

International organizations and global migration governance

Citation for published version (APA):

McGregor - Lebon, E. (2020). *International organizations and global migration governance*. [Doctoral Thesis, Maastricht University]. Boekenplan. <https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20201005elm>

Document status and date:

Published: 01/01/2020

DOI:

[10.26481/dis.20201005elm](https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20201005elm)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Please check the document version of this publication:

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Abstract

Recent years have seen migration rise to the top of political agendas around the world. A series of ‘migration crises’ in 2015 demonstrated the limits of the existing international architecture leading states to reconsider the global response to migration. In October 2016, in addition to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) joining the United Nations (UN), 193 UN Member States unanimously agreed upon the New York Declaration (NYD) at the closing of the High-Level Summit to Address Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants, to commit themselves to negotiate two Global Compacts by 2018, one on migration and the other on refugees. This decision commenced two years of consultations and negotiations, which concluded with the adoption of a Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in December 2018. By bringing IOM into the UN system and endorsing a comprehensive set of, albeit non-binding, commitments, states acknowledged migration as a global governance issue and accepted the necessity of institutionalizing migration within the UN. Next to the migration crises of 2015, which provided the necessary ‘window of opportunity’ to pursue institutional change, however, this dissertation argues that reframing migration as a development issue by the UN was key to the process of institutionalizing migration into the UN. The inclusion of migration in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 was a key milestone securing consensus among UN Member States that migration, an issue previously held at arms-length from the UN, was indeed relevant to its mandate. Hence, the dissertation investigates how migration became a global governance issue, and the role played by the UN in this process.

Building on theoretical insights from the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), and the methodological principles of process-tracing, the dissertation tells the story of how migration has evolved as a global policy issue since 1919. Framing analysis is used to analyse the different ways that migration has been framed, by whom, and to what end. Drawing on interviews with 43 key protagonists, actors involved in global-level discussions on migration, and the UN archives, the dissertation explores four case studies that shed light on how IOs have influenced global migration governance:

- 1) the creation of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) (Chapter 5);
- 2) the inclusion of migration in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Chapter 6);

- 3) IOM's journey to becoming a UN agency (Chapter 7); and
- 4) the negotiation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) (Chapter 8).

The dissertation argues that a range of factors including the migration crises of 2015 which propelled migration into the political limelight; the reframing of migration as a development issue (Chapter 5) and the subsequent inclusion of migration in the Sustainable Development Goals (Chapter 6); coupled with the increasing likelihood that the UN would appoint or create a new body for migration within the UN, led IOM's Member States to conclude that it was necessary for IOM to become part of the UN system in 2016 (Chapter 7). However, while the migration crises of 2015 created the 'window of opportunity' to bring IOM into the UN, it also provided a fertile environment for advocates of the migrant rights frame to revive their struggle for universal norms to govern international migration (Chapter 8).