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## Transforming the International Organisation for Migration: An Analysis of the IOM Strategic Vision

Younes Ahouga

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## **Transforming the International Organisation for Migration: An Analysis of the IOM Strategic Vision**

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## **Abstract**

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has actively advocated for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). Following their adoption, it not only pledged to assist states in their implementation, but it also drafted the 'IOM Strategic Vision' to realign its activities and mandate accordingly for the years to come. This represents the IOM's latest effort to shore up its claim to global leadership in migration governance. While the IOM is often understood as a functional intergovernmental organisation (IGO) showcasing its expert authority, this working paper argues that such involvement aims to transform it into a more normative IGO. Despite lacking any supervisory role over the 2030 Agenda and the GCM, the IOM would wield them to bolster its moral authority. Rather than being restricted to designing projects on behalf of its wealthiest member states, the IOM would embody, serve, and protect the seemingly widely shared set of principles of both multilateral texts. This would allow the IOM to autonomously become in authority over the global governance of migration. Based on a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the IOM Strategic Vision, this working paper examines the epistemic and normative argumentation that would sustain the transformation of the IOM. However, the IOM Strategic Vision is also an organisational strategy. Further research is required to examine the process of the adoption and implementation of the strategy within the IOM and the organisational change it entails.

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**List of abbreviations**

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
IGO	Intergovernmental Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
SCPF	Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance
UN	United Nations
UNDPO	United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

## **Introduction**

The second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century represents a significant milestone in the long history of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (Perruchoud, 1989). Indeed, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2016, the Director General of the IOM and the United Nations (UN) Secretary General signed the Agreement concerning the relationship between their organisations (UN & IOM, 2016). It authorised the former intergovernmental organisation (IGO) established in 1951 to join the UN system as a related organisation. The year-long negotiation of the Agreement was not a straightforward process, however. The UN notably opposed the IOM's claim to exclusive leadership over global migration governance and objected to its lack of a legal protection mandate of migrants. In addition, many of the IOM's member states were concerned throughout the negotiation with maintaining their control over the organisation and ensuring that it would not report to the UN Secretary General (Ahouga, 2019). Nevertheless, the new status of the IOM allowed for its formal and full participation in various UN bodies while retaining its state-sanctioned mandate and budget. Moreover, the Agreement recognised the IOM as an organisation with 'a global leading role in the field of migration' (UN & IOM, 2016, p. 3). The IOM very much welcomed this as a sign that it would have a 'voice at the table', thus filling an 'institutional gap in the international governance of migration' (IOM, 2017a, p. 4).

The Agreement lent weight to its subsequent involvement in the 2017-2018 intergovernmental negotiations leading to the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). The IOM attempted to shape their outcome by laying out its 'vision' of a coherent migration governance. It convened several policy meetings to engage various 'stakeholders' and drafted multiple issue briefs, thematic papers, and inputs to the UN Secretary General (IOM, 2017b). The IOM also pleaded with states, albeit unsuccessfully, to provide it with more stable funding to reinforce its 'strategic and knowledge generation capacity' and to design new technologies for its 'assessment processes' (Camacho & Lauber, 2017, p. 17). It further failed to assume the main responsibility for managing the GCM's follow-up and review mechanism to emphasise its position as 'first among equals' within the UN system (IOM, 2017d, p. 3). In contrast to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) role as the sole IGO overseeing the Global Compact on Refugees (Ferris & Donato, 2019, p. 125), the IOM had to fit into the mould of the newly established UN Network on Migration. Along thirty-eight other UN agencies, the IOM was limited to helping set up the capacity building mechanism of the GCM.

Although foiled in its attempts to increase its agency and capabilities throughout the negotiation of the GCM, the IOM emphatically described its adoption as offering 'guiding principles' and 'foundational objectives' for both state and non-state actors (IOM, 2018). The IOM additionally compared the compact to another multilateral text in which it was involved during its inception before joining the UN, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (hereafter 2030 Agenda). Indeed, the IOM's role in the process leading to the GCM built upon the experience it gained from its previous policy advocacy to include migration in the 2030 Agenda. During its negotiation from 2013 to 2015, the IOM convened various policy meetings with other UN agencies (IOM, 2013a) and drafted recommendations that highlighted the relevance of managing migration to alleviate poverty (IOM, 2013b, p. 2). Just as it welcomed the signing of the GCM, the IOM greeted the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and its inclusion of migration through the sustainable development goal 10.7 (UN, 2015, p. 21). Furthermore, the IOM announced its readiness to assist governments in implementing it (IOM, 2015a, p. 4). The IOM's active involvement in the negotiation and implementation of both the 2030 Agenda and the GCM illustrates its latest efforts to shore up its claim to leadership in migration governance. Along with its joining of the UN system, these efforts raise the question of the evolving role of the IOM and their effects on the organisation's interactions with its member states.

## Transforming the IOM by Implementing the 2030 Agenda and the GCM

The IOM is best described as a ‘centaur organisation’ (Dupeyron, 2016, p. 246). Its ‘operational lower body’ is composed of nine regional offices and hundreds of (sub)national offices throughout the world. They design, implement and review ‘projects’ in areas of refugee resettlement, peacebuilding and crisis stabilisation, so-called voluntary return of migrants, and migration mainstreaming in regional and national policies. The ‘policy upper body’ of the IOM located in its headquarters in Geneva loosely supervises the organisation’s decentralised parts and formulates general policy and strategy guidelines. The components of the IOM are unequally funded. The operational lower body attracts substantial but unstable, voluntary, and project-specific contributions from its (wealthiest) member states that amounted to 858 million U.S. dollars in 2020 (IOM, 2020d, p. 11). While the policy upper body relies on limited member states contributions that seldom fluctuate, and which represented 58 million dollars in 2020 (IOM, 2020d, p. 9). This imbalance stems from the so-called projectisation of the IOM. Whereas other IGOs benefit from substantial funding that is not tied to an exact use, the IOM’s member states allocate almost all of their voluntary contributions to specific and time-limited projects<sup>1</sup>. Every activity of the regional and (sub)national offices must then be tied to a project. Therefore, they are constantly looking for new projects to ensure their continuous work. To do so, they follow a ‘market like logic’ (Pécoud, 2020, p. 11) by advertising not so much their ability to implement the headquarters’ priorities but the cost-effective and flexible nature of their services to the member states. Yet the asymmetric growth of the operational lower body results in an incoherent IOM. First, the policy upper body’s inferior budget weakens its ability to determine and monitor the type of projects implemented by the operational lower body (IOM, 2009, p. 6). Second, while the latter is largely independent from the headquarters it nonetheless is depending on fulfilling the priorities of the wealthiest member states even if they do not fit with those of the IOM.

That is why, this distinctive configuration prompted scholars and human rights activists alike to question the incoherence of the IOM. They notably point to its positive rhetoric on migration at the top which contradicts the implementation on the field of sometimes severe migration control measures on behalf of so-called destination countries (Human Rights Watch, 2003; Georgi, 2010; Ashutosh & Mountz, 2011; Dupeyron, 2016; Brachet, 2016; Düvell, 2015). The structural imbalance within the IOM reflects its role as an ideal typical *functional organisation* (Hall, 2013, p. 93). Along IGOs such as the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) or the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the IOM is geared towards performing delegated tasks in an efficient and expert fashion. In contrast to *normative organisations* like the UNHCR or Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), overseeing the states’ compliance with a body of international law, the primary concern of the IOM is to persuade its donor states that it delivers projects coinciding with their priorities (Hall, 2013, p. 92). Indeed, the so-called IOM Constitution drafted by the member states determines that the organisation’s mandate consists in providing migration services ‘at the request of and in agreement with the states’ (IOM, 1989, p. 11). Thus, both the upper and lower parts of the IOM tend to promote the organisation’s *expert authority* to attract further funding, expand the scope of its activities, and position it as the global lead agency on migration (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, p. 24).

The academic literature highlighted the many ways in which the IOM sought to legitimise the relevance and efficiency of its specialised and technical knowledge during its interactions with states (Korneev, 2018; Robinson, 2020; Kluczevska, 2020). However, the focus on the functional role of the IOM tends to sidestep the issue of whether the organisation seeks to establish its *moral authority* to achieve further autonomy and enhance its standing (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, p. 23). For instance, the resort of the IOM during these past years to the human rights norms gets a

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<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the UNHCR’s so-called unearmarked and softly unearmarked state voluntary contributions amounted to 1.3 billion dollars in 2018 (UNHCR, 2019, p. 12).

lukewarm assessment at best. It is either deemed as a 'sincere' but unimpressive and procedural endeavour (Frowd, 2018, p. 1663). Or it is dismissed outright as a 'weak legal gloss' trying to obfuscate the coercion inherent to the organisation's technocratic form of rule (Ashutosh & Mountz, 2011, p. 25; Brachet, 2016, p. 274). Yet as demonstrated by Al Tamimi et al.'s (2020, p. 196) analysis of the IOM's Missing Migrant Project <sup>2</sup>, the organisation seeks to appear both as a technical and humanitarian actor to gain 'political legitimacy' and strengthen its position.

That is why this working paper aims to explore the involvement of the IOM in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the GCM without solely focusing on its relevance for its expert authority and functional role. Specifically, this working paper seeks to answer the following research question: **how does the IOM undertake its transformation into a more normative organisation through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the GCM?** These multilateral texts would sustain the attempts of the policy upper body of the organisation to bolster the moral authority of the IOM so that it could 'embody, serve or protect some widely shared set of principles and often use this status as a basis of authoritative action' (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, p. 23). Such a push towards a more normative organisation is not unheard of; it was previously demonstrated in two instances. First, the policy upper body of the IOM explicitly underpinned its drafting of the 2015 Migration Governance Framework by the need to implement the 2030 Agenda. It incited the member states to do the 'right thing' (IOM, 2016b) by assigning them appropriate guiding principles and objectives – e.g. respecting human rights, advancing the socioeconomic 'well-being' of migrants – to achieve a 'good' migration governance (IOM, 2015b). Although non-binding, the framework's moral tone departs from what could be expected from a functional organisation. Yet it did not only allow the IOM to appear as principled in multilateral settings, notably during the negotiations of the GCM. The framework helped the IOM justify the transformation of its reporting routines and its ways of interacting with states in the name of safeguarding its implementation. It further authorised the policy upper body to attempt to monitor the compliance of the states' migration policies with the framework and the 2030 Agenda through the Migration Governance Index (see Ahouga, forthcoming; IOM, 2016a). Second, the issue of the implementation of the GCM led the policy upper body to remark to the member states in 2017 that the IOM 'has long ceased being a purely operational organisation' (IOM, 2017c, p. 2). Consequently, it appealed, once more unsuccessfully, for an increase in funding and 'generalist' staff members to enhance the 'policy work' done in its headquarters in Geneva (IOM, 2017c, p. 4).

These instances could foreshadow the ways in which the policy upper body of the IOM may use the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the GCM going forward. They suggest it is indeed striving to alter the IOM's authority, patterns of interactions with its member states, and structure so that it could become a more normative organisation. That is why this working paper aims to examine the 'IOM Strategic Vision' which embodies the latest attempt of the policy upper body to implement the 2030 Agenda and the GCM by transforming the IOM. Drafted in November 2019, this document of approximately 20 pages and numbered C/110/INF/1 'sets the course' for the development of the organisation between 2019 and 2023 (IOM, 2019d). Its objective is to shore up the IOM so that it would 'become an institution capable of leading the global conversation on migration' (IOM, 2019d, p. 2). To do so, the IOM Strategic Vision translates the 'broad organisational structure' outlined by the 2030 Agenda and the GCM into a 'common narrative' (IOM, 2020c, p. 1). It further delineates the priorities of the IOM and requires the enhancement of 'its capacity to provide policy advice' (IOM, 2019a, p. 4). In other words, this document embodies the objective of the IOM 'to translate its vast field experience into tangible policy recommendations' (IOM, 2020c, p. 10). This could represent an attempt of the policy upper body

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<sup>2</sup> The Missing Migrants Project monitors the number of migrant deaths, an issue which according to IOM staff members raises 'questions concerning the responsibility of states' (Brian & Laczko, 2014, p. 16).



of the IOM to convert the organisation's expert authority into a moral authority.

### **The Authority and Legitimation Practices of IGOs**

How could a functional IGO achieve a more normative role? IGOs can shape their own form, vocabulary and purposes and tell states 'what is the right thing to do' based on their authority (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, pp. 20–22). Barnett and Finnemore identify four sources of authority which make IGOs authoritative: rational-legal, delegated, expert, moral. As states constitute IGOs as impersonal and neutral bureaucracies entrusted with certain tasks, the first two sources allow them to be 'in authority' as legitimate holders of an institutional role (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, p. 25). This is notably the case for normative IGOs which try to ensure the states' compliance with the body of rules and norms they are in authority over (Hall, 2013, p. 92). IGOs require the third source of authority to be deemed as 'an authority' demonstrating an innate mastery of technical knowledge (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, p. 25). Indeed, functional IGOs rely on their expert authority to achieve specific tasks assigned by the states in the best way they see fit (Hall, 2013, p. 92).

However, some IGOs may not fall neatly into these categories. Hall (2013, p. 93) recognises 'hybrid' organisations such as the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) or UN Women who assist and advocate adherence to an international convention without possessing a state-sanctioned mandate. But Hall does not discuss the role of their agency in achieving such hybridity. In contrast, Barnett and Finnemore (2004, p. 25) observe that some IGOs may autonomously seek to 'intensify' their authority by making states perceive them as both being in authority and an authority. For instance, the UNHCR leverages the fact that it is in authority over the legal principle of refugee protection to become an authority on the issues it subsumes (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, p. 25). Such transformation relies on the moral source of authority which allows the UNHCR to claim that it is better suited to act on behalf of refugees and represent the wishes of all states (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, p. 25). Furthermore, the shift towards becoming an authority results in the promotion of trained and specialised staff within normative IGOs. Yet Barnett and Finnemore fail to consider the instance where an IGO which is an authority may strive to become in authority and recruit a 'generalist' staff instead. This is because they explain the search for an intensified authority by the necessity for IGOs to enhance their ability to execute the tasks that are delegated to them (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, p. 64). The pursuit of additional authority is thus strictly a matter of strengthening the expert capabilities of institutionally established IGOs. But the focus on efficiency and task execution sets aside the fact that the search for intensified authority can instead adhere to a 'strategy of legitimation' (Hall, 2013, p. 93).

Indeed, Hall (2013, p. 93) indicates that regardless of their role, IGOs strive to convince their 'core constituents' of their legitimacy. To institutionalise their position and ensure their survival, IGOs cannot solely rely on their rational-legal, delegated and expert authority (Scott, 2014, p. 71). They require moral authority so that other actors could perceive their actions as 'appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions' (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). In other words, IGOs must become 'infused with value' by their member states and other social actors irrespectively of their ability to achieve instrumental goals (Selznick, 1984, p. 40; Huntington, 2006, p. 246; Levitsky, 1998, p. 79). Consequently, IGOs tend to conform with the 'normative pressures' of their institutional environment (Zucker, 1987, p. 443). Based on an analysis of eighteen IGOs, such as the UN, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), Tallberg et al. (2020) demonstrated that the strength of the democratic density of their membership determined their level of commitment to 'liberal norms' (e.g. human rights, sustainable development, good governance). However, once they conform to the pressures of their environment, IGOs may

attempt to act autonomously as ‘supranational norm entrepreneurs’ (Tallberg et al., 2020, p. 631). They could try to influence how the norms adopted under pressure determine their own decisions, affect the allocation of their resources, and place demands on their member states (Tallberg et al., 2020, p. 626). Nevertheless, Tallberg et al. (2020, p. 631) consider rather restrictively that the possibility of such advocacy depends on the level of the ‘delegated authority’ of the IGO.

In contrast, Dingwerth et al. (2020, p. 716) determined that the level of authority of IGOs does not ‘directly trigger’ the adoption of a strategy of legitimation (Dingwerth et al., 2020, p. 716). Instead, it is the degree of politicisation of its authority (resulting from negative media coverage and publicly visible protests) which leads IGOs to commit to ‘democratic norms’ such as inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability (Dingwerth et al., 2020, p. 716). That is why Dingwerth et al. (2020, p. 715) observe that IGOs such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Trade Organisation, who have long relied on a ‘functional narrative’ seek to legitimise their authority. To do so, they embrace a morally infused ‘democratic narrative’ to target their external constituents (non-state actors, wider public). In other words, the moral source of authority depoliticises and shields IGOs from political contention and legitimacy challenges (Petiteville, 2018; Wilén, 2009). Nevertheless, altering the perceptions of external audiences is not the sole impetus for moral legitimation. Von Billerbeck (2020, p. 207) evinces that IGOs with multiple ‘institutional identities’ (both functional and normative) tend to engage in self-legitimation practices to mitigate their incoherence and maintain a sense of consistency. This is particularly true for IGOs, such as the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPO), that are unable to select or prioritise between their contradictory obligations and whose member states overrule or ignore their authority (von Billerbeck, 2020, p. 210). To respond to their predicament, they develop narratives that stress their conformity with shared norms and values and portray their goals as universal (von Billerbeck, 2020, p. 214).

These discussions inform how this working paper characterises the IOM. It is a functional IGO that relies on its expert authority to interact with the member states and other IGOs. Yet the IOM is only an authority; it lacks the moral authority required to put it in authority over global migration governance. It does not have sufficient legitimacy to act as the sole IGO responsible for international migration. Lacking the necessary intensified authority, the IOM has to continuously struggle to make its voice heard among the numerous UN agencies that are active on migration. Moreover, the IOM cannot easily act autonomously from its (wealthiest) member states. The latter can bypass, ignore or challenge the policy upper body of the IOM by referring it to its limited status of an authority and by readily employing the operational lower body to fulfil their priorities. Against this backdrop, the IOM Strategic Vision should be questioned as to whether it aims to shape and legitimise a new form, vocabulary and purpose of the IOM so that it would become in authority.

## **The Transformation of the IOM and Its Search for Legitimacy**

That is why, this working paper anticipates that the involvement of the IOM in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the GCM serves a broader undertaking whereby the functional IOM would transform into a more normative IGO. Instead of carrying out discrete and time-limited projects paid by its wealthiest member states, this involvement determined by the IOM Strategic Vision would legitimise the organisation to act autonomously and intensify its authority. To achieve such outcome, the policy upper body of the IOM would seek to extend the organisation’s autonomy by promoting, implementing, safeguarding, and demanding the compliance of states with the 2030 Agenda and GCM. Despite lacking a formal supervisory role over these multilateral texts, the policy upper body of the IOM would leverage them to bolster the moral authority of the organisation along with its expert authority. By intensifying its authority, the IOM would create a ‘basis for [its] autonomous action’ (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004, p. 27) to achieve a more normative role. The moral source of authority would allow the IOM to appear as

a proponent of the seemingly universal and consensual norms of sustainable development, good governance and human rights embodied by these texts. And it would further help the IOM to 'become the honest broker' (IOM, 2019a, p. 4) among so-called origin, transit, and destination countries. While Hall (2013, p. 93) rightly points to the necessity for IGOs to convince their core constituents, the involvement of the IOM in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the GCM is not solely a matter of garnering legitimacy from other actors. Barnett and Finnemore (2004, pp. 25–26) indicate that the intensification of the IGOs' authority requires their organisational adjustment. To transform the IOM into a more normative organisation, its policy upper body must address the functional organisational structure (i.e. the imbalance and inconsistency between its upper and lower body) that ties it with the interests of the member states. In sum, the analysis of the IOM's attempt to transform would shed light on how IGOs can autonomously try to attain a hybrid role, wield moral authority to become in authority, and adjust their organisational structure.

But the question remains as to why the policy upper body of the IOM would seek to transform the organisation. Geiger and Koch (2018) offer a possible explanation by conceptualising the IOM as a 'world organisation'. Notwithstanding its intergovernmental character, the IOM is embedded in and interacts with a '(world) societal environment' (Geiger & Koch, 2018, p. 29). To act legitimately within the latter and abide by its pressures, world organisations adopt semantics, internal structure, external relations, and norms that explicitly reference, recognise and are preoccupied with the world (Geiger & Koch, 2018, p. 30). Thus, the 'growing role' of the IOM since the 2000s signals its further embeddedness in its wider environment (Geiger & Koch, 2018, p. 38). The involvement of the IOM in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and GCM could then be interpreted as stemming from its self-perception as a 'role model' of the world society (Geiger & Koch, 2018, p. 33). Albeit undeniably useful in distancing the analysis of the IOM from its functional role, this account 'rooted in organisation studies' (Geiger & Koch, 2018, p. 29) reprises their core assumption; namely, that durable organisations reflect, comply and adapt to their social environment. This leads Geiger and Koch to stress the importance of the lower body of the IOM for its embeddedness. It is what renders the organisation capable of adapting proactively, autonomously and locally to the social environment throughout the world (Geiger & Koch, 2018, p. 35). Whereas the upper body's bureaucracy is not deemed as a relevant driving force of the IOM (Geiger & Koch, 2018, pp. 28–29).

This fails to account for the fact that the headquarters of the IOM seem to direct the attempt to transform the organisation through the IOM Strategic Vision. Moreover, Geiger and Koch's explanation implies that the adaptiveness of the IOM lends legitimacy to its position within the social environment. In contrast, Pécoud evinces that the IOM long evolved within an environment where 'the absence of an internationally agreed-upon agenda over migration deprive[d] the organisation from political legitimacy and [kept] migration policy in the sovereign realm' (2020, p. 9). The involvement of the IOM in the negotiation and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the GCM may then be best understood as a strategy of legitimation which upholds them to put the IOM in authority. However, the transformation sought after by the policy upper body of the IOM is likely to face contestation from the member states. If overwhelmed by the latter, the involvement of the IOM in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the GCM could then devolve into an exercise in self-legitimation. Lacking any organisational impact, the IOM Strategic Vision could merely serve to obfuscate the inconsistencies of the organisation and its inability to break away from its functional role.

## **A Critical Discourse Analysis of the IOM Strategic Vision**

Accordingly, the IOM Strategic Vision is a strategy devised by the policy upper body of the IOM to manage the contradictions inherent to the structural imbalance of the organisation

(Fairclough, 2005, p. 931). This working paper examines this endeavour to transform the IOM by wielding the 2030 Agenda and the GCM through the lens of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2005, 2003). This method of textual analysis delves into the discursive dimension of such strategy. Indeed, the IOM Strategic Vision contains discourses regarding not only the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the GCM but the role and authority of the IOM therein (Fairclough, 2005, p. 931). This requires identifying how the document C/110/INF/1 develops an epistemic argumentation (about what is and is not the case, what has happened, and what the issue is) and a normative argumentation (about what should happen and should be done) (Fairclough, 2006, p. 35). They would both allow the IOM Strategic Vision to textually construct together the conventional narrative about the expert authority and functional role of the IOM with an emergent discourse implying its moral authority and normative role (Fairclough, 2005, p. 932). If the strategy of the policy upper body of the IOM is to be successful, it requires to discursively break the 'inertia and resistance' emanating from the extant discourses and structures of the IOM (Fairclough, 2005, p. 933). This could involve attempting to recontextualize external discourses emanating from the UN, the 2030 Agenda and the GCM to internalise them within the IOM in a way that supports its transformation (Fairclough, 2005, pp. 933–934). In other words, the ability of the policy upper body to reorganise the discourses on the role of the organisation is particularly crucial to intensify its authority

### ***The Changes in the Environment of the IOM as an Impetus for Transformation***

The IOM Strategic Vision's epistemic argumentation depicts the global migration governance and the issues it entails for the IOM. Indeed, the document's background section begins by situating the IOM within its 'strategic environment'. It describes the 'broader developments' that marked the global migration governance since 2015 (IOM, 2019d, p. 2) by selecting the following institutional events as significant: the adoption of the 2030 Agenda (2015); the negotiation of the status of the IOM as a related organisation of the UN (2016); the announcement of the reform of the UN by its Secretary General (2017); the creation of the UN Network on Migration (2018); and the adoption of the GCM (2018). At first glance most of these events do not directly modify the functional role of the IOM, but the document argues that they nonetheless result in 'new responsibilities and demands' (IOM, 2019d, p. 3) for the organisation. The IOM Strategic Vision classifies these responsibilities and demands according to whether they emanate from the generic group of the 'member states' or the impersonalised 'UN system' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 146). The document claims that the IOM 'has already been called by many of its Members for support [to implement the GCM]' (IOM, 2019d, p. 3). While the UN system requires that the IOM 'develop and manage ground breaking [UN] machinery' (IOM, 2019d, p. 3). To showcase the full breath of such a complex system, the document enumerates its various parts that welcome the IOM as a 'full member': UN country teams; Chief Executives Board for Coordination; UN Network on Migration; UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) (IOM, 2019d, p. 2). The latter body is particularly crucial as it puts the IOM in contact with the heads of thirty-five other UN agencies to coordinate the funds and programs implementing the 2030 Agenda. This allows the document to situate the multiple tasks required to implement the latter within the framework of the UN system rather than the interactions with the member states. To further emphasise that the IOM expects to fully engage with the UN, the document precedes each implementation task of the 2030 Agenda by the broadly inclusive pronoun 'all': 'IOM – as a member of the [UNSDG] – will participate in all relevant inter-agency results groups and tasks teams and make substantive contributions to all relevant reports by the [UN]' (IOM, 2019d, p. 2).

Nevertheless, the IOM Strategic Vision unevenly characterises the social actors that express these two new types of demands. Whereas the member states enjoy an active role (they demand support from the IOM), the document assigns the UN system to a passive role (its

machinery is to be operated by the IOM) (Fairclough, 2003, p. 145). This leads the document to distinguish the issues that each type of demand will pose to the organisation. First, the IOM 'may struggle to meet donor expectations' (IOM, 2019d, p. 3) as it faces additional requests to implement the GCM. The generic term of member state gives way here to the more specific category of 'donor' which outlines a subset of wealthy member states. Contrary to other member states, they could impede the IOM's ability to respond to the additional 'needs on the ground' (IOM, 2019d, p. 3). Second, the extensive involvement of the IOM with the UN system will require 'articulating [the IOM's] activities and mandate in relation to the 2030 Agenda' (IOM, 2019d, p. 2). In other words, the state-determined projects and functional role of the IOM will have to adapt to the various parts of the UN machinery involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, by stating the need for such 'articulation', the document opens up the door for the recontextualization of the discourses and practices of the UN system within the IOM. This is justified by the document's claim that 'there is now a strong expectation that IOM's work will be more closely coordinated with that of the rest of the [UN]' (IOM, 2019d, p. 2).

This statement's cautious impersonal construction (which actors strongly expect such coordination?) and its use of the word 'now' suggests that such close cooperation has met the member states' resistance and that they could still oppose it. Indeed, during the negotiation of the Agreement between the UN and the IOM, some of them were concerned with the inability of the IOM governing bodies<sup>3</sup> to monitor the policy upper body's actions within the UN system (IOM, 2017a, p. 4). This is not surprising as the issue of the scope of the IOM's agency within the UN system has crucial implications on the functional role of the organisation.

### ***From the Changes in the Environment to the Dual Logic of the IOM***

The epistemic argumentation regarding the strategic environment of the IOM strives to dictate the transformation of the organisation. That is why it is intertwined with a normative argumentation about what should (not) be done. It builds upon the 'factual' distinction between the demands of the member states and the UN system to suggest how the IOM's interactions with both of these actors should be determined. In fact, this distinction allows the IOM Strategic Vision to cautiously present the organisation as abiding by a dual logic that could potentially result in contradictions. The IOM is both a functional IGO searching for additional autonomy to support the implementation of the GCM and a normative IGO serving the 2030 Agenda within the UN system. First, the IOM Strategic Vision conveys the idea that the organisation is not merely functional by stating that member states should not expect it to 'do more with less' (IOM, 2019d, p. 3) to meet their wishes. To address the challenge of additional demands from non-donor states, the IOM Strategic Vision calls for 'a moment of collective reflection regarding [the IOM's] consolidation and structural development' (IOM, 2019d, p. 3). Second, the fulfilment of the demands of the UN system does not depend on the IOM's expert ability to implement projects, but rather on its 'own sense of identity, and institutional poise in framing the key issues under discussion with the [UN] partners' (IOM, 2019d, p. 3). The notions of identity and institutional poise are previously unseen in the strategic documents of the IOM (i.e. the IOM Strategic Planning (IOM, 1995); the IOM Strategy (IOM, 2007); the Migration Governance Framework (IOM, 2015b)). They imply that the IOM Strategic Vision is not only aiming to alter the way of (inter)acting of the organisation, it is

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<sup>3</sup> These are the Council of the IOM and the Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance (SCPF). The former is the highest authority of the IOM where each member state has one representative and vote. It meets once a year in normal session to determine and review the policy of the IOM. The latter is a subcommittee of the Council open to all member states. It meets twice a year 'to examine and review policies, programmes and activities, to discuss administrative, financial and budgetary matters and to consider any matter specifically referred to it by the Council' (IOM, 2014).

striving to determine its way of being (Fairclough, 2005, p. 925).

### ***The Future Composite 'Identity' of the IOM***

If the IOM ought to change its way of being to meet the recent developments of the global migration governance, what particular identity should it embody? Following the background section, the IOM Strategic Vision expounds on the 'strategic goals' that should complement the 'core characteristics' (IOM, 2019d, p. 4) of the IOM. In other words, these goals would transform the IOM in a way that would begin to untie it from its functional role. The dedicated section discussing these goals expresses them in the form of nine seemingly positive adjectives and nouns that outline how the 'IOM should be [by 2023]' (IOM, 2019d, p. 4):

A driving force; principled; migrant-centred; joined up; balanced; operational; forward-looking; a learning organisation; collaborative; an objective voice (IOM, 2019d, pp. 4–5).

These goals outline a rather composite identity of the IOM as it blends together functional and normative characteristics. Indeed, a few of these goals contain claims to moral authority that would imply the transformation of the IOM into a more normative IGO. This is notably the case of the principled goal. It proclaims that the IOM 'is guided by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the [UN], including upholding human rights for all' (IOM, 2019d, p. 4). The goal translates the commitment of the IOM to 'conduct its activities in accordance with [...] the Charter' (UN & IOM, 2016, p. 3) as stipulated by the Agreement concerning the relationship between the UN and the IOM. In contrast, the principled goal only mentions laconically the member state-sanctioned and functional IOM Constitution. Moreover, it does not clarify the manner in which the latter combines with the normative Charter (IOM, 2019d, p. 4). Therefore, the goal does not respond to the 'serious incompatibility' (Guild et al., 2020, p. 47) between the two texts notably regarding the protection of migrants. Indeed, the IOM Constitution does not list the latter as one of the 'purposes and functions' of the organisation (Pécoud, 2020, p. 12). Yet despite these shortcomings, the principled goal constitutes an important instance of recontextualization of the normative discourse of the UN within the IOM. The policy upper body actively appropriates this discourse not by transposing it as it is, but by 'reweaving' (Fairclough, 2005, p. 932) it with the narrative about the functional role of the IOM. The principled goal signals the IOM's claim to a moral authority that would allow it not so much to protect the rights of migrants but to modify its interactions with member states. Once it established the guiding principles of the IOM, the goal puts forward the following assertion: 'IOM has always assisted governments in their effective implementation of international standards in its programming and, will continue to do so' (IOM, 2019d, p. 4).

Regardless of its truth, this statement introduces a normative dimension to the organisation's project-based way of interacting with states. While this may seem tentative and dependent on the willingness of the member states, the 'objective voice' goal of the IOM Strategic Vision is more straightforward. It surprisingly announces that the IOM will make use of its moral authority to interact with member states rather than its expert authority as suggested by the use of the word 'objective': '[The IOM] will remind governments and publics of the rights of all human beings, including migrants, in line with the values enshrined in its Constitution' (IOM, 2019d, p. 5). This goal embodies the attempt of the IOM Strategic Vision to textually construct together the expert and moral authority of the IOM. Indeed, it links the moral authority that it entails with the functional IOM Constitution. By blurring the distinction between the established functional role of the IOM and the emergent normative one, the IOM Strategic Vision aims to intensify the authority of the organisation so that it could become in charge over migration. The 'migrant-centred' goal exemplifies such claim as it singles out the organisation from other UN agencies and encourages deference from member states: 'the IOM will remain the sole actor committed to working with and on behalf of migrants' (IOM, 2019d, p. 4).

### ***Transforming the IOM by Mitigating the Effects of Projectisation***

But along these normative leaning goals, other straightforward functional goals equally imply the alteration of the IOM's role and the extension of its autonomy. Although the 'operational' goal is unsurprisingly committed to enhancing 'the operational effectiveness' (IOM, 2019d, p. 5) of the organisation, it conditions this enhancement to a closer work with the UN agencies (IOM, 2019d, p. 5). Furthermore, other functional goals entail a top-down reorganisation of the projects implemented by the operational lower body. This transformation would mitigate the projectisation of the IOM. The 'driving force' goal states that 'priority areas [...] based on what IOM believes the future will bring' (IOM, 2019d, p. 4) should accompany the 'broad and deep' scope of the operational lower body's activities. Rather than abiding by the priorities of the wealthiest member states, the policy upper body of the IOM would be able to select what should be done based on its own assessment. To this end, the 'joined-up' goal advocates that the IOM's projects need to 'take into account overarching goals that may go beyond the migration field or specific geographies, such as [...] the broader 2030 Agenda' (IOM, 2019d, p. 4). This is meant to 'ensure consistency' (IOM, 2019d, p. 4) across the various regional and (sub)national offices by allowing the policy upper body to subsume and override their local contexts and compartmentalised projects. Accordingly, the 'balanced' goal calls for a 'holistic approach to the mobility continuum' to 'break down internal silos' of the IOM programming (IOM, 2019d, p. 4). This aspiration to comprehensiveness would conjure the fragmentation stemming from the projectisation. It would also require mitigating the short-term nature of the IOM's activities. That is why the 'forward-looking' goal highlights the need for a 'long-term approach to addressing emerging issues' (IOM, 2019d, p. 5). This would go hand in hand with the 'learning organisation' goal which expects the establishment of a 'pool of knowledge and experience' that could centralise the data collected through the 'operational activities' of the IOM (IOM, 2019d, p. 5). In this manner, the policy upper body of the IOM could ensure that it has a clearer knowledge of what is happening on the ground.

### ***The IOM Strategic Vision as a Corporate Narrative***

The slew of metaphors of the normative argumentation of the IOM Strategic Vision (holistic approach to the mobility continuum; internal silos; pool of knowledge and experience) is a striking feature of the document. This results in a rather abstract representation of what the IOM should become by 2023. The IOM Strategic Vision does not specify the process required to achieve the transformation of the organisation. This has to do with the document's aim to develop 'a strong corporate narrative' (IOM, 2019d, p. 4). This genre which originates from the private sector structures the document in specific ways (Fairclough, 2003, p. 17). A corporate narrative must focus on telling a 'story' about the organisation 'as if it were a person'; it should 'say who you are, not just what you do' (Bonchek, 2016). That is why the IOM Strategic Vision recontextualizes this external genre by expressing its strategic goals through adjectives and nouns that might as well characterise individuals. By doing so, these goals spell out the appropriate ways of being for the organisation rather than its ways of (inter)acting with the member states and its various decentralised parts. The corporate narrative aims to situate the IOM and convince others about its value and uniqueness (Bonchek, 2016). This requires highlighting the moral authority of the IOM. Nevertheless, the precise operational steps that the IOM should undertake are unspecified by the epistemic and normative argumentation of the IOM Strategic Vision. Furthermore, one of the objectives of the genre of the corporate narrative consists in 'get[ting] everyone [within an organisation] on the same page' (Greenberg, 2013). That is why many of the more functional strategic goals attempt to establish consistency throughout the IOM by mitigating the effects of projectisation.

## **Conclusion: Beyond the Discursive Content of the IOM Strategic Vision**

This working paper sought to examine the discursive content of the IOM Strategic Vision to understand how the IOM undertakes its transformation into a more normative organisation through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the GCM. The IOM Strategic Vision differs from past strategic documents of the organisation. It is the first of such documents that attempts to fix the role and position of the IOM since it became a UN-related organisation in 2016. It is also the first strategic document that explicitly attempts to extensively reorganise the 'activities and mandate' of the IOM based on two external multilateral texts. And unlike most of its predecessors, the policy upper body is the one spearheading the IOM Strategic Vision rather than the member states. To examine this important document in the history of the IOM and highlight its epistemic and normative argumentation, this working paper used the CDA methodology. The epistemic argumentation developed factual statements about the recent events that marked the environment of the global governance of migration. It argued that these events warrant the transformation of the IOM as it could not continue operating as a mere functional organisation. As it will have to respond to both the demands of the member states and the UN system, the IOM would therefore need to abide by a dual functional and normative logic. The normative argumentation further details this by outlining the future composite identity of the organisation by stating the multiple goals the IOM should achieve. These goals blend the organisation's functional role with a more normative one. They notably recontextualize the normative discourse of the UN with the more conventional discourse about the IOM's functional role. This allows the IOM Strategic Vision to proclaim the moral authority of the IOM along its expert authority so that it would become the sole authority over the issue of migration. Additionally, the normative argumentation attempts to mitigate the functional effects of the projectisation of the IOM. Indeed, it assigns overarching priorities and goals, decompartmentalises the projects implemented by the operational lower body, and requires a long-term approach to migration. Finally, the working paper highlights the specificity of the IOM Strategic Vision. To formulate its goals, the document recontextualizes the genre of the corporate narrative. Contrary to past strategic documents, it primarily focuses on telling a 'story' about the organisation so that it would elicit some deference from the member states and the operational lower body of the IOM.

But while this working paper examined the discursive content of the IOM Strategic Vision, the focus on its epistemic and normative argumentation is not enough to adequately assess its impact. Indeed, the IOM Strategic Vision is best understood as being both a discursive and an organisational strategy that aims to transform the IOM into a more normative IGO. Thus, a more comprehensive CDA of the strategy is required to delve into its relationship with institutional and organisational elements (Fairclough, 2005, p. 924).

Firstly, further research is needed to examine the process of the adoption and implementation of the IOM Strategic Vision. The IOM Strategic Vision must be acknowledged and followed within the institutional context of the IOM throughout its implementation to be able to spur a transformation of the organisation. The policy upper body of the IOM must support the legitimacy of its strategy so that it might become taken-for-granted and unchallenged by the member states (Meyer et al., 2017, p. 406). It would need to enact various textual 'strategies of legitimation' to generate deference (Fairclough, 2003, p. 98): by reference to the authority of tradition, custom, law, and of persons and organisations in whom moral or expert authority is vested (authorisation); by reference to value systems (moral evaluation); by reference to the utility of the strategy (rationalisation). Therefore, a further research on the IOM Strategic Vision would need to analyse how the document C/110/INF/1 contains these strategies. But it will also require examining the reports on the sessions of the IOM governing bodies where the policy upper body and the member states discuss the IOM Strategic Vision (IOM, 2020e). This would indicate how the former applies these strategies to legitimise it in the eyes of the latter.

Secondly, the organisational change expected by the IOM Strategic Vision should also be



analysed to scrutinise the potential changes it could engage in how the policy upper body interacts with its member states. To avoid becoming a mere self-legitimising 'imaginary for change', the IOM Strategic Vision must operationalise its discourse 'in new ways of acting and being and new material arrangements' (Fairclough, 2005, p. 931). In other words, an additional analysis of the IOM Strategic Vision must assess whether its operationalisation could result in: the enactment of new ways of acting (e.g. changes in the procedures that regulate the interaction between the IOM and its member states); the inculcation of new ways of being (e.g. changes in the identities of the staff of the IOM and their communicative styles); the materialisation of new arrangements (e.g. changes in the structuring of the organisation) (Fairclough, 2005, p. 934). This will require examining how the IOM Strategic Vision translates into the budgetary documents of the IOM for the years 2020 and 2021 (IOM, 2019b, 2020a, 2020d). But also, how it relies on the 'parallel process' (IOM, 2019d, p. iii) of the application of the Internal Governance Framework. Designed in 2019 by the policy upper body of the IOM, it addresses the fact that 'the IOM has outgrown its governance architecture' (IOM, 2019c, p. 1). The policy upper body supports this framework so that it becomes 'the functional backbone of the Organisation' (IOM, 2019d, p. iii). It considers that the Internal Governance Framework is 'an important driver of [the] successful implementation of the Strategic Vision' (IOM, 2020b, p. 1).

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