overplayed and the concerns about distributional effects – especially among low-skilled workers – need to be recognized and taken into account. (UNDP, pp. 95–96)

This is nevertheless problematic for IMN, as they aim at convincing people and governments of the benefits of migration, while simultaneously encouraging more public debates. In other words, debates are needed, but their outcome is already known (as they should validate IMN views). This is a logical contradiction in IMN 'evidence-based' technocratic

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approach: as 'sound' policies are determined on the basis of facts, debate is unnecessary; but it nevertheless must take place to make these policies acceptable. The problem for IMN is all the more tricky because migration would constitute a sensitive issue, and that public debates may therefore easily get out of control:

> Because migration is a contentious issue, information is often used selectively at present, to support the arguments of specific interest groups. While this is a natural and usually desirable feature of democratic discussion, it can come at the cost of objectivity and factual understanding. (UNDP, p. 110)
>
> The public debate is too often fuelled by a lack of information, a negative role played by the media, deliberate misinformation and inadequate political leadership to address what is an entirely manageable issue. (Hague, p. 18)
>
> Destination countries should decide on the design of migration policies and target numbers of migrants through political processes that permit public debate and the balancing of different interests ... Partly out of fear that debate over migration will take on racist overtones, discussion of migration ... has often been more muted than might have been expected. While the reasons for caution are laudable, there is a danger that self-censorship will be counter-productive. (UNDP, p. 111)

IMN face here an arguably complex situation. Debate is necessary, but risky. It must take place, but avoids excesses. It must enable an exchange of views (otherwise, it is no longer a debate) but also remain 'objective'. To reach this objective, IMN believe in the key role of the media:

> In many countries around the world, the situation of migrants in society has been jeopardized by media stories that portray members of migrant and minority populations in the worst possible light: as criminals, terrorists, and more generally as people who represent a threat to the established way of life. In some situations, ignorance and careless reporting have obscured objective reality. In the worst cases, journalists have been responsible for propagating myths and supporting the agenda of populist politicians and pressure groups that seek to mobilize xenophobia as a means of attracting popular support. Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants who have arrived in a country in an irregular manner have often been singled out for attack. (GCIM, p. 52)

Media should, on the contrary, act responsibly and contribute to smooth debates:

> The leadership role of the media is of exceptional importance in avoiding stereotyped representation and in contributing ... to an atmosphere of welcome and acceptance of refugees and migrants. (Hague, p. 18)

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> Those individuals and organizations that have an influence on public opinion must address the issue of international migration in an objective and responsible manner. (GCIM, p. 81)

This raises yet another problem for IMN, which are torn apart between the role they want media to play and their respect for press freedom:

> The Commission places great value on the existence of a free press and recognizes the danger of seeking to regulate the public discourse on international migration…The Commission strongly advocates a responsible debate on migration, ensuring that the reputation of people originating from other countries is not tarnished on the basis of their national origin or legal status. (GCIM, p. 52)

If everything goes well, migration policies will ultimately enjoy the wide support of the public opinion, and of dominant political parties:

> All states should adopt a coherent approach to international migration that is consistent with international law and other relevant norms. This will usually require strong political leadership, transparent communication with the public and concerted efforts to generate widespread community support for the state's migration policy. (GCIM, p. 68)

> Ideally, the immigration and labour migration policies and objectives in destination countries should be clearly stated, and based on broad political and popular support, not only to enjoy wide legitimacy, but also to obviate the risk of subsequent policy inconsistencies espoused and pursued by different political formations. (IOM, 2008, p. 288)

The UNDP further calls for 'a more determined effort to engage with the public and raise their awareness about the facts around migration' (p. 5). The ILO also calls for 'promoting public education and awareness-raising campaigns regarding the contributions migrant workers make to the countries in which they are employed, in order to facilitate their integration into society' (p. 28). The best way to do so is to rely on reliable date and sound evidence concerning the benefits of migration. The UNDP thus stresses the need for 'impartial sources of information' (p. 110). Other reports concur:

> Economic arguments, notably about benefits and costs of migration, can play a critical part in policy-making. Unfortunately, the debate is often pre-emptively hijacked by negative, populist slogans, which can inhibit the formulation of sound and balanced migration policies. Current knowledge about the benefits and costs of migration also remains inadequate, diffuse and often confusing, which in turn aids the cause of those

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> politicising the debate, and helps to create a vicious circle. (IOM, 2005, p. 163)
>
> Exploding the myths and establishing more clearly the facts about migration and its consequences is a sure way of enabling the debates and design of migration policies to be more informed and reasoned. (IOM, 2005, p. 22)
>
> Good refugee and migration policy depends on positive public support, and on good research and information rather than on a defensive and fearful discourse. (Hague, p. 18)

It is therefore not only migration that must be 'managed', but also public opinion: IOM speaks of the 'need for better management of public perceptions of migration, and by extension, for more result-oriented research and consistent data collection' (IOM, 2005, p. 22).

While IMN encourage debate, they do not really engage directly in public discussions concerning migration. Of course, by publishing reports, IOs aim at contributing to such discussions. But as the quotes in this section make clear, IMN mostly call for debate to take place, rather than actively taking part therein. Most of their arguments concern *how* 'stakeholders' should discuss, or the role of governments or the media in these debates. It is as if IMN expected other actors to defend their own views. They know what should be done, but act as a kind of arbiter; in a somewhat paternalistic fashion, they ask people to debate – while already knowing the 'truth' and checking that debates take place in the way they should. But by remaining above the fray, IMN risk being unheard. Their consensual tone makes it difficult for them to defend a strong argument, and their strategic positioning at a kind of supralevel jeopardises their capacity to play a role where they could, namely in the battle of ideas. The result is a process of (self-)depoliticisation.

It is also worth noting that these debates are not expected to oppose different views of what migration should be; they only oppose the interests of different groups in societies. In line with their technocratic and managerial approach, IMN believe that there is only one possible way to govern migration and hardly conceive the possibility of a plurality of beliefs, for instance between employers, unions, political parties, civil society groups, etc., or between those who advocate open and cosmopolitan societies and others who believe in the value of closed nation-states. The only kind of disagreement that is taken into account concerns the unequal access to the benefits of migration. The UNDP acknowledges that immigration can generate costs for a limited number of people in

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destination societies, but this does not question the overall benefits of migration; and such trade-offs can apparently be addressed by a debate that will identify the right equilibrium:

> While the weight of evidence shows that the aggregate economic impact of migration in the long run is likely to be positive, local people with specific skills or in certain locations may experience adverse effects. To a large extent these can be minimized and offset by policies and programmes that recognize and plan for the presence of migrants ... It is important to recognize the actual and perceived costs of immigration at the community level, and consider how these might be shared. (p. 104)

Debates are therefore not social, historical, or political, in the sense that they would address the relationship between a society and non-citizens. They are of a more abstract and economic nature, and concern the 'just right' level of openness that will be of the greatest benefit for all.

Controlling and steering migrants' behaviour

IMN address migrants' behaviour in more or less the same way than they treat public opinion. They first identify what their appropriate behaviour should be, and then attempt to persuade migrants to comply with this ideal. And again, this is a matter of rationality: there exists a rational attitude, which rational migrants should normally adopt; the issue is to establish indirect mechanisms to steer their behaviours and incite them to move in such rational manner. In this respect, IMN rely on a relatively sophisticated understanding of control: for them, controlling migration is not about stopping people or coercively moving them from one country to another; it is about shaping their attitude and subjectivities so that their mobility fits into the desired goals of IMN.

If one goes back to the issue of 'circular' migration, for example, one can observe how the UN envisages policies that do not force migrants to circulate, but incite them to 'spontaneously' do so:

> Migrants may be more likely to return if they see opportunities at home. It is thought that migrants who have rights to long-term residence in countries of destination may be more willing to try life back home if they can be assured of being able to emigrate again. Security of residence in countries of destination may thus promote either return or circulation. Similarly, allowing dual citizenship may be conducive to return. (p. 70)

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In the same vein, the ILO recommends 'adopting policies to encourage circular and return migration and reintegration into the country of origin, including by promoting temporary labour migration schemes and circulation-friendly visa policies' (p. 30). Information plays a central role in this remote guidance of migrants' behaviour:

> Dissemination of information on migration legislation or regulations, including user-friendly interpretations posted on the Internet, is a useful means of ensuring that potential migrants and employers know the requirements and procedures necessary to obtain legal admission. Civil society can assist in ensuring that potential migrants have reliable information on admission requirements before they embark on the migration process. (UN, p. 28)

> The dissemination of accurate, objective and adequate information on migration policies and procedures enables migrants to make informed decisions. (IAMM, pp. 24–25)

This implies that unauthorised migration is due to migrants' ignorance and that, consequently, information campaigns can contribute to 'deterring' irregular migration:

> Governments, with the assistance of appropriate international organisations, should deter undocumented migration by making potential migrants aware of the legal conditions for entry, stay and employment in host countries through information activities in the countries of origin. (Cairo, p. 72)

Information is needed both for the public opinions in receiving countries and for would-be migrants in sending regions. Once all these people are well-informed, they will rationally understand the benefits of 'ordered' migration and behave accordingly:

> Too many people cross borders in an irregular fashion and make unjustified claims for asylum or residency because they are unaware of the prerequisites for the move. The public in receiving countries needs accurate information on the implications of migration to counteract xenophobia. (IOM, 2000, p. 21)

According to the Hague Declaration, 'to add credibility to their work, policy-makers will need to consult and inform local receiving populations as well as the migrants themselves' (p. 11). The IAMM makes the same point:

> Greater awareness of and attention to the reality of today's mobile world are required to create better-informed public opinion ... Migrants need to

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> be made aware of legal migration opportunities in order to limit the incidence of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. An improved supply of information to potential migrants on conditions and procedures in destination countries could help promote more orderly migration flows. To reduce xenophobia and discrimination in host societies, migrants need to understand and comply with local laws, and migrant-hosting societies need to be aware of the positive contributions migrants can make to their communities. Information campaigns are indispensable tools in countries of origin and destination for achieving these goals. (p. 66)

The assumption that underlies information campaigns is that the recipients of this information are rational actors, who will change their behaviour and attitudes according to the information received. The recommendation concerning the need for information campaigns has actually been translated into practice: IOM, in particular, has launched campaigns in sending countries to sensitise potential migrants on the risks associated with unauthorised migration. One can nevertheless observe that these campaigns tend to emphasise the dark side and the dangers of migration, thus being overall negative and discouraging (rather than pointing to the advantages of legal migration). Moreover, they have exclusively targeted would-be migrants, and not the public opinion in receiving countries (Nieuwenhuys and Pécoud, 2007; Pécoud 2010).

Ultimately, the dissemination of information to a rational audience will make 'sound' policies possible: 'Rational and well-informed choices by migrants, governments, civil society, communities, and the private sector can help maximise the benefits and minimise the costs of migration' (IOM, 2005, p. 11). This articulation between rationality, information, and debate sheds light on the way IMN conceptualise migration control. In a Foucault-inspired fashion, Rose (1999) speaks of 'governing through freedom' to refer to a strategy of control that does not oppose power and peoples' freedom or subjectivity; 'freedom' becomes, on the contrary, the mean through which power is exercised. In the case of migration, this would imply that migrants 'freely' behave in a way that is compatible with the objectives of governments. This objective is in line with IMN's overall philosophy: being in favour of more immigration, they logically reject policies dominated by security/control objectives. As the GCIM indirectly argues, such an approach would be unrealistic and insufficiently flexible:

> States and other stakeholders should pursue more realistic and flexible approaches to international migration, based on a recognition of the

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> potential for migrant workers to fill specific gaps in the global labour market. (p. 79)

In addition, IMN stress that states may not be entirely capable of controlling migration. In line with the 'losing control' argument (Sassen, 1996), they mention the role of private actors and brokers in the mobility of labour, as well as the agency of migrants and their capacity to escape the regulation mechanisms imposed to them:

> While states continue to play an important role in the establishment of labour migration programmes, migrant workers are increasingly engaged by private recruitment agents, brokers and gang masters. (GCIM, p. 61)

> International migration policy is difficult to formulate and implement because it involves the movement of human beings, purposeful actors who are prepared to make sacrifices and to take risks in order to fulfil their aspirations. Its challenges are radically different from those that arise in managing the movement of inanimate objects such as capital, goods and information. (GCIM, p. 10)

IMN thus display a kind of 'post-control' spirit. They seem to believe that the control of migration would be something of the past.[1] While they respect states' sovereign right to control their borders, they are also motivated by the conviction that migration is a normal feature of today's world that should be encouraged, rather than stopped. In the words of the IAMM, this means achieving 'a balance between facilitation and control of migration' (p. 10).

One can finally observe that IMN never envisage a scenario based on 'open borders' or freedom of movement. IOs pursue hugely ambitious goals (development, peace, human rights, etc.), but freedom of movement is not part of this list – not even in a long-term distant horizon. While free movement is an objective of several regional organisations, it is a taboo at the international level. As discussed above, the UNDP makes an intense use of the word 'freedom', but it actually means a form of freedom that is strongly monitored, supervised, or 'managed' by governments. This is what this organisation calls the 'instrumental value' of freedom: 'the ability to move is a dimension of freedom that is part of development – with intrinsic as well as potential instrumental value' (p. 15).

For obvious political reasons, IMN cannot challenge the legitimacy of states' sovereignty over migration. But their rejection of freedom as an exclusively 'intrinsic' value also reflects their conviction that people must

be helped, informed, or steered to behave properly. In their view, a world in which people would be genuinely free to move would probably be a disorderly world. Moreover, as Ferguson writes about development policies, 'policy makers, experts and officials cannot think how things might improve except through their own agency' (1990: 7). This is also what Murray Li (2007) calls 'the will to improve', namely the idea that those with power (states, but also colonial rulers or international experts) are in charge of peoples' lives and in the promotion of their well-being.

Global capitalism and the naturalisation of the social

As argued above, the relationship that IMN establish between migration and development is quite ambivalent. It posits that migration is a symptom of development differentials between countries and that, ideally, people should be able to stay at home and remain immobile. This is difficult to conciliate with the claimed normality of migration as a central feature of a globalising economy. Recognising the normality of migration indirectly amounts to recognising the normality of underdevelopment and of global inequalities. In other words, and even if they want migration to foster development, IMN need to take for granted the disparities between countries. This is the 'normal' context in which migration takes place. The issue therefore regards the extent to which IMN naturalise a specific pattern of socioeconomic and political organisation, precisely the one that leads to international migration.

At times, IMN acknowledge that North-South imbalances are the product of a specific way of regulating the global economy:

> The growing competitiveness within the global economy has led to a process of economic restructuring that has limited the number of public and private sector jobs available in developing countries. This has simultaneously created demand for a flexible labour force in the industrialized states that is prepared to work for low wages and under difficult conditions. Migrants from developing countries are currently helping to fill that gap at the lower end of the labour market, and seem likely to do so for the foreseeable future. (GCIM, p. 6)

The GCIM believes that 'the globalization process has created enormous wealth and has lifted millions of people out of poverty', but nevertheless admits that 'it has not yet narrowed the gap between rich and poor' (p. 6). But this does not lead IMN to look for alternative regulation mechanisms, which would tackle these disparities and challenge this organisation of

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the world. They rather tend to take this context for granted, at least in the 'foreseeable future'. Given that this global context cannot be modified, and that migration is an unavoidable consequence of world imbalances, the issue is how to cope with this ineluctable process.

For IMN, this means applying a basic supply-and-demand logic to international migration flows. The entire argument about 'managed' labour migration from less-developed to developed countries indeed rests upon the assumption that the former has too many workers, while the latter experiences shortages and therefore need these migrants:

> There would appear to be an emerging convergence of interests between richer and poorer countries. In simple terms, the former are running short of working-age people, while the latter have such people to spare. Logic suggests that one outcome of this situation should be a growth in the scale of authorized labour migration from developing to high-income countries. (GCIM, p. 15)

According to a standard economic logic, this would increase the prosperity of both sending and receiving countries, and therefore of the world at large:

> The temporary movement of unskilled workers from developing to developed countries promises to bring the greatest gains because it is with regard to these two groups of countries that the difference between factor prices is greatest and the gaps between demand and supply are often the largest in absolute terms. (WESS p. xix)

IMN do not wish to run against these supply-and-demand mechanisms, as this would be bound to fail: 'Ultimately, laws and regulations that go against the forces of demand and supply will likely be ineffective in controlling the labour market' (UN, p. 72). The issue is rather to cope with this context and to make sure it does not lead to disorders; the ambition of the 2008 IOM report, for example, is to identify a 'broad and coherent global strategy to better match demand for migrant workers with supply in a safe, humane and orderly way' (IOM, 2008, p. 11).

A consequence of this acceptance of the socioeconomic and political context of migration is the naturalisation of the differences between 'national' and 'migrant' workers. As argued above, IMN never envisage that these two categories could overlap or share common concerns. On the contrary, they assume that migrants are needed to do the jobs that are perceived as unattractive by national workers. According to the UNDP, 'migrants are often willing to accept work that locals are

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no longer prepared to undertake, such as child care, care of the elderly (much in demand in aging societies), domestic work, and restaurant, hotel and other hospitality industry work' (p. 85). The UN adds that 'by performing tasks that either would go undone or cost more, migrants allow citizens to perform other, more productive and better-paid jobs' (p. 13). '3D jobs' would go to migrants, while national workers would enjoy better work opportunities:

> Many advanced and dynamic economies need migrant workers to fill jobs that cannot be outsourced and that do not find local workers willing to take them at going wages. Population ageing also underlies this growing demand, as it gives rise to deficits of workers relative to dependants. And as younger generations become better educated, fewer in their ranks are content with low-paid and physically demanding jobs. (UN, p. 12)

According to IMN, not only are there jobs for national workers and others for foreigners, there are also job for men and others for women. According to the GCIM, female migration will grow 'because of increased demand in the industrialized states for labour in sectors that are traditionally associated with women: domestic work, nursing and personal care services, cleaning, entertainment and the sex trade' (p. 14). Moreover, migrant women are needed to enable non-migrant (or 'native') women to work out of their home: 'The availability of low-cost child care can free up young mothers, enabling them to go out and find a job' (UNDP, p. 85). The UN makes the same point:

> The more women work for wages, the less time they have to do unpaid household work. Consequently, in the high-income economies, both developed and developing, migrant women, by engaging in domestic work or in child and elderly care, have been filling the care gap left by native working women. (p. 22)

All these assumptions could easily be challenged. One could argue that 'unattractive' jobs could be made more attractive (thanks to higher wages or better work conditions), which would benefit those who occupy them (whether migrant or not). One could contest that certain jobs are only for women and one could challenge the logic according to which women's access to the labour market makes it necessary to recruit foreign nannies. One could point to the social or psychological costs of the mobility of those 'servants of globalisation' (Parrenas, 2001). And of course, one could disagree with the fact that migrant women are needed for the 'sex trade' to prosper.

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According to Barthes, the naturalisation of social differences is one of the political functions of myths:

> What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality ... The world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities, between human actions; it comes out of myth as a harmonious display of essences. (1972: 142–143)

This is why, he adds, 'statistically, myth is on the right' and inseparable from a 'bourgeois ideology'. As Bourdieu further observes, this naturalisation is inseparable from a process of depoliticisation that serves the interests of dominant groups:

> Having an interest in leaving things as they are, [dominant individuals] attempt to undermine politics in a depoliticised political discourse, produced through a process of neutralisation or, even better, of negation, which seeks to restore the doxa to its original state of innocence and which, being oriented towards the naturalisation of the social order, always borrows the language of nature. (1991: 131)

IMN would then be conservative; while at first sight calling for an upheaval of migration policies, they would actually confirm the current – or 'natural' – order of things.[2] Despite their stated ambition of better protecting vulnerable migrants or achieving triple-win scenarios, they would actually represent the views of the ruling elites and leave the global capitalist system unchallenged. This point is made by Boucher (2008), who criticises IMN for being pro-capitalist and for failing to question the neoliberal context in which migration takes place. This context would not be problematized as a factor leading to migration 'problems'; it would, on the contrary, be presented as the solution to these problems. In the view of IMN, states' role would be to accompany market-based dynamics and to favour global capitalist actors by facilitating the circulation of labour.

This bias is indeed noticeable, particularly (but not only) in the GCIM report. One can, for example, read that 'some stakeholders, including the private sector, have called for a more liberal approach to international labour migration' (GCIM, p. 16). Indeed, a 'tension has arisen regarding the interests of the state and the interests of markets and the corporate sector' (GCIM, p. 9) and 'there is growing frustration among employers about the restrictions that states place on the recruitment and relocation

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of foreign labour' (GCIM, p. 15). The conclusion is that migration should help address employers' needs:

> In many industrialized states, the increasing competitiveness of the global economy has placed new pressures on both private and public sector employers to minimize costs and to maximize the use of cheap and flexible labour – precisely the kind of labour that migrants, whether they have moved in a regular or irregular manner, are able to provide. (GCIM, p. 13)

Another manifestation of this neoliberal orientation is the way IMN disconnect migration-related problems from their context. As argued, IMN display a strong concern with the vulnerability of migrants, like irregular migrants, labour migrants, or the 'victims' of smuggling and trafficking. This human rights, or humanitarian, sensitivity could support a broad criticism of the socioeconomic and political context that makes these abuses possible. But IMN prefer isolating problems and treating them as if they could be fixed without questioning their context. Rogaly (2008) thus argues that the ILO, while highlighting the vulnerability of labour migrants, never relates it to the economic context behind their exploitation. This is in line with Lerche's analysis of ILO's notion of 'forced labour', which is denounced but 'delinked' from its context, and particularly from the broader capitalist framework in which it emerges: 'The strategy of the ILO is to isolate the worst forms of "un-decent labour", so that these incidents can be dealt with in isolation, without challenging the overall system that created the conditions for their occurrence in the first place' (2007: 430–431). In so doing, 'the ILO ... depoliticizes forced labour issues, isolates them as an "unnatural" element of capitalism, and avoids any politicization that could lead towards a general critique of capitalism' (2007: 431).

This decoupling process is also at play in the treatment of smuggling and trafficking. As O'Connell Davidson argues:

> Dominant discourse on 'trafficking' detaches the restriction and economic exploitation experienced by some groups of migrants from its basis in the global political and economic inequalities that simultaneously generate migratory pressures and set in place barriers to migration, and from the immigration regimes that make some legal as well as some irregular migrants vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. (2010: 257)

In the same vein, several observers have criticised IMN for failing to address so-called root causes. The emphasis would be on the 'management' of flows, rather than on the imbalances that lead to such flows.

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World inequalities then remain unchallenged, or naturalised, and the main issue is how to best cope with movement of people that stems out of these inequalities. Maas and Koser (2010) note that IMN reports talk more and more of migration, and less and less of the reasons why people leave their country (see also Kritz, 2006; Munck, 2008).

As argued, 'ordering' migration is about disentangling migration realities (and migrants themselves) into different boxes. This leads to a double decoupling: (1) it separates realities that are connected (e.g., like 'irregular migration' and 'trafficking'), thereby obscuring some of the underlying dynamics that shape migration; and (2) it separates the content of each box from its context. This 'divide and rule' logic is deeply political, not only because it defines one specific way of constructing problems, but also because it excludes from the discussion a number of issues that can thus go unnoticed. Through their seemingly consensual and neutral representations of reality, IMN actually take clear political positions. But these positions are not explicit and are not accompanied by offensive arguments against competing positions.

While IMN undoubtedly leave global capitalism unchallenged, it is worth recalling that their obsession with 'order' is to some extent incompatible with a genuine *laissez-faire*. IMN are pervaded by a spirit of 'planning' that sometimes seems at odd with their neoliberal aspirations. In an expression that reflects this tension, the GCIM speaks of 'a well regulated liberalization of the global labour market' (p. 17). Castles (2006) observes that the renewed interest in guest-workers' system is problematic in a context of labour market deregulation, as they imply the control of employers' practices. The reliance on irregular migrants' work, by contrast, seems better suited to such a context. But IMN want the best of both worlds: a freer and flexible access to foreign workforce, and a careful monitoring of peoples' mobility. This 'planning' spirit is also obvious in the above-mentioned rejection of any kind of 'open borders' horizon.

Notes

1 One can, for example, quote Régine de Clercq, the Belgian ambassador in charge of the 2007 GFMD in Brussels, who lyrically stated: 'Now we wonder why in the previous century so much money was spent on customs control, and why we took so many years to break the trade walls. Could it be that 20

years from now we might wonder why we were spending so much resources on controlling immigration – often with so little success? ... If you draw a line in the sand, the wind will sweep it away in a matter of hours. If you build a fence through a globalizing labour market, will it withstand the pull and push forces on both sides?' (cited by Kalm, 2010: 35).

2 For example, IMN often speak of migration 'flows'. While this term is not specific to the reports of my corpus, it could be interpreted as a nature-inspired interpretation of peoples' mobility. This point is made by Campillo Carrete and Gasper, who also argue that, in this case, nature is both normal and threatening (for society): 'The metaphor of 'flows', taken from movements of water and now used to describe movements of people or money or goods, matches well with the naturalisation of the phenomenon concerned. It can convey not just 'natural' status and inevitability, but also danger and the need for management' (2011: 127).

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9
Conclusion

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By definition, IMN call for change. They would be pointless if they were to approve existing patterns of migration governance. They therefore need to criticise current political orientations and to propose alternatives. There are many reasons for which this is difficult: the legitimacy of IOs and other international entities is low; migration is a sensitive issue closely associated with sovereignty, and it is delicate to openly criticise states in an intergovernmental setting. The strategy of IMN is to present their recommendations as the result of technical and neutral expertise. On the other hand, IMN also ground their message in far-reaching values and ambitious objectives (like freedom or human rights) – hence the contrast between the potentially radical criticism of current migration realities and the modesty of IMN's tone.

This leads to a double depoliticisation process. First, by limiting themselves to technical recommendations, IMN do not challenge the global socioeconomic and political context behind migration dynamics. They do as if minor changes in policymaking could bring solutions to the deep imbalances that underlie the cross-border mobility of people. Second, by referring to consensual and undisputable objectives, IMN make any kind of scientific and political debate impossible. Both research and democratic debates imply the existence of competing worldviews, arguments, interests, etc. But nobody can seriously claim to be 'against' the principles and objectives of IMN: who would favour trafficking abuses, human rights violations, disorderly migration, or exploitation?

This makes a critical reading of IMN both difficult and necessary. Indeed, given that IMN already claim to be critical, criticising IMN amounts to a criticism of the criticism. This is an uneasy position, which may be difficult to understand. If I disagree with IMN, does this mean I agree with what IMN criticise? If I am not convinced by IMN's strategies to 'manage' migration, does this imply that I prefer mismanaged migration? One often encounters a 'pragmatic' counter-argument, according to which IMN may not be perfect, but are nevertheless far better than existing policies. Regardless of their possible weaknesses, they should therefore be backed by all those who are concerned with improving immigration policies and the life of migrants. Those who criticise IMN would be idealists, who will fail to change real-world realities.

This also applies to the way IMN depoliticise migration. This is a reaction to the over-politicisation of the topic that, as noted, is perceived as hindering sound policymaking. In many receiving countries, migration is a heavily politicised issue, associated with all possible problems, from

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unemployment to social cohesion or insecurity. Understandably, IMN wish to break away from this representation of the topic, and therefore downplay the political importance of migration. So the issue is again how to contest IMN: if I disapprove this depoliticisation, does this mean that I want to fuel the kind of hysteria that regularly surrounds political debates on migration? The question, therefore, is how to 're-politicise' IMN and their topic, without falling into the traditional over-politicisation of migration. As discussed in the previous chapter, this means, above all, recognising the existence of different political strategies to address migration 'problems'. Moreover, whereas IMN tend to treat problems in isolation from each other and from their context, this also implies recognising the connections between these 'problems' and the broader political context in which they emerge.

As a matter of fact, the institutions that produce IMN are aware of this plurality of political options and of the far-reaching political implications of the issues they discuss. The production of IMN is indeed more chaotic and less straightforward than the text itself acknowledges. Different actors struggle to influence the content of IMN, including the governments of developed and less-developed countries, the private sector, or NGOs. The relationships between these actors are characterised by obvious power relations, which are hidden – but not absent – in IMN. IMN themselves are unlikely to ever acknowledge these internal debates, as this would run against their claimed universality. But this nevertheless calls for examining the 'making-of' of IMN and for developing a sociological analysis of the ideas contained therein (see e.g., Piper and Rother, 2012).

Importantly, this reintroduction of power relations into IMN also implies that the power of IOs themselves should be taken into account. As noted above, the institutions behind IMN often claim that they merely reflect the ideas shared by the so-called stakeholders, or that they only rely on evidence to craft their recommendations. This neglects the way in which IOs themselves exercise power or, at least, attempt to increase their political influence through the production of such narratives. There is therefore a need to frame the analysis of IMN into a broader reflection on the influence of IOs in the politics of migration (Geiger and Pécoud, 2015).

It is finally worth stressing that, even if one fully agrees with IMN's content, and even if one supports their objectives, the depoliticisation at play in these reports may well be counter-productive. By standing above

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political debates, IOs indeed self-eliminate their potential political influence (see Müller, 2011). In order to convince, IMN should leave the level of abstract and consensual objectives to actually debate about the ways through which these objectives can be achieved. This means confronting themselves to other arguments and taking part in genuine political and intellectual debates. Whether IMN can actually do so is debatable, not least because this is at odds with their textual nature and with the intergovernmental setting in which they are elaborated. In other words, whether one commends or condemns IMN, one needs to bring back into the discussion the political nature of ideas and the power relations that underlie them, without which no real rethinking of the politics of migration can take place.

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