**Developmental borderwork and the International Organization for Migration**

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**Introduction**

The global governance of borders and migration combines elements of both care and control. The hardening of the world’s borders is facilitated by technical cooperation, new technologies of identification, and the externalization of the West’s borders into the global south. Yet migrants’ human rights, the need to save lives of migrants at sea, and a sense of duty towards the displaced also drive the practices of the global actors — like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) — whose contribute to governing the world’s borders. This global governance of borders is increasingly undertaken by organizations like the IOM, which presents itself as an intergovernmental service provider of expertise and logistics in areas as diverse as visa processing, border police training, evacuations of foreign nationals, disaster relief, and reintegration of deportees. The IOM’s work in the global south places a particularly strong emphasis on the reinforcement of state capacity as well as on humanitarian principles and development methods. In sub-Saharan Africa particularly, the organization straddles the security, statebuilding, and humanitarianism elements of contemporary ‘border management’. The term ‘border management’ is commonly associated with coercive activities such as training security forces to better control borders. This is one part of the story, but IOM increasingly introduces humanitarian personnel, legal norms, and methods — often to mitigate the very effects of border controls — into its work. As part of a growing emphasis on crisis management and disaster relief within the IOM, many of its projects focus entirely on sensitization activities, emergency evacuations, and health interventions on displaced populations. How are these seemingly disparate elements of border governance reconciled? What are their effects? This article builds on a growing interest in the work of the IOM, paying particular attention to the organization’s logics and strategies as well as to the ways that it brings together care and control. It builds on two main questions: How does the IOM link borders and migration with security, humanitarianism, and development? How do these linkages shape the IOM’s practices and projects in the global south? In answering these two questions, the article contributes to work on the role of international organizations in the governance of migration as well as to the literature tackling the linkages between migration, security, humanitarianism, and development.

This article advances two claims about contemporary borderwork and the positioning of IOM’s role within it. The first is that contemporary borderwork, especially in the field of ‘border management’ of which the IOM is a key player, has taken a turn that can be described as *developmental*. Efforts to ‘manage’ migration, partly through border controls but also through other policy tools, increasingly draw on the discourse of development but also its financial resources, forms of organization, and implicit understandings about the world. Similarly, the need to secure borders is increasingly justified by humanitarian principles and practices. This is driven by the IOM’s expanding definition of migration issues, as well as its growing financial resources and global footprint, which in many cases allow it to carry out practices beyond the border management and evacuation/return projects it is commonly associated with. This argument builds on a gap in the literatures on ‘migration and security’ and ‘migration and development’. The migration-security literature is well developed in its analysis of the sociological elements of how migration is constructed as a security threat (e.g. Bigo 2001, Bourbeau 2011, Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002, Andersson 2014). This literature focuses on security professionals and is driven in part by a desire to comprehend the internationalization and externalization of borders. Work on ‘migration and development’, for its part, has examined how migration potentially improves development outcomes through remittances or vice-versa how development actually fosters migration (De Haas 2012), or how the migration-development nexus itself as a means of ‘keeping people where they are’ (Bakewell 2008). However, neither of these clusters of literatures has sufficiently engaged with the *developmental* nature of border interventions themselves. This developmental turn includes interventions’ reliance on the language of ‘capacity’ or their justifications (and funding) in the language and practices of development and humanitarianism. The term developmental also captures the marked increase in IOM practices that defy its frequent association with security and control — underpinned by the organization’s broad mandate (Pécoud 2017: 6). This article’s contribution is to create an explanatory framework for the linkages between these factors that situates security, humanitarianism, and development as *overlapping* sectors within border management.

This article’s second argument is that developmental borderwork is central to the activities and self-image of the IOM, particularly in the global south. The IOM has a powerful role in the assembling and transmission of modes of controlling borders. This argument builds on work that emphasizes the role of international organizations in shaping the ideational elements of border control — and this article takes up the mantle of explaining and understanding the elements that make up the worldviews and agendas of international organizations (IOs) in the global governance of borders and migration. It argues that the IOM’s contribution to developmental borderwork is underpinned by three key elements of the agency’s practices and positioning: a genuine but overly formalist humanitarianism, a technical and technological global positioning as a service provider, and a practical focus on pedagogy and statebuilding. This emphasis on the ideational elements of migration in such an organization builds on a growing concern with the multilevel governance of borders and migration, and especially on the worldviews and strategies of IOs in this governance. Recent work in this vein has looked at the role of consultative processes, dialogues and intergovernmental organizations (e.g. Kunz, Lavenez, and Panizzon 2011) as well as the functional differentiation of IOs in governing mobility (Betts 2010). This article builds on the growing realization that IOs are central to the major trends in how migration is understood, channelled, and stopped. Focusing on an organization like the IOM — which has so far received limited attention despite an increasingly central role in migration governance — this article contributes to remedying the observation that “little is known on the strategies of IOs, on their influence on policy-making, on the worldviews they promote, or on the nature of their interventions and their actual contribution to policy implementation” (Geiger and Pécoud 2014: 866).

To make this argument, the article draws on two cases, which build on the author’s fieldwork in Mauritania, recent telephone interviews with staff at IOM offices, and analysis of the organization’s policy pronouncements, newsletters, and strategies. The interviews, carried out in 2013 and 2016, have been anonymized and cited using only dates. All of them are based on conversations with current and former IOM staff based in Europe and Africa at varying levels of seniority. The first case examines the IOM’s deployment of new and improved border infrastructures and technologies in Mauritania and South Sudan. In this case, the IOM’s developmental approach to borderwork manifests itself through the leveraging of humanitarian infrastructure, the use of development industry methods of follow-up, and a fundamental goal of improving state capacity. The second case examines the IOM’s adoption of the Humanitarian Border Management (HBM) concept since 2012. The article argues that this concept comes from a humanitarian streak within the organization growing from the ‘migration crisis’ of the early 2010s — reflected in its staff’s own worldviews — yet is also in tension with the organization’s broader responsibility to its members and its commitment to state capacity. In this case, the ‘developmental’ element of borderwork comes from the blending of the will to mitigate states’ control reflex and the methods and tools of humanitarianism and capacity-building. The article concludes that in each of these cases we see ‘developmental borderwork’ at play through links of varying intensity between security, statebuilding, and humanitarianism.

**Developmental borderwork**

Contemporary borderwork has taken a turn for the ‘developmental’. Across the global south, and particularly in Africa, the work of building and sustaining international borders is increasingly subject to the rationalities of statebuilding, development, and cooperation. The European Union (EU) is particularly active in this field, funding border management assistance in Central Asia alongside the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and through member states’ police forces such as the Spanish *Guardia Civil* in West Africa, while UN agencies such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) fund training on drug interdiction. The IOM is heavily active in this field, which in many cases involves capacity-building in weak states of the global south where many of the organization’s projects are concentrated. Much of this work is funded through the IOM Development Fund, which provides small grants of up to $300,000 for migration management capacity-building projects in eligible states drawn from the World Bank’s list of low and middle income countries. It is precisely this focus on building capacity of states considered ‘origin’ and ‘transit’ states — the field of operations referred to by the editors of this special issue — that leads me to the argument that there is a shift towards the ‘developmental’. IOM projects have included regional training workshops for West African security officials to better detect fraudulent documents, the drafting of a procedures manual for Namibia’s border police, encouraging Malian and Mauritanian police to cooperate with each other, and providing counter-terrorism training in Libya. Yet IOM also increasingly orients its projects towards sensitization and sensitivity, such as training given to Niger’s border police on human rights and histories of migration in the Sahel (interview 6.9.2016). The organization’s positioning as the pre-eminent migration organization extends its remit away from the security focus of its ‘northern’ members and further towards projects such as HIV prevention in mobile populations across Southern Africa and care for tuberculosis patients amongst the displaced in South Sudan. These projects all contribute to a turn — especially within the IOM — to a new form of ‘borderwork’ that is broadly developmental in that it brings together these divergent rationales in complex ways. The IOM’s developmental turn retains work around sovereign borders as its raison d’être, yet its conception of managing them brings together logics and modes of intervention from the worlds of security, development, and humanitarianism.

What does it mean to speak of borderwork in the first place?I use the term here to refer to the discursive and practical labour that goes into the production and maintenance of the borders. The term has gained greater traction of late, beginning with Chris Rumford’s (2008) definition as “the role of citizens (and indeed non-citizens) in envisioning, constructing, maintaining and erasing borders” (2008: 2). This understanding of borderwork as the enrolment of everyday people in borderwork figures in Hille Koskela’s work (2010) in which she focuses on the Texas Virtual Border Watch Program. More recently, Reeves’ (2013) research on state-making in Central Asia has used ‘borderwork’ to describe the performative and spatial practices that constitute the state and its limits. It is in the spirit of these various contributions that I use the term. I draw on a meaning of borderwork different from ‘bordering practices’, and take it to bring attention to the work people do that often takes place well beyond the borders themselves, with particular attention to the institutional settings inhabited by IOM staff. Borderwork, here, helps us to point to their forms of knowledge generation, lobbying, training, and project management.

I use the term along three lines, to refer to the practices that build and sustain international borders. First, I understand borderwork as an activity whose geographical scope is not limited to the territorial limits set by international borders. Rather, borderwork can be — and very often is — enacted well away from the territorial border. This is largely consistent with the insights of critical border studies that borders are social processes (Paasi 1998) and can be enacted by citizens as much as agents of the state (Rumford 2008). For instance, the production of immigration data can have its initial thrust at the border where data is collected yet enable techniques of population registration or deportation that occur away from the territorial line itself. Second, I understand the term as referring to the performative as well as constructive aspects of borders. That is to say that an international border derives its functioning from its continual performance (e.g. patrolling) or position within a discourse (e.g. as a space of threat) but also relies on physical constructions such as border posts — like those built by the IOM — and other material infrastructures. Third, and finally, I understand ‘borderwork’ as fundamentally driven by a cultural foundation. The construction and performance of borders across space is always undergirded by a form of ideational reasoning: knowledge about what is to be defended against, how, and by whom. This is similar to what Zaiotti calls ‘cultures of border control’ (2011). It is in this vein that Pécoud (2015) points to the importance of ‘narratives’ about migration management, not only as strategic tools but also as modes of self-understanding. The work of the IOM — and contemporary border management practices more generally — fit within this frame of ‘borderwork’. For instance, its practice of training of border guards often takes place in police schools well away from the territorial border and its logics, is reliant on the performance of role-plays, and inculcates trainees with specific visions of how a good border is run.

Why speak of an emerging ‘developmental’ form of borderwork? This emerges from the observation thatthe specific projects and practices named above rely on four elements. First, borderwork practices of the IOM draw on discourses about ‘capacity’ of states, and implement solutions that draw on modernizing and statebuilding agendas. This is evidence by the plethora of training programs the IOM runs to grow law enforcement agencies’ focus on managing migration. Second, the IOM’s work also appeals to humanitarian principles and forms of intervention, which are often founded on a well-meaning desire to aid and improve. The use of role-playing workshops to reinforce sensitivity to refugee protection in the DRC is one of myriad methods in this vein. This includes practices that eschew coercion or dissuasion, such as the construction of ‘information centres’ in cities like Agadez (Niger) to advise previously Europe-bound migrants returning from exploitative and violent transit situations in Libya. Many have recently written about this as a type of ‘humanitarian borderwork’ (e.g. Pallister-Wilkins 2015), using this concept to understand the efforts of charities and relief agencies in the Mediterranean. Thirdly, there is a sense that security can be improved through material interventions, which follow a linear trajectory and are objectively measurable either in terms of numbers trained, equipment deployed, or other modes of project assessment. Finally, the ‘developmental’ element of borderwork comes from the *combination* of these elements, through staff’s inclinations to link these different factors up and base strategies on iterations of the security-humanitarian-statebuilding nexus.

This realization is not radically new, even in relation to the work of the IOM. Existing work on the IOM has understood the organization as juggling a number of priorities. For instance, Ashutosh and Mountz (2011: 22) argue that “the IOM stands at the intersection of the nation-state, international human rights regimes, and neo-liberal governance”. Geiger and Pécoud identify three overlapping “political agendas” of IO intervention in international politics: security, labour, humanitarianism (2014: 876). They note that the disjuncture between these agendas can be evidenced by tensions or debates within organizations, but this overlooks the fact that these concerns are often *merged* in these organizations’ discourses and practices. We should indeed be attentive to the overlaps between these areas and think of IOM as putting forward a broader developmental mindset in border control. Rather than understand IOM as using humanitarianism or development work as a smokescreen for control, or in contention with it, we should understand how these practices cohabit within the same projects and priorities. This merging is visible in many of the organization’s projects and documents, especially in relation to the global south.

**The IOM’s emerging borderwork agenda**

***A constrained humanitarianism***

While it is easy to see the IOM as an adopter of humanitarian slogans and nothing more, its discourse reflects changes within the organization as well as its evolving global positioning. The IOM is frequently criticised by NGOs and in the academic literature for adopting a veneer of humanitarianism without having much to show for it: Brachet (2016) describes the IOM’s humanitarianism as much more of a rebranding exercise of existing project than a practical evolution. Ashutosh and Mountz similarly consider the IOM’s humanitarian rhetoric as a mode of legitimization of its practices (2011: 22) and go on to call it a “consent-generating apparatus of the neo-liberal state” which dovetails with states’ attempts to stress human rights language for public consumption (2011: 25). They consider that “the ‘good’ work done by the IOM serves to obscure some if its ‘shady’ operations” (2011: 28). The critiques assume a strategic quality to the discourse, which is to be expected given the IOM’s need for positioning itself in relation to UNHCR. Indeed, As Georgi argues, the organization is a “competitor in the humanitarian market place” (2010: 48). These critiques also align with critiques of the growing interplay of of humanitarianism and border control, especially from a Foucauldian perspective, which point to the “paradox of protection where the subject must be saved while the object is kept safe” (Pallister-Wilkins 2015: 60). However, IOM staff display elements of a humanitarian worldview, and the organization devotes considerable resources to projects and campaigns in which care outweighs control. Why is this the case?

The IOM’s words on humanitarianism do not simply operate as a mask but also have clear strategic effects. This is not to absolve the organization of the strategic element of its discourse, but rather to highlight its evolving positioning in relation to others in the global space of mobility governance. For instance, the IOM now sidesteps competition with UNHCR and the ILO by focusing on its relatively new practices of disaster relief. Fusing security with development and with humanitarianism also functions at a strategic level, as a way of ensuring some degree of consensus and to ensure that IOM is not intruding on the core sovereign functions of states (a tenuous balance Pécoud highlights in the introduction to this issue). During my time in Mauritania, most Western interveners reported to me that talking about migration or development (rather than security) tends to calm suspicions about the goals of intervention. It also functions to bring together a wider range of actors and ensure a ‘comprehensive’ approach to questions around migration. For example, the IOM has been heavily involved in arguing for a strong attention to migration in the post-2015 development agenda. Even at the level of everyday procedures, IOM approximates the development industry: the organization proposes work plans based on members’ border management needs, while remaining sensitive to local priorities, and are careful about not overstepping their bounds in relation to what local governments will allow.

The IOM’s humanitarian tendencies are part of a sincere shift in priorities since the beginning of this decade, produced in part by a drive within IOM to adopt a holistic view of what the organization does. My interlocutors stressed that while border management has consistently been a key part of the organization, there is nothing new about its humanitarian focus (interview 19.1.2016). Indeed, the organization has been heavily involved in anti-trafficking campaigns well before the ‘migration crisis’ of the early 2010s in Europe, and devotes a considerable amount of its funding and professional resources to types of borderwork that align with the idealism and sense of responsibility (see Barnett 2011) that are characteristic of humanitarianism, carrying out displacement tracking of complex emergencies in Mali, South Sudan, and Iraq among others. Recent conceptual critiques of humanitarianism in the context of borders and migration have concentrated on undermining the idea of a clinical separation between the drives for protection and security. Pallister-Wilkins (2015: 59) argues that “humanitarian motivations are deployed by militaries, police forces, and government agencies in various situations for the governance of ‘problematic peoples’” and indeed, the second bullet of the IOM’s 12 point strategy illustrates how this clinical separation of security and humanitarianism is not so clear-cut, claiming that the organization committed to the “humane and orderly management of migration” (IOM 2016a). The persistence of sovereignty and its attendant desire to manage flows — which the IOM must still position itself to defend — puts a brake on the organization’s commitments to the ‘human’ over the ‘state’. Yet it is safe to say that a rapid driver of change has been the Euro-Mediterranean ‘migration crisis’ of the early 2010s, and the currency of this term within the IOM and its partners, which have been catalysts for efforts to bring together previously siloed divisions such as those relating to border management, migrant assistance, and development. Through the new Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC), for instance, IOM contributes to building up a statistical record of migrant movements and — by bringing attention to the numbers who perish — providing backing for a growing advocacy role.

The IOM’s humanitarianism is largely a procedural, formal, and legally-oriented one as reflected in the Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF) which emerged from the ‘migration crisis’ problematic. For instance, IOM stresses humanitarianism in the formalized elements of project design. Its Project Handbook (2012a) asks project developers and managers to consider the formal, legal humanitarian conventions — mainly from the UN — in the development of project proposals. Questions for self-evaluation during project design include: “Does the project proposal recognize that the human rights of migrants are interdependent and indivisible?” (IOM 2012a: 89) alongside further questions about gender sensitivity and environmental sustainability. Beyond this, the MCOF consistently places the IOM’s humanitarian commitments in legal terms. One objective is to “help crisis-affected populations, including displaced persons and international migrants stranded in crisis situations in their destination/transit countries, to better access their fundamental rights to protection and assistance through IOM support to States” (IOM 2012b: 1). This same document goes on to claim that IOM is “bound and committed to the existing legal and institutional frameworks contributing to the effective delivery of assistance and protection and ultimately to the respect and promotion of human rights and humanitarian principles” (IOM 2012b: 9). While this humanitarianism is largely a formalist one, it is consequential enough on the IOM’s self-image that it actively shapes the organization’s strategy and practices. This emphasis on self-image, and projection of image, shows precisely the importance of ‘slogans’ that Pécoud highlights in his introduction to this special issue (2017: 8).

***Strategic focus on technique and technology***

The IOM positions itself as a technical, service-providing organization, a vision of itself anchored in a developmental worldview. Contemporary borderwork is marked by both technicalization and technologization: states demand technical (and technological) solutions to their border ‘problems’ and IOM, as a service provider to states, is happy to oblige through the provision of expert networks, technological solutions, and capacity-building interventions. This technical image (and self-image) of the IOM has been well noted in the literature on the organization. Brachet (2016: 273) notes that the IOM operates in a way “akin to consultancy: it offers a diagnosis, develops projects ad hoc with precise purposes, dispenses advice, and estimates the efficacy of its actions on the ground with regard to the objectives stated”. Andrijasevic and Walters (2010: 984) see the organization’s neoliberalism reflected in its positioning as “a ‘partner’ and a ‘consultant’ assisting states who, for various reasons, express a will to get their own borders in order, as it were”. My argument here is more in line with the idea that IOM’s adoption of the ‘management’ lingo is a means of making its work as an IO easier (Geiger and Pécoud 2014). Its positioning as a technical and technological service provider is an essential element in its positioning as the actor of choice for border management.

IOM’s work in border management emphasizes *capacity-building*, which reflects IOM’s self-image as a reformer of states and the ascendancy of these rationales within the organization. While sums invested are often small, and projects short, this line of emphasis on capacity represents a crucial rhetorical strategy for the advancement of IBM section projects and personnel. It is reflected most evidently in the titles of its projects (e.g. ‘Capacity Building in Migration Management in East Africa’) but also in its strategic thinking about border management. Documents like its ‘Border Management and the Role of the IOM’ show the agency framing border management as “an important development issue, with countries looking to greater efficiencies to support higher levels of economic growth through improved trade and human mobility”. This is balanced, however, by an emphasis on how IOM “takes a comprehensive and integrated approach to boosting State capacity to manage borders effectively and efficiently” (IOM 2009: 1). This strategy document calls for capacity-building, the deployment of technical systems, and ‘identity management’ to ensure adequate filtering and the selective permeability of borders. This is essential as key border management technologies the organization pushes — like the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) — effectively contribute to its institutional prestige (interview 10.2.2013) which helps the agency position itself as *the* capacity-builder in the field.

The IOM also perceives itself as a form of international clearing house for the disparate interests of donors, recipients, and the its state membership at large. The IOM’s formal rapprochement with the United Nations system since 2016, through which it now labels itself through the catchall moniker of ‘the UN migration agency’, has facilitated this change of perception. The ‘developmental’ element of its borderwork here is precisely in the emphasis the organization places in its 12 point ‘strategic focus’ on “spreading best practices” (point 5) as well as acting as a “primary reference point” (point 6) in the field of border management. The IOM is therefore not so much driven by competition with other agencies as it is by the need to find its niches. Indeed, my interlocutors did not tend to view UNHCR, ILO, and others as competitors in a market, but rather as collaborating agencies with diverging specializations. For IOM this means it must emphasize its own specializations across security, statebuilding, and humanitarian tasks: speed, a practical ability to fill gaps, its work on mass resettlement, and the flexibility of its humanitarian provision. In this vein, IOM staff say the organization wants to be ‘used, rather than simply allowed to exist’ (interview 19.1.2016). It therefore sets itself up as a provider of key services not only to governments but to other agencies as well. This positioning has taken some institutional ability for reinvention. The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, which bundled €2.8 billion in pledged funding agreed after the 2015 Valletta summit, carved out a new role for the IOM as one of the implementers-in-chief of EU projects around security and development on the continent. As Geiger and Pécoud note, the IOM “was not destined to become a permanent organisation, but nevertheless managed to endure by constantly reinventing its role and functions” (2014: 870). IOM is keenly aware of its overlaps with other regimes to do with mobility such as those relating to refugees. This is visible in the case of resettlement, in which UNHCR proposes cases but IOM considers itself as doing the heavy lifting of making the process happen (interview 19.1.2016). IOM is in essence a clearing house for border management work, taking on a mediating position in the global organizational arena around border management.

IOM reconciles the contradictory elements of developmental borderwork by skilfully using the language and practices of technique rather than of politics. This is particularly striking in the case of the new HBM approach, which tries to keep border control functioning in the name of protecting trapped migrants (interview 19.1.2016). As Georgi notes, the term ‘migration management’ itself has became a “label for a rather diffuse and less specific direction in migration policy, holding [IOM’s] diverse and often contradictory services together” (Georgi 2010: 60). The discourse of management is in line with thinking within the organization that there is an optimal way to manage borders and migration that can be attained through the application of expertise, rather than purely through the (contestable and difficult) work of high-level politicking. An example of the IOM’s favouring of technical solutions is illustrated by its relationship to the European Union, where the former reprises its role as service provider and implementer: after the 2015 Africa-EU summit on migration in Valletta, an action plan was published in which the IOM figured in its *technical* role: one pilot project to boost capacity (state and civil society) in ‘origin states’ to “manage voluntary returns and support reintegration of all returnees” (Valletta Summit on Migration 2015). Pécoud’s (2014) argument that the process of depoliticization is key to the global governance of migration applies neatly here, as the IOM is providing a technical good in service of a thoroughly political goal: of smoothing the process of returning the hundreds, if not thousands, of migrants denied access to Europe.

***Deployment of intervention and development techniques***

The third aspect of the IOM’s developmental approach to border management is its participation in interventions and its growing use of development industry methods and techniques. The IOM is the most prominent participant in the growing fusion — at the level of practice and of understandings — of border control as a practice that is pedagogical, performative, and subject to knowledge exchange. The 2012 formation of the Africa Capacity Building Centre (ACBC), based in Tanzania, testifies to the intensification of bricks-and-mortar efforts to transmit knowledge and equipment in the global south. Its strategy is to compete and ensure global circulation of its models of border management. To do this, it sets cultural standards about how border control should be done. As Georgi (2010) rightly notes, the IOM is both an operational and an ideological organization. This ideological function is expressed through the agency’s work on key training manuals like the *Essentials of Migration Management* (EMM) and the *Essentials of Migration Practice* (EMP). In each section of the EMM, dealing with themes such as border security, travel documents, or refugee law, the reader is asked to apply her knowledge and test her competencies. The vast majority of examples used in the EMM, whether on visa processing or border control offshoring, are based on ‘best practice’ from Europe and the Anglosphere: examples such as US pre-clearance, Australian passenger screening methods, and EU airline liaison feature prominently. This is not revolutionary or surprising in itself, but it is important to note that this is consequential in shaping experts’ modes of pedagogy once they meet the context of the global south. Knowledge tools such as the EMP run through the current pedagogical work of the IOM and features in ongoing training practices across the global south. This pedagogy works through face-to-face meetings within a particular field, such as regional law enforcement meetings and migration policy workshops. In the IOM’s case, the organization is active as an idea generating organization even though its staff are keen to downplay its role in circulating knowledge about border control. For instance, the Schengen countries remain powerful border management role models and many of the pool of experts the IOM draws on come from these states and were active in shaping Schengen itself (interview 2.3.2016).

The IOM’s growth in terms of membership and geographical presence enables its developmentalist emphasis on practical and technical expertise. IOM staff are keen to stress the organization’s growing ability to spread best practices in proximity to the ‘field’ — a ‘field’ in which the organization is increasingly present as the case of humanitarian relief in South Sudan demonstrates. More broadly, the very structure of the IOM’s offices replicates the multi-sectorial nature of the organization. Its offices generally have staff mirroring the organization of divisions, meaning that there are usually staff on border management, emergencies/humanitarianism, and resettlement — these are simply closer to the ‘field’ in their local iterations. Buttressing this claim is the provision of tailored solutions: for each project it creates a particular package of methods based on a combination of pre-assessments, requesting state requirements, the wishes of the donor, and prevailing international laws and standards. It encourages the repetition of training activities, and is particularly keen on the training of trainers (ToT) model which emphasizes training at all levels within intervened states’ bureaucracies: from those who are in a position to make decisions about practice and policy, through middle management, and down to the ‘new generation’ who can solidify new forms of practice (interview 2.3.2016). While the IOM is somewhat constrained by its position as an intergovernmental organization, this is counterbalanced by the fact that it is a *global* organization with its internal logics and politics.

The IOM has also made more explicit forays into humanitarian techniques of intervention. As MCOF-driven activities such as ‘humanitarian border management’ demonstrate, the IOM’s humanitarian work is perfectly compatible with its border security work. However, it is inaccurate to claim that the former is simply a palatable veneer for the latter. Rather, it demonstrates the organization’s reframing towards intervening on the whole ‘chain’ of phenomena related to migration. The IOM’s submission to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit is revelatory, arguing that “[m]igration as a thematic area and migrants as a target population can serve as models for the interconnectedness between relief and development and can provide an avenue for new, innovative, and synergistic programming” (IOM 2016b: 5). Some of this programming stretches the very definition of border management itself, proving that ‘borderwork’ is carried out across territory and not simply at the border line. Projects in the IOM’s Humanitarian Compendium — for which just under $1billion is being requested — showcase the organization’s work in low and middle income countries, especially in conflict zones across Africa and the Middle East. The IOM is part of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (which includes UNICEF, UNHCR, and UNDP among others) and specializes in efforts aimed at mobile populations. These projects stretch the definition of border management by operating further along the ‘chain’ of migration, and projected beneficiaries are often host communities. This is visible in projects relating to agricultural assistance to the community around the M’Bera camp in Mauritania, in which thousands of displaced people from northern Mali live. Another project in Mali seeks to remedy water and sanitation issues (and prevent water-borne disease) in areas where many people internally displaced by Mali’s protracted conflict. These project proposals are even more ambitious in South Sudan, where IOM has requested over $81 million for a range of projects on camp management, the psychosocial well-being of conflict-affected populations, and the provision of common logistics for other humanitarian actors operating in the country (IOM 2016c). While the IOM’s border management work has been fused with humanitarianism through HBM (discussed later), the organization’s raison d’être itself has increasingly shifted to humanitarian- and development-driven approaches in many areas.

**Statebuilding and border infrastructures**

With Mauritania facing increasing numbers of infiltrations and attacks from Islamist groups based in the Sahel-Sahara zone of West Africa, including a first suicide bombing at the French embassy in Nouakchott in 2009, the security-focused government of president Mohammed Ould Abdel Aziz has made the development of border security infrastructures a top priority. In 2010, the Mauritanian government decreed that the country would have 45 exclusive legal points of entry along its over 4,000km of borders with Western Sahara, Algeria, Mali, and Senegal, as well as 3 international airports. The national migration strategy, in force since 2011 and developed with help from the European Union, called for this program under its section dealing with ‘control over migration flows’. Since then, largely with €8million of funding from the European Development Fund (EDF), the EU and IOM have led a project to build and renovate Mauritania’s border posts, helping to train staff and install new technological infrastructures. In South Sudan, the world’s newest independent state, the task of enhancing border security was driven by the desire to build border management capabilities of a state in the process of being (re)built, and the construction of border posts was undertaken in a context of massive return of this new country’s nationals from neighbouring states. The IOM’s project design goals generally try to link up border management programming with medium-term (2-3 year) national security priorities of the intervened state. In each case, IOM linked its project either to a national migration strategy with strong security elements (in Mauritania) or to an emerging legal framework for migration management and policing (in South Sudan). Both of these projects are some of the IOM’s most literal attempts at border-work, and their implementation shines light on the security-statebuilding nexus that forms part of the broader developmental approach to borderwork within the IOM.

Part of the alliance between border control and statebuilding is the IOM’s understanding that it is starting from the very basics. This self-understanding shared across the agency shapes its understanding of security as a process that is built and guided. For instance, the border posts project in Mauritania has been put in place as a means of ensuring some path dependencies of *correct* ways of controlling borders. In Mauritania, the onus has been to ensure that border infrastructures are solid and able to be incrementally updated. In South Sudan, the process was understood as providing many of the ‘first’ steps towards suitable border management. One of these ‘first steps’ is the implementation of the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) that IOM uses as a basic entry-exit data collection system. With a very basic interface, this system is free and is IOM’s way of ‘protecting’ states from expensive private sector border solutions (interview 27.1.2016). Mauritania was offered a whole range of systems before settling for MIDAS (interview, 28.2.2013). The understanding of IOM staff is that these solutions result in burdensome competitive conditions and actively hamper the pursuit of basic capacity. Systems like MIDAS are a key part of the IOM’s positioning as a neutral, technical provider of border management solutions for states who may not be able to afford them. As such, the organization operates as a public sector developmental organization whose clients are not so much customers as recipients of assistance.

The normative assumption underpinning these projects is that security and capacity go hand in hand. Capacity-building practices assume that African states, hampered by colonial era borders and weak administrative efficiency, must first attain successful statehood through better territorial control (at borders) and better visibility of population (through identification techniques). Modernization is therefore a form of statebuilding, which Hameiri defines as “the broad range of programs and projects designed to build or strengthen the capacity of institutions, organizations and agencies” (2010: 2). Statebuilding does not always concern military or traditional concerns of ‘hard’ security. Rather, it is a routine and unspectacular practice aiming at buttressing the state. Hameiri notes that this type of statebuilding outside of post-conflict settings has “taken on a more pre-emptive, risk management form than earlier post-Cold War interventions” (Hameiri 2010: 2). This turn to risk management is instructive as to the *technical* rather than political element of statebuilding, reflected in how the border posts projects in Mauritania and South Sudan have been run. Both have been run under the IOM’s unique Africa Capacity Building Centre (ACBC), based in Moshi, Tanzania. Unlike the regional offices which operate under the central office, the ACBC is more autonomous and represents the agency’s first dedicated centre for capacity-building in the management of borders and migration. The ACBC’s mission is to coordinate the IOM’s work in this vein across Africa, and it maintains a strong linkage — including shared office space — with the Tanzania Regional Immigration Training Academy (TRITA). This enables the ACBC to function as a one-stop hub for expertise and project coordination. The ACBC also sets the agenda for the IOM’s various national projects, administering funding and project design.

The installation of new border posts in South Sudan drew upon the pedagogical and humanitarian leanings that underpin developmental borderwork. In terms of training, the IOM took South Sudanese police staff on observation missions to neighbouring countries with study tours organized to Tanzania, Uganda, and Rwanda (interview 27.1.2016). The sharing of best practices — in a post-conflict context — was key between Rwanda and South Sudan, and also functioned as a way of showing the success of the Rwandan development model at the borders. In Mauritania, a follow-up project, ‘Strengthen Joint Management of Borders between Mali and Mauritania’ (2013-2014), made a point of “using the expertise of Mauritania to increase the capacity of those responsible for border management in Mali” (IOM 2015). In South Sudan, this emphasis on sharing best practices took on greater importance in a context marked by what Schomerus and De Vries (2014) call South Sudan’s ‘security pluralism’. It was particularly important for the IOM to buttress the *right* state institutions in the post-independence context. Training activities guided by the *Essentials of Migration Management* (EMM), and the newer *Essentials of Migration Practice* (EMP) were used to guide IOM training activities in both Mauritania and South Sudan, and these are mainly taught via training of trainers, with trainings adapted to local circumstances. Finally, the border posts project in South Sudan relied strongly on the IOM’s straddling of humanitarianism and security. Here, the IOM’s ability to deliver aid to those displaced by conflict was a direct result of its operational presence after the civil war as well as its relatively speedy operational capacities and footprint (interview 27.1.2016). In the case of border infrastructures, the IOM’s work on border management defies a security-first interpretation by either building on a humanitarian footprint or integrating into a broader statebuilding agenda.

**Making border management humanitarian**

The IOM’s rhetorical commitment to humanitarian principles is nothing new, but its desire to ally them to border management is an innovation within the organization. The practice of ‘border management’ itself is one of the IOM’s main areas of expertise, and its Immigration and Border Management (IBM) division is the main institutional locus for this expertise. IOM staff generally insist that ‘management’ is not only about control but also about the involvement of non-security agencies (like food inspection) and also involves the application of technical procedures and a migrant-centred view. More recently, the broader political context has been one in which the IOM has leveraged the migration crisis in Europe to position itself as a critic of the European Union’s overly control-focused approach to managing migrant flows. The organization has also stressed its credibility as a preventer of disease through its work in regulating mobility in West Africa during the Ebola outbreak (interview 19.1.2016). It is not surprising, then, that the IOM would move towards a stronger nexus between its border control and humanitarian missions. But how does it bring these together, and why?

Claims that the IOM engages in developmental borderwork find some support in the organization’s ongoing application of the Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF), and within this, the concept of ‘humanitarian border management’. The concept of HBM is rooted in a conception of the role of crisis that seeks to balance out the functioning of borders with the realities of the risks migrants face. The MCOF was designed, in its own terms, due to a “growing interest in the migration consequences of crisis situations” (IOM 2012b: 1). The MCOF includes a range of solutions for elements of crises with impacts on migrants, from camp management to health support to resilience building. Indeed, sectors 16 and 17 of the framework concern post-conflict reconstruction and development issues in which the IOM has been involved. Yet it is ‘sector 11’ of the MCOF that deals most directly with the question of HBM, arguing that IOM has tried to “support States in building robust immigration and border management programmes supported by appropriate policies, laws, procedures and information systems to facilitate the movement of people which arises from a crisis” (IOM 2012b: 7).

The framework document gives examples of crises in which IOM has been able to assist both migrants (e.g. displaced Iraqis) but also state authorities’ controls (e.g. better immigration management in Somalia). The concept of HBM is holistic enough to enable IOM to maintain its obligations to migrants whilst ensuring that its members do not have to relinquish control of their borders. In other words, crisis need not mean loss of control, and this is something IOM staff also emphasize: that there is a need to contend with ‘exceptional measures’ (interview 19.1.2016). The IOM’s perception here is that it is not borders themselves that are oppressive, but rather their *malfunctioning*. My interviewees stressed that malfunctioning borders gave smugglers (and other exploitative actors) opportunities to extort or otherwise abuse migrants who — given the failure of the border — found themselves trapped (interview 19.1.2016).

The way that HBM has been implemented shows the two major strands of ‘developmental’ borders where the inculcation of a standard approach to border management (through pedagogy) meets to need for sensitivity rather than control (through humanitarianism). The IOM staff’s aspiration towards a ‘protection-sensitive’ mindset suggests that IOM thinks border management is about more than control, and that borders have certain externalities which much be reconciled with the needs of mobile and vulnerable populations. Indeed, staff mentioned to me that they take a ‘broad’ view of migration (27.1.2016). It also reflects the fact that, as an organization, the IOM is multi-faceted and subject to much internal deliberation. With regards to the question of borders’ sensitivity, IOM staff are keen to stress that the humanitarian side of the organization has always existed, even before the adoption of the MCOF whose section on border management emphasizes the need for border to be ‘protection-sensitive’. The HBM concept itself draws on the breadth of the organization: its approval went through the various sections of the organization and as such the approach represents a ‘joined-up’ way of thinking in line with the MCOF. Part of the motivation for HBM is as a negotiation between the ideals of free movement and states’ risk aversion: it acts as a third option between stopping controls and complete closure of borders, both of which IOM considers to be undesirable (interview, 19.1.2016). In this case, the IOM’s border work is a *balance* between the utopian solution (which is unrealistic for an IGO beholden to its members) and the situation that endangers migrants and prevents mobility (which is unpalatable to the IOM’s sincere humanitarian aspirations).

In the case of HBM, the IOM uses many of the same pedagogical tools as seen in the implementation of more conventional border management procedures. Section 2.9 of the *Essentials of Migration Management* training guide — which staff insist is very basic, but still which still composes the backbone of the IOM’s normative approach to training — includes sections on some of the more humanitarian elements of migration and mentions that there should be a sizeable role for international assistance when governments are unable to intervene. The IOM also works to sensitize border guards, and effectively take them beyond the cultural or occupational habits inherent in their career path. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the IOM’s staff encouraged local staff to carry out role-playing exercises on refugee protection. Given that many of these workshops involve multiple agencies, notably police and local refugee integration authorities, the role-plays were based on actors’ own positions. These situations are very emotionally powerful and build into the ‘learning by doing’ model that the IOM uses.

**Conclusion**

This article has argued that the IOM’s border management work, especially in the global south, should be considered ‘developmental’. This has not been to take at face value its modernizing premise, but rather to illustrate the combination of humanitarianism, technicalization, and intervention that are characteristic of how the organization speaks of itself and acts in the ‘field’. More specifically, this article has shown how key changes in global politics, such as the Euro-Mediterranean ‘migration crisis’, as well as changing rationales within the IOM have shaped this developmental turn. Developmental borderwork is a common rationality or worldview that underpins the IOM’s work, founded on a will to improve methods of control coupled with a self-image of a duty of care. The article has argued that given the nature of contemporary borderwork in the global south — underpinned as it is by the rationalities of ‘improvement’ — we should pay more attention to the worldviews and agendas of key governance actors like the IOM. It has also argued that the novelty of the ‘developmental’ term is that it goes beyond simple migration-security or migration-development nexus thinking, and towards a consideration of how these factors sustain each other in key projects.

Drawing on fieldwork and interviews as well as policy analysis, this article has shown how the improvement of border infrastructures in Mauritania and South Sudan is not only a question of security but also explicitly targets these states as sites of intervention on their ability to govern effectively. In the case of of humanitarian border management, the article has shown that, far from being a cynical ploy, it is revelatory of the IOM’s impossible positioning between the world of sovereign states and the ideals of a borderless world. If anything, both of these cases should give us pause when labelling the IOM a ‘neoliberal’ organization. Many of its practices do, in fact, facilitate low-wage labour (e.g. help with temporary workers in the Americas). However, examining the ‘developmental’ elements of the IOM’s work in the border management field shows us that the organization is multi-faceted, constrained in its global context, and driven by its need to reinvent itself and its work.

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