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Self-legitimation through knowledge production partnerships: International Organization for Migration in Central Asia

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ABSTRACT

The absence of a solid international migration regime and related competition between international organisations (IOs) in the field of global migration governance bring challenges to their authority and legitimacy to the fore. This paper sets to explore how the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has reacted to such challenges. For this, the paper applies the concept of self-legitimation of IOs. Drawing on insights from International Relations and International Political Economy as well as on 'sociology of translation', the paper argues that the core self-legitimation strategy and practices of IOM rely on knowledge production partnerships with other IOs and relevant local stakeholders. To develop this argument, the paper uses the notions of challenged and challenging institutions, identifies sources of related challenges and the audiences that are important for self-legitimation efforts of IOs. It shows how IOM has become both a challenging and a challenged institution and how its knowledge production partnerships in the post-Soviet Central Asia increase its reputational authority in relations with its local and global audiences. This analysis builds on fieldwork conducted in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in 2011–2015.

KEYWORDS
Self-legitimation; international organisations; knowledge production; IOM; Central Asia

Introduction

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is one of the two 'global' referent international institutions in global migration governance (Betts 2013), the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) being the other one. However, the absence of a solid international migration regime (Betts 2011; Newland 2005) provides not only these referent institutions but also non-referent international organisations (IOs) with a favourable context to introduce and even impose varying international standards in different countries (Kunz, Lavenex, and Panizzon 2011). These governance dynamics contribute to the growing regime complexity in migration field challenging old established referent IOs and creating new opportunities for non-referent IOs (Korneev 2017).

Increasing competition between IOs (although, as this paper shows, IOs can cooperate even in conditions of competition) brings challenges to their authority and legitimacy to the fore. This is particularly relevant for IOM due to its core features and the dynamic, loosely

regulated context in which it operates. IOM is an intergovernmental organisation that, until recently, was outside of the United Nations (UN) system. Its new status of an UN-related organisation does not put IOM on equal footing with UN agencies deriving legitimacy from their charters and recognised mandates. IOM is 'not accountable to any democratically elected body. Although international organisations such as UNHCR, UNICEF and WHO have observer status, as do international trade union, religious and welfare organisations, they have no voting power' (Morris 2005, 43). Created after the Second World War as 'The Inter-Governmental Committee on Migration in Europe', IOM was tasked with a very precise mission: to help states resettle forced migrants produced by the war. Its rebranding into IOM and gradual transformation of the mandate have happened at a much later stage. Still, the current IOM's mandate defines IOM as a service-providing agency supporting governments of its Participating States and does not include the goal of migrants' protection, which is seen by many as its key problem (Pécoud 2017). Most of IOM budget comes in the form of earmarked funding from Participating States and this, ostensibly, hinders IOM's autonomy. Despite such limitations, IOM has taken important steps in order to re-position itself in the field, namely through its 'migration management for the benefit of all' slogan. Over a number of years, IOM has been moving beyond its narrow mandate and challenging other IOs. However, extant research suggests that multiple various actors have also challenged the legitimacy of IOM: these are other IOs that enter migration governance terrain, governments of beneficiary countries, human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and, finally, some experts that form transnational epistemic communities in the field of migration.[1]

This paper sets to explore how IOM reacts to these challenges. Recognising the importance of discussions on complex normative and sociological dimensions of legitimacy (Buchanan and Keohane 2006), this paper focuses, instead, on the concept of (self)legitimation of IOs describing 'the ways in which they communicate and justify their claims to authority, and in which these claims are recognized and validated' (Zaum 2013, 10). More specifically, it is interested in legitimation 'from above' implying that IOs 'communicate their claims sideways to other institutions that might make competing claims, or downwards towards their membership and wider international community, to justify particular activities' (Zaum 2013, 11). The paper builds on the premise that IOM has relied on self-legitimation for subsequent improvement of its position in the 'complex webs of varied actors pushing change' (Avant et al. 2010, xiii) because it has become an increasingly challenged institution (Betts 2013) in the field of migration governance. The paper, thus, contributes to research on IOM's role in the production and dissemination of knowledge identified as one of the four key themes for this special issue (Pécoud 2017). Through an analysis of the format and substance of this knowledge production and, specifically, highlighting IOM's focus on 'migration and development' paradigm in the context of the case study, this paper also joins discussions on markets and the global economy as well as on civil society and human rights of migrants.

Drawing on insights from International Relations and International Political Economy (Avant et al. 2010; Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Best 2007, 2014; Sharman 2007; Stone 2013; Zaum 2006, 2013) as well as on 'sociology of translation' (Callon 1986), this paper argues that the core self-legitimation strategy and practices of IOM rely on knowledge production partnerships with other IOs and relevant local stakeholders. Theoretically, following ideas of Haas (1992) about the emergence and impact of international

institutions under conditions of uncertainty and on the role of knowledge therein, this paper links the study of IOs in migration governance field (Betts 2011, 2013; Geiger and Pécoud 2010, 2014; Pécoud 2015) with literature on production and political use of knowledge (Boswell 2009; Boswell, Geddes, and Scholten 2011; Nay 2014). Empirically, the paper explores IOM knowledge production efforts in the post-Soviet Central Asia.

This region has so far escaped attention of migration governance scholars, despite evidence of both significant migration and multi-layered governance in the Eurasian Migration System (Ivakhniouk 2003) composed of the post-Soviet states with Russia and Kazakhstan being the core countries of destination, whereas Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are among the world's top remittance depending countries (World Bank 2011, 2014). Due to specific historic circumstances – functioning of the single monolithic state apparatus of the USSR – by the time of their independence Central Asian states did not have any normative frameworks and institutions in the field of migration (Geddes and Korneev 2015). These countries tried to make sense of the rapidly intensifying migration dynamics both within and beyond their own borders, in particularly exacerbated by the brutal civil war in Tajikistan. Creation of relevant institutions, development of norms and practices of migration governance – just like in many other governance fields – very much relied on pro-active positions of various international actors. This paper, based on fieldwork conducted by the author in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in 2011–2015, hopes to shed the light on this largely unexplored case. The analysis made in the paper relies on 18 interviews with national and international civil servants, local researchers and staff of local NGOs, informal communications, (participant) observations, publicly available documents as well as on some non-published primary materials.

The paper proceeds the following way. In the next section, drawing on Betts (2013), I introduce the notions of challenged and challenging institutions in patchy global migration governance, identify sources of related challenges and, more specifically, the audiences that are important for self-legitimation efforts of IOs. I show how IOM has become both a challenging and a challenged institution. The third section discusses the relevance of knowledge as a source for self-legitimation of IOs. It shows that knowledge production interventions by IOs in local contexts increase their reputational authority (Sharman 2007) in relations with their domestic and international audiences. The fourth section analyses self-legitimating practices and partnerships of IOM in Central Asia. It demonstrates, in particular, that knowledge production partnerships tend to be mutually reinforcing which emphasises cumulative nature of legitimacy for IOM and other IOs in this field. To conclude, I summarise the main arguments of the paper and emphasise the need to further explore IOM's knowledge production activities linked to its new formal status of an UN-related organisation.

Challenged and challenging institutions in global migration governance

Whereas the UNHCR has been conceptualised as a 'challenged institution' losing its monopoly in the complex contemporary international refugee protection regime (Betts 2013), broader migration governance field is characterised by the presence of 'challenging' institutions. By enlarging – discursively as well as practically – their involvement in various migration policy sub-fields, these IOs have started challenging the authority, expertise, capacities and overall influence of the UNHCR as well as UNDP and ILO whose role as

referent organisations had been established in a number of policy fields relevant for migration governance. However, some IOs exhibit qualities of both challenged and challenging institutions. This has certainly been the case for IOM in the post-Soviet Central Asia. This region is a peculiar case that allows tracing IOM's challenging involvement and reactions to it by other IOs from 'no man's land' state of affairs when five Central Asia republics gained their independence in 1991 to nowadays when multiple IOs have become prominent stakeholders in the region (Korneev 2013).

This favourable context has facilitated the de-facto expansion of the IOM mandate to a number of fields previously associated with other international or regional institutions. One example comes from the field of the fight against trafficking in human beings. In the early 2000-s, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has come up with the concept and content of what later – with much support from the Council of Europe – has become widely known as best practices of the national referral mechanism for victims of human trafficking (NRM). However, in the post-Soviet region, IOM is often credited for this innovation (Interview 1; Interview 14). Playing an active role in the implementation of multiple migration management projects, relying on its dissemination and communication channels and promoting 'best practices' invented by other actors, IOM has managed to carve itself a niche in this important field in the post-Soviet region, thus challenging the previously monopolistic authority of the OSCE.

There is not only quantitative but also a qualitative change in the presence, actions and impact of the IOM. It has gained more experience and gathered more expertise in and on certain areas of the world and certain topics thus strengthening its position against (potential) competitors. With years of involvement in various migration-related issues in various corners of the world, IOM has increased its capacity to 'see like an international organization' (Broome and Seabrooke 2012). Arguably, this capacity is particularly crucial where the market has weak information about an economy (Broome 2010). This applies to cases of international developmental interventions in the post-Soviet Central Asia, including the field of migration governance. At least during the first post-independence years, major international donors had weak knowledge about (human) development needs of these countries and substantially relied on experience and expertise of the IOs present in Central Asia. Eventually, some of these IOs, including IOM, have managed to establish themselves as both expert authorities and reputational intermediaries (Broome 2010) in relations with these donors drawing for them pictures of a single country or of the whole region. In particular, IOM has always tried not only to produce knowledge about migration but also to link it to other key topics from the international agenda, such as development, security and human rights (Interview 2; Interview 3 and Interview 4). At the same time, IOM has been eager to socialise Central Asian governments and NGOs into the rules and practices of the international donor community.[2] This comprehensive approach has provided IOM with a position of an indispensable reputational intermediary for international interventions on various migration-related issues across the region.

The downside to this is that having a finger in every pie IOM is also often getting under fire of critique coming from various angles. Numerous stakeholders including other IGOs, transnational NGOs (Human Rights Watch 2005; 2010a), local NGOs and, importantly, academics and mass media have come forward to criticise IOM for various aspects of its activity and, indeed, for the managerial spirit that it conveys to the field of migration politics and policy worldwide. Its contribution to depoliticising of migration has already

become a subject of rigorous academic scrutiny (Andrijasevic and Walters 2010; Georgi 2010; Pécoud 2015, 2017). Perhaps even more importantly, IOM – that had much less competition in the 1990-s and saw itself as the leading IO in the sphere of migration – is now challenged as regards its self-proclaimed exclusive expertise and competence in the field. It is precisely its expert legitimacy that is challenged, mainly by experts despite the fact that international donors often praise IOM's expertise. For quite a while, IOM has been an object of strong critique coming from the academia, wider expert community and human rights NGOs (Ashutosh and Mountz 2011; Georgi 2010; HRW 2005, 2010a; Schatral 2011). Some even view IOM as a global migration police in the context of 'the international government of borders' (Andrijasevic and Walters 2010). Such critique is subsequently disseminated not only within the transnational expert community but also to 'the end users' of IOM services, mostly states – both funders and beneficiaries of its activities.

This is exacerbated by an increasing presence of challenging institutions. These are mostly various non-referent IOs often producing impact that is comparable or even exceeding the impact of the two international bodies that are formally related to migration issues. In this way, non-referent organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UN Women, the World Bank, OSCE and others are taking on migration portfolio. Many of them have been manifesting a mission creep (Barnett and Finnemore 2004) over a number of years. By enlarging discursively as well as practically their involvement in various migration policy sub-fields, these IOs have started challenging the authority, expertise, capacities and overall influence of IOM. Challenges to IOM authority and leadership in the field of migration governance have stimulated its increasing reliance on migration knowledge production as an important self-legitimation strategy.

Governing through knowledge

This self-legitimation does not necessarily have to address so-called 'general public' (otherwise defined as 'ordinary citizens') as a whole potential legitimating community. Rather, it targets a certain audience or even several different audiences (Broome 2010). Self-legitimation might be directed towards a very particular group of key stakeholders who, in return, are expected to lend legitimacy to an IO. Such potential key stakeholders can be identified among internal and external audiences in relation to both governance issues at stake and the context in which those issues are tackled by IOs. On the ground, this internal–external distinction is often blurred but one can nevertheless specify the following ideal-typical groups in the case of migration governance. International audiences include other IOs, donor states, international NGOs, international media, transnational expert communities, transnational knowledge networks (Stone 2013). Internal audiences are found among the different levels of government in recipient states, other parts of local political elite, local NGOs, local media and local experts. Naturally, beyond this immediate need to restore challenged legitimacy in the eyes of various key audiences, IOs need legitimacy in order to pursue their long-term goals and impose their agenda in particularly volatile and often hostile political environments.

In this context, expert authority (Avant et al. 2010; Barnett and Finnemore 2004) or authoritativeness – authority based on expertise (Zaum 2006) – often becomes a key to

success for IOs. Knowledge and knowledge claims function as an essential resource for both referent and non-referent IOs in the migration field. In her seminal contribution to the studies of knowledge use in politics and policy, Boswell (2009) has argued that apart from the well-studied and praised instrumental function of expert knowledge based on bureaucratic rationality, there are also two symbolic functions equally important for politics and policy – substantiating and legitimising. The substantiating function is used to give authority to particular policy positions, in particular in cases of political contestation such as debates around the impact of environmental changes on migration flows (Geddes and Somerville 2012) or EU policy-making in the field of migrant integration (Geddes and Scholten 2015). The legitimising function is important when an organisation needs to rely on expert knowledge to strengthen its claim for jurisdiction over particular policy areas and to improve its legitimacy as, for example, in the case of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) struggling with increasing critiques of its interventions in policies of borrowing countries (Best 2007).

Importantly, Boswell emphasises the role of risk and uncertainty in defining which knowledge function would be prioritised by an organisation in any given context (2009). Uncertainty is probably the most stable characteristic of global migration governance field. It is also of crucial importance for IOs. They act in conditions of uncertainty about international migration arising from the absence of solid scientific foundations for migration policies at national and global levels (Boswell 2009) and the lack of a single coherent framework in the shape of a global migration regime (Betts 2011). Boswell mostly discusses *the use* of knowledge, and her primary focus is on variations of knowledge use in politics, with the exception of the case study of the European Migration Network that also links to a discussion of policy-making processes. This paper argues that we might get more insights as regards the political use of knowledge if we turn our attention first to the actual processes of knowledge *production* by those actors that are, in fact, its primary users and disseminators. The spread of knowledge production partnerships among such actors – or inspired and sponsored by them – deserves special attention nowadays when we are witnessing 'a creeping McKinseyation of IOs … that need … expertise to do their job properly' (Rushton 2014). IOs are, indeed, active producers of knowledge on migration and migration policies in the current global context, whereas this global migration context is primarily characterised by enduring uncertainty about future migration dynamics.

Uncertainty provides IOs with the freedom to produce and disseminate expert knowledge of two types particularly valued by stakeholders. I call the first type 'analytical-predictive knowledge'. It is knowledge about current or potential demographic fluctuations, changes in migratory flows, routes, patterns, etc. that needs to be produced regularly in order to keep up with changes in the globalised world that increase the perceptions of risk (Beck 1992; for a critical reflection see Joseph 2012). Another type of expert knowledge relevant for migration politics and policy-making is what I call 'normative knowledge'. It encompasses knowledge claims about the best ways in which particular policies – such as migration control, integration and rights, labour markets, regional cooperation – should be changed and is usually, although not always, linked to the specific expertise if IOs. Knowledge of this type seems to form the core of what Pecoud calls 'international migration narratives' (2015) conveying certainty to otherwise uncertain migration world. Knowledge of both types has been massively produced by various

academic institutions and think-tanks such as Migration Policy Institute (Washington, D.C.), Migration Policy Group (Brussels) or Migration Policy Centre (Florence) often getting funding from the U.S.A. and the EU. Still, IOs seem to be the champions in the production of migration knowledge (Korneev 2017).

In order to sustain their authority, IOs rely on various strategies and practices of knowledge production and use. This paper draws upon the 'sociology of translation' (Callon 1986) in order to conceptualise how IOs claim exclusive legitimacy in 'speaking for others' – for international donors and recipient states, but also for experts and migrants – in their knowledge production. Ideas from the 'sociology of translation' or its later version generally called actor-network theory have already been successfully used in studies focusing, for example, on the concept of failed states (Bueger and Bethke 2014), international water management projects (Mukhtarov 2012) or practices of global institutions in the field of development finance (Best 2014).

Sociology of translation is an 'analytical framework … particularly well adapted to the study of the role played by science and technology in structuring power relationships' (Callon 1986, 196). The mechanism described by Callon involves four stages or 'moments': problematisation, interessement, enrolment and mobilisation that 'constitute the different phases of a general process called translation, during which the identity of actors, the possibility of interaction and the margins of manoeuvre are negotiated and delimited' (1986, 201). Callon notes that in practice these stages do not necessarily follow this strict chronological pattern, they are closely interrelated and often overlap. In the end, the distinctness of these stages/moments is not important. The core of 'translation' is the overarching process of displacement that occurs through these moments, because

> to translate is to displace … But to translate is also to express in one's own language what others say and want, why they act in the way they do and how they associate with each other: it is to establish oneself as a spokesman. At the end of the process, if it is successful, only voices speaking in unison will be heard. (Callon 1986, 216–217)

Such displacement of knowledge-based authority from local actors underpins knowledge-based self-legitimation strategies of IOs. The nuanced analytical framework produced by Callon helps explaining how local knowledge is being used by IOs.

This conceptual framework is well suited to the study of the role played by both global and local expert knowledge in global governance. When those who attempt to govern have to compete for influence, expert knowledge – both global and local – can play crucial role as a resource and comparative advantage (Autesserre 2014). In many cases, IOs resort to external knowledge produced by experts from 'developed countries' (Zaum 2006). Policy norms and standards proposed to local actors are not only being created from scratch, but often selected from a wide range of 'success stories' already existing somewhere in the world, thus making 'knowledge delivery'[3] yet another label for (perhaps more subtle) policy transfer. Dissemination of transnational 'hegemonic knowledge' by IOs occurs, according to Nay (2014), through three consecutive normative processes: normalisation, fragmentation and assimilation. These processes involve original producers of knowledge (in this case – IOs), transnational knowledge networks as well as dissenting experts. This linear model proposed by Nay is well suited for analysis of cases where general – not related to any specific local context – normative knowledge produced by global actors is disseminated internationally. However, such general – rather abstract – knowledge is

not the only type of knowledge used in global governance. Tailor-made knowledge about specific local conditions and complexities is crucial for the authority of IOs (Zaum 2006). This does not necessarily extends to all types of IOs, because some of them might exploit their reputational authority without any particular knowledge of local conditions as it has been convincingly demonstrated by Broome in his study of the IMF actions in the post-Soviet Central Asia (2010). Nevertheless, in the conditions of increasing competition between IOs amounting to cases of regime complexity (Alter and Meunier 2009), there is a certain erosion of reputational authority. Moreover, recent studies in social anthropology of development and in international relations show that when 'global' experts unilaterally produce knowledge about local conditions such knowledge often becomes problematic and contested (Mosse and Lewis 2005; Stone 2013).

Therefore, in order to sustain their legitimacy, IOs face the need to engage in co-production of knowledge not only with global but also with local partners. This dimension of knowledge production is still very much understudied. The three-process framework suggested by Nay does not seem to provide enough insights on how IOs manage to successfully produce and disseminate knowledge about specific local conditions, how they select local partners and how they get them involved. Callon's framework explaining this through the metaphor of translation is better suited to analyse knowledge production in partnerships forged by global (external) and local actors. The need for 'translation' between various actors involved in migration governance might at some point become indispensable and thus strengthen the impact of IOs on policy priorities. Since most global governance of international migration takes place under conditions of uncertainty about future migration scenarios, applying the 'sociology of translation' to the study of self-legitimation practices used by IOs can bring us important insights about the role of IOs in problematisation (Hülsse 2007), normalisation (Nay 2014) and specific governance impact in this complex policy field.

Self-legitimating practices of IOM: knowledge production partnerships in Central Asia

Although most studies concentrate on the roles of single IOs in migration governance and management (e.g. Geiger and Pécoud 2010; Potaux 2011; Schatral 2011), the issue of IOs' interaction and, in particular, their competition is also getting attention (Badie et al. 2008; Betts 2013; Korneev 2013). At the same time, studies that address cases when IOs of different types with overlapping mandates do not only compete but also cooperate in the field of migration governance are still rare.[4] Nevertheless, despite being competing international bureaucracies (Barnett and Finnemore 2004), IOs often cooperate with each other in the field of knowledge production. Important examples of such cooperation are provided by cases of IOM cooperation with the World Bank, UN Women, the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNDP, UNODC or OSCE. The rest of this section explores such cooperative dynamics of migration knowledge production by IOM and its partners in the post-Soviet Central Asia.

Despite a very complex character of migration flows within the Eurasian (post-Soviet) migration system, a clear priority for both academics and practitioners is labour migration. A migration expert from Tajikistan provides a critical view of this situation:

> I am now involved in a study on irregular migration done by IOM. When we ask our officials about the current migration policy of Tajikistan, they immediately think about labour migration. This is how they immediately see it. Integrated border management, mixed migration flows, refugees or stateless people who are many in Tajikistan – all these issues are not important for those whom we speak to. This is because migration policy here means labour emigration policy. Nothing else. (Interview 5)

Much of this labour migration is said to be of irregular nature (for a review or relevant studies see Ryazantsev and Korneev 2013). This labour-irregular migration nexus has been cemented in the discourse of multiple IOs involved in Central Asian migration governance. Importantly, however, IOs do not explicitly frame migration governance priorities for Central Asia in terms of counteracting irregular migration. IOM together with several other IOs has greatly contributed to the international image of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan as 'countries of labour emigration' *par excellence* instead of promoting other options for their socio-economic development. Eventually, Central Asian migration processes have been *inscribed* (Best 2014) into global migration discourses and frameworks from a very one-sided perspective. In its funding proposals to various international donors and in its programme documents, IOM has emphasised that Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan face serious challenges of significant labour emigration.[5] Therefore, most of IOM activities in these countries are targeting (potential) labour migrants.

Relatedly, irregular migration is either framed as part of this labour migration governance package or excluded from public discussions at all. Nevertheless, governance frameworks for labour migration are strongly linked to governance proposals concerning irregular migration. Clearly, the latter comes on and off the agenda through the projects implemented in the region by various IOs. There are no umbrella projects that would exclusively target irregular migration issues. Instead, in the constant process of translation of the world 'best practices' for local stakeholders, other migration governance mechanisms are presented as relevant for this purpose. Most labour migration management projects and initiatives are targeting the problem of large-scale irregular migration in the region. IOs, thus, are attempting to translate the politically sensitive reality of irregular migration issues into more positively oriented discussions on labour migration.

For instance, while implementing its regional labour migration projects 'Towards Sustainable Partnerships for the Effective Governance of Labour Migration in the Russian Federation, the Caucasus and Central Asia' (2007–2009) and 'Regulating labour migration for development and regional integration in Central Asia' (2008–2010), ILO aimed at promoting standards that would create possibilities for a larger scale regular migration, thus diminishing the need for irregular migration.[6] In a similar vein, IOM together with ILO (ILO and IOM 2009), and the World Bank has been promoting organised recruitment via private employment agencies as a means against irregular migration channels (FIDH 2011). It has also been advertised as an important output of the Central Asia Regional Migration Programme (CARMP) in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan where 'the programme facilitated an organised recruitment scheme, pre-departure orientation and post-arrival integration, set-up of Migrants Support Centres (MSCs), which linked state structures with civil society organizations' (DFID 2015a).

Multiannual CARMP was implemented by three main partners – IOM, the World Bank and UN Women.[7] The programme has a rather long history in the region. Already in

2007–2009, IOM implemented its Central Asian Labour Migration project (CALM)[8] funded by the European Commission. This in itself was a very successful attempt of IOM to challenge the monopoly of ILO on labour migration governance initiatives in the region (Korneev 2013). Then, in 2009 IOM secured funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for a much more ambitious CARMP. In 2010–2013, DFID spent on the Programme £5,982,089; IOM – £1,260,315; the World Bank – £729,480; UN Women – £378,569 and National Governments – £418,332. By the time of the Programme completion in the autumn of 2015, total financial provision from DFID was £8,733,772 (DFID 2015b) – certainly the biggest ever amount spent by an international donor on a migration programme in the region. The programme consisted of two phases: first phase called 'CARMP' was implemented in March 2010–December 2013, its follow-up called 'Regional Migration Programme in Central Asia' (RMP) covered January 2014–August 2015[9]. Despite these two different names found online as well as in in various DFID and IOM documents, these are two phases of the same DFID-funded Regional Migration Programme in Central Asia (DFID 2015b) commonly referred as CARMP.

CARMP covered not only several migrant origin countries, but also Kazakhstan and Russia as the major destination countries. From the three implementing partners, IOM was playing the leading role in the programme to an extent that CARMP was perceived by migration scholars and practitioners in the region as an exclusively IOM-driven initiative (Interview 9; Interview 10). However, CARMP is a good case study of how IOs with rather different mandates and profiles such as IOM, the World Bank and UN Women come together for knowledge production through the mechanisms of translation identified by Callon (1986). Several sub-fields of CARMP activities provide good illustrations here.

Having arrived in a relatively new migration governance terrain (Korneev 2013), IOM and its partners have first *problematised* migration challenges characterising individual Central Asian countries locking them into a strictly defined regional framework and developmental agenda. Despite significant variations in migration dynamics and broader economic and socio-political circumstances described above, most IOs in their activities prefer to approach Central Asia as a region (similar trends exist in other governance fields, see Warkotsch 2011). Facing the challenge of Central Asian countries not ascribing to a homogenous region, IOM and its CARMP partners were trying to construct this regional reality. They tried to make 'legible' (Broome and Seabrooke 2012) its specific features, comparability and similarities between its parts, often referring to common historic past when the present states did not exist and instead the territories they encompass now fitted into some other state-like systems. IOs were also trying to approach Central Asia as a region comparable and similar to other regions of the world – namely to Eastern Europe where many innovative regional migration management projects of IOs such as IOM and ICMPD had originated. In doing so, they attempted to link experiences lived in Central Asia to those in Eastern Europe by their common Soviet past (Korneev 2013). Through this framing, production of migration-related knowledge of both predictive and normative types took on regional character and involved experts on 'Central Asian region' that allowed disregarding certain country-specific characteristics often evoked by local scholars challenging 'one size fits all' approach used by IOM and other IOs (Interview 11; Interview 12).

Specific features – uncertainties – of individual Central Asian countries constrained or, vice versa, expanded the ability of certain IOs to act. To address these uncertainties, CARMP partners proceeded with *interessement* of local actors relying on their particular positions in the field. The general developmental dynamics in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the countries' strong dependence on remittances and generally poor state of their economies (Ryazantsev and Horie 2011; World Bank 2011, 2014) made the position of the World Bank particularly strong.[10] That is why the World Bank – clearly a non-referent IO for migration issues – was successful in its translation efforts as regards the Philippines's migration management model. This model – based on organised recruitment of migrant workers – has been a part and parcel of the World Bank' developmental agenda for a number of years in various regions of the world. It was presented to the Tajik authorities as the most up-to-date normative knowledge on migration enabling them to organise, control and protect labour migrants from Tajikistan in the best possible way (Interview 13).

The model was further promoted by IOM and embraced by both Tajik officials and local NGOs (Interview 14), despite significant criticism from the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH 2011) presenting the crucial differences between the Philippines and Tajikistan as reasons for this model 'non-fit' with the local realities. To counteract this critique, IOM was searching for support from well-established experts from Tajikistan and other countries in Central Asia through their involvement in various research and training projects funded by these IOs (Interview 11). Projects studying organised recruitment and its impact on migration patterns from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were getting continuous support within the relevant national administrations (Interview 15; Interview 16).

The developmental agenda promoted globally by the World Bank, various UN agencies and major donor states (Cross 2015; De Haas 2012; Gamlen 2010) was used in order to channel local knowledge production in the direction of globally produced knowledge on migration and development. This overarching philosophy of 'migration and development' functioned within CARMP as the direct link between global norms and local conditions, targeting migration as resource for development without questioning their interaction in concrete settings. Producing knowledge on migration and development in the local context, thus, served the need to lock the discussions in this context in order to promote relevant policy instruments, avoid discussions of other more politically sensitive issues and, thus, legitimate involvement of the World Bank and IOM in 'internal affairs' of the ostensibly authoritarian states in the region.

The roles of IOs and their respective local counterparts were interrelated and reinforced through the mechanism of *enrolment*. UN Women involved in CARMP by IOM mostly to convey a positive, inclusive and, at the same time, gender-sensitive image of the Programme activities was playing a major role by alleviating critique from IOM. In particular, various IOM moves to significantly enlarge its 'population of concern' involved launching massive research on so-called 'abandoned women' – women staying in the country while their husbands leave to work abroad and eventually being left with no proper economic means or even eventually forced to divorce. The scale and character of this phenomenon in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan is far from clear and local researchers (Interview 17) dispute its significance for country-specific context pointing to the fact that this knowledge is produced by external experts who lack sufficient understanding of local conditions and, hence, professional expert legitimacy within local expert communities. Such contestations

challenge overall expert authority of certain IOs, such as IOM and UN Women in this particular case. The questioning of expert legitimacy by local expert communities or even individual experts increased the need to stabilise IOs' expert authority, especially when such dissenting expert voices come from well-established professionals who have good links with governmental bodies in the region. However, despite such challenges, IOM was keen to direct its resources to this research area. Cooperation with UN Women whose reputation for gender mainstreaming and women-sensitive research is widespread in the region was crucial for this IOM's strategy (Interview 8; Interview 18).

Another example of *enrolment* comes from Kazakhstan. Faced with multiple critiques of its managerial approach, IOM attempted to demonstrate that it recognised and valued the migrants-rights approach to migration management. With this focus on migrants' rights, IOM staff was rather successful in using knowledge produced by other actors for legitimating IOM's agenda. In Kazakhstan, a prominent case of such IOM self-legitimating strategy was a working group that included some unexpected participants. Together with representatives of the government and CARMP implementing partners, the working group involved the company Philip Morris producing cigarettes from tobacco collected by migrants. This tripartite setting – albeit different from more representative but also vaguer format that underpins the functioning of the ILO – was a very interesting case of public-private partnership.[11] One of the major reasons for such enrolment of a private partner was a wide resonance of the Human Rights Watch report focusing on migrants' exploitation during tobacco collection in Kazakhstan (Human Rights Watch 2010b). The rationale of such working groups formally created under the auspices of CARMP mentioned the need to build trust among the stakeholders with the ultimate purpose of increasing companies' social responsibility and improving migrants' working conditions.[12] However, more importantly, the knowledge about 'bad' practices of migrant labour produced by one of the most influential transnational NGOs allowed IOM to play an active role in engaging business in practical exchanges with authorities about migration policy in Kazakhstan, where such an engagement previously existed only on discourse level. Acting as a 'reputational intermediary' (Broome 2010) IOM again strengthened its own position in the migration governance field.

To implement the fourth work package of the CARMP ('research component'), IOM and DFID via a private consultancy firm hired a research team to analyse the existing research on migration in, from and through Central Asia and to identify further research needs that could possibly be developed into policy-relevant projects. The creation of this research group demonstrates how migration-related knowledge co-production by IOs is taking shape. Without going into detail of the content of the work done by the group,[13] it is important to mention its composition. The group was headed by an established scholar from a reputable European university possessing 'strong knowledge of migration and the Central Asia region, strong knowledge of UK research and publishing environment and standards … and experience producing research that is of the standards required by DFID'.[14] The group included a well-known external expert on migration in the post-Soviet space, as well as several experts from Central Asia. The activities of the group were supervised by DFID and closely linked to the other CARMP work packages implemented by IOM, the World Bank and UN Women. Seen through the prism of Callon's ideas on translation, this is a perfect team brought together through properly implemented *mobilisation* and representing 'various relevant collectivities' (1986, 196).

This enables claims to both global expertise and local knowledge, legitimates both the process and the outputs of such knowledge co-production and, eventually, lends legitimacy to the actors producing this knowledge, including IOM.

A close look at these knowledge-generating activities of IOM and its partners in Central Asia helps revealing several significant shifts in the way knowledge is produced and, more specifically, in the selection of those who contribute to its production and global–local dissemination. First, there are fluctuations in terms of 'location' of expertise. We certainly observe changes from global to local and back to global sources of expertise selected by IOs. Second, IOs seek to move from cooperation with the older – 'Soviet' – generation of local experts from academic circles and clearly articulated positions in the field of migration studies to a new generation of more 'neoliberal' free-lancers who move from one project to another with no particular knowledge 'backpacks'. Third, there are also certain disciplinary changes reflected in the shift from enrolment of mostly demographers and sociologists to political scientists and public policy experts. Fourth, we also observe changes in experts' professional profiles with increasing involvement of experts who can equally well deal with migration and at least one other field – development, gender, children or human rights. This change seems to be a reflection of new approaches to migration governance linking it to governance interventions in these other fields and by other non-referent IOs.

Finally, there are also changes in the way IOs are involved in migration knowledge production. Their current preferences for direct but insulated production of knowledge via intermediaries indicates an attempt to derive expert authority from a broader support base within knowledge circles. These changes signal that opposing perceptions of what constitutes important migration-related challenges are linked to similarly opposing perceptions of what can be defined as important policy-relevant and legitimacy-enhancing knowledge. Such knowledge produced by IOs in specific regions relying on local expertise is then gradually incorporated into 'international migration narratives' (Pécoud 2015) circulating between local and global governance levels through transnational knowledge networks (Stone 2013).

Conclusion

This paper started with an observation that the absence of an overarching global normative structure of migration governance provides IOs with a favourable context to introduce and even impose varying migration governance standards in different countries. This often stimulates competition between IOs and, thus, increases challenges to their authority and legitimacy in the contentious field of global migration politics. However, IOs are also the major players in the game of depoliticising migration (Pécoud 2015). They make migration issues seem requiring merely technocratic solutions, hence their specific expertise becomes useful for downplaying contentious dynamics. The paper, thus, shows that despite competition IOs often cooperate with each other in the field of knowledge production. Moreover, (co)production of knowledge on migration and migration governance becomes an important self-legitimation strategy for many challenged and challenging IOs in the field.

IOM is one of such organisations and this paper focuses on its activities in the post-Soviet Central Asia. For IOM, knowledge is a resource crucial to sustain its authority in

the field of migration governance. IOM has pioneered various migration governance initiatives in Central Asia promoting them through important strategic cooperation with its (potential) competitors within knowledge-producing partnerships. The self-legitimation through knowledge production involves *problematisation, interessement, enrolment* and *mobilisation* (Callon 1986) of both internationally recognised and local experts. This helps IOs to be seen as the sole sources of reliable knowledge. The self-legitimation through partnerships happens in global–global and global–local formats. The former includes partnerships between IOs involved in mutual legitimation, such as in cases of IOM and OSCE, the EU, the World Bank, UN Women, as well as with 'global' experts. The latter implies engagement with 'local' experts, governmental and civil society actors via implementing partnerships, multiplication of working groups and various knowledge production activities. Knowledge production in partnerships initiated by IOs through stages of *translation* leads to reshuffling of local expert communities and presents new constellations of experts as 'speaking for the others'. Most importantly, however, practices of self-legitimation through knowledge production interventions increase reputational authority (Sharman 2007) of IOs in relations with their domestic and international audiences. Through an analysis of such partnerships initiated by IOM in Central Asia, the paper shows that IOM has become particularly successful in its migration knowledge production opening the way for its deep involvement in migration governance across the region.

This case study of IOM's knowledge production partnerships also has some broader implications. Strengthening of IOM's formal institutional authority (Avant et al. 2010) following its recognition as an UN-related organisation can increase the impact of its knowledge production activities. Therefore, there is a risk that IOM's managerial vision of migration governance contested by various constituencies will be gaining more legitimacy and prominence. To a certain extent, this is already happening in the development of the two global compacts for refugees and migration. New research and public discussions of these current dynamics should probably address growing normative concerns related to the role of IOM in the elaboration of a nascent global 'soft law' migration regime.

Notes

1. For an overview of IOM's difficult relationships with some of these actors, see Pécoud (2017).
2. Author's observation at the 'OSCE-IOM meeting on Migration Data for Policy Makers and Data Users', OSCE Academy, Bishkek, 31 March 2011.
3. As it is often formulated by the World Bank.
4. Notable exceptions are Betts (2013), Elie (2010), Koch (2014).
5. See, for example, IOM operational strategy for Tajikistan 2012–2015.
6. ILO (2009); Interview 6.
7. Two key informants have emphasized the importance of proper division of labour among the partners for the success of the programme (Interview 7; Interview 8).
8. For programme details see 'Labour Migration in Central Asia and the Russian Federation and Studies Conducted by IOM in the Labour Migration Area', available online at: http://moscow.iom.int/activities_labormigration_CALM.html (accessed March 23, 2016).
9. IOM: Regional Migration Programme, http://moscow.iom.int/activities_labormigration_RMP.html (accessed March 23, 2016).
10. For a critical analysis of the World Bank migration and remittances agenda see Cross (2015).

11. Important insights on the involvement of private actors in migration governance were provided by Alexander Betts in his talk 'The Private Sector in Global Migration Governance' at the EUI Migration Working Group (EUI, Florence) on 10 October 2012.
12. Private discussions with IOM Central Asia staff, May 2014.
13. It is rather problematic due to the absence of any publicly available information about this activity. Even the website of DFID presenting the final reports of the project does not contain any official report about this fourth 'research' work package. Most information used here comes from the author's informal communication with the private consultancy company that organised the research logistics, with several members of the research group in the summer and autumn 2014 and some – unpublished – documents to which the author has gained access during his fieldwork in the region.
14. Author's correspondence with the private consultancy company, July 2014.

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