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Returns and Return Policies

Between Discipline and Biopolitics:
The Role of IOM and UNHCR in the Return of Crisis-Affected Populations

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List of abbreviations

AVR	Assisted Voluntary Return
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MCOF	Migration Crisis Operational Framework
MICIC	Migrants in Countries in Crisis
MIDAS	Migration Information Data Analysis System
PRDS	Progressive Resolution of Displacement Situations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VHR	Voluntary Humanitarian Return
WPR	What's the problem represented to be approach

Abstract

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) return crisis-affected populations as part of their humanitarian interventions under the assumption that return represents a solution to the initial displacement. This assumption raises the question of how IOM and UNHCR problematize crisis-affected populations, that is, conceptualize them as a policy problem through policy documents reflecting implicit rationalities of government. Based on Foucault's concepts of discipline and biopolitics and Bacchi's approach to critical discourse analysis, this working paper examines the disciplinary and biopolitical rationalities of two policy documents. First, the IOM Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF) draws on disciplinary rationality to outline a process of successive immobilization and mobilization of crisis-affected populations during which IOM monitors, cares for, transports, and immobilizes individuals in their countries of origin. Second, the UNHCR Policy Framework builds on a biopolitical rationality to elicit spontaneous returns of populations by reshaping the milieu of return through constructing infrastructure and restoring social services. However, each policy document combines both disciplinary and biopolitical rationalities. The MCOF strives to durably immobilize returnees by reshaping their milieu through infrastructure construction and resolution of land and property issues. The Policy Framework seeks to achieve durable returns by securing the milieu of return by restoring the nation-state's disciplinary institutions. This complementarity between disciplinary and biopolitical rationalities indicates that IOM and UNHCR expanded their role in return governance to shape the economic, social, security and, ultimately, political conditions in the countries of return.

Keywords: return governance, international organizations, discipline, biopolitics, critical discourse analysis

1. Introduction[1]

The international governance of return migration involves two key international organizations: the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Since 1979, IOM has been implementing so-called assisted voluntary return (AVR) programs to remove irregular migrants and refused asylum seekers from destination and transit countries. Lacking a protection mandate, IOM implemented these programs to complement and externalize its donor states' fight against irregular migration rather than to protect the human rights of migrants and asylum-seekers (Andrijasevic & Walters, 2010; Ashutosh & Mountz, 2011; Caillault, 2012; Hirsch & Doig, 2018; Robinson, 2022). Therefore, NGOs and migration scholars have long criticized IOM for removing individuals whose seemingly voluntary choice of return results from the threat of indefinite detention or forced deportation by the states (Amnesty International & Human Rights Watch, 2002; Webber, 2011).

Although UNHCR has a protection mandate, scholars have equally criticized its role in legitimizing the forced removals conducted by the states and the assisted returns carried out by AVR programs (Scheel & Ratfisch, 2014, p. 933; Koch, 2014, p. 914). Faced with donor states' demands and competition from IOM, UNHCR has started since the 2000s to selectively monitor the compatibility of interstate agreements returning refused asylum seekers and individual cases of return with international human refugee law (Koch, 2014, pp. 916–917; Ahouga, 2024b, p. 21; Hirsch & Doig, 2018, p. 691).

However, the role of IOM and UNHCR is not limited to the removal of irregular migrants and refused asylum seekers in the context of the fight against irregular migration. Both organizations are also involved in the return of crisis-affected populations as part of their humanitarian interventions. To increase its role beyond that of a service provider implementing AVR programs for donor states (Ahouga, 2023, p. 529), IOM has 'expanded its [return-related] work to support migrants who are stranded and in situations of vulnerability' following natural disasters and armed conflicts based on a 'protection-oriented approach'[2] (IOM, 2019b, p. 12). And UNHCR directly organizes the voluntary repatriation of thousands of refugees, notably between African countries (UNHCR, 2022a, 2022b).

The taken-for-granted assumption that the return of crisis-affected populations represents a solution to their initial displacement guides both organizations' humanitarian interventions. Indeed, IOM considers that 'the organization of safe evacuations for migrants to return home […] is often the most effective method of protection for migrants caught in crises' (IOM, 2012, pp. 2–3). And UNHCR has favoured since the 1990s voluntary repatriation as the preferred 'durable solution' to refugee crises – instead of local integration and resettlement – following

[2] IOM showcased its changing role in return governance during the COVID-19 pandemic when state-imposed travel restrictions immobilized thousands of migrant workers, irregular migrants, and asylum seekers in so-called destination and transit countries. In response, IOM implemented its Humanitarian Assistance to Stranded Migrants mechanism and Voluntary Humanitarian Return program, notably in Libya and Yemen, to provide financial, medical, and transportation assistance to migrants who had the 'confirmed desire to move' (IOM, 2021, p. 21).

internal shifts and external pressures from host and donor states (Barnett, 2001, pp. 260–261; Chimni, 2004, p. 66; Koch, 2014, p. 913; Nah, 2019, p. 76).

The representation of return as a solution raises the question of how IOM and UNHCR problematize crisis-affected populations, that is, conceptualize them as a policy problem (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 38). Problematization occurs through policy documents which implicitly reflect particular rationalities of government, that is, ways of representing an issue 'to be governed, the agencies to be considered and enrolled in governing, the techniques to be employed, and the ends to be achieved' (Dean, 1999, p. 268). Foucault (2007) identified two main rationalities of government that conceptualize and organize interventions on populations.

First is a disciplinary rationality that seeks to monitor and capture individuals within a population to ensure their conformity with an optimum behaviour model (Foucault, 2007, p. 85). This rationality favours disciplinary techniques (e.g. digital surveillance, case management, biometric registration, identity verification) that operate in artificial and enclosed spaces (e.g. camps, airports and ports, border crossings, field offices, databases) where control is exercised over individuals to verify and correct their behaviour (Foucault, 2007, p. 67). This individualizing form of control aims to introduce 'breaks and divisions into [the] otherwise free-flowing phenomena' surrounding populations (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000, p. 608).

Second, a biopolitical rationality that strives to reshape the natural and artificial elements (rivers, hills, forests, agglomeration of houses, roads, sewage network, schools, hospitals, etc.) of the milieu where populations live and move (Foucault, 2007, p. 36). By targeting the milieu, this rationality aims to address the biological and quasi-natural events that these populations produce and occur around them (birth and mortality rates, diseases, weather events, mobility, education, working conditions, etc.) (Foucault, 2007, p. 37). Rather than monitor and capture individuals in closed spaces, rationality privileges security techniques (e.g., infrastructure construction; provision of food, shelter, and health care) that intervene in the open milieu to mitigate the likely and never entirely avoidable risks facing populations (Foucault, 2007, pp. 90–91).

Although often used to examine border control critically (Murphy, 2021; Stierl, 2023), migration scholars rarely apply the concepts of discipline and biopolitics to return governance. Therefore, this working paper conducts a critical discourse analysis informed by Bacchi's (2009) 'What's the problem represented to be?' (WPR) approach to exhume the implicit disciplinary and biopolitical rationalities informing two policy documents through which IOM and UNHCR problematize crisis-affected populations. First is the Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF), which IOM designed in 2012 to systematize its interventions on the movements of crisis-affected populations (IOM, 2012). Updated in 2022 to respond to recent international developments (e.g. IOM becoming a UN-related organization and adoption of the Global Compact for Migration), the MCOF constitutes the 'IOM's central reference point for the Organization's engagement on the mobility dimensions of crises (IOM, 2022, p. 1). Second, the Policy Framework and Implementation Strategy (hereafter the Policy Framework) that UNHCR drafted in 2008 to determine its role in the repatriation and reintegration of refugees (UNHCR, 2008a). The Policy Framework revised the organization's approach to return and reintegration to address the 'dangers of the "gap" between initial humanitarian assistance [provided by UNHCR] and longer-term development activities' (UNHCR, 2008b, p. 10).

The significance of both policy documents lies in that they resulted in organizational change within their respective organizations. Following the MCOF's adoption, IOM created training workshops for its staff members, drafted a planning methodology to help country offices include the policy document in their strategies, and established a working group tasked with monitoring its organization-wide use (Ahouga, 2024a, pp. 115–116). And to implement the Policy Framework, UNHCR designed a new budget structure and created a unit tasked with setting standards to harmonize practices of reintegration across the organization (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 68). Moreover, the MCOF and the Policy Framework shaped how states thought about the issue of crisis-affected populations. IOM used the MCOF to inspire the state-led Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) initiative, which developed non-binding guidelines related to the return of crisis-affected migrants in 2016 (Ahouga, 2024a, pp. 113–114). UNHCR also used the Policy Framework to help states design early recovery and development plans for areas where refugees had returned (UNHCR, 2009b, p. 7).

The working paper is organized into four sections. The first section examines how migration scholars focus on the reasons that lead IOM and UNHCR to return to crisis-affected populations without considering the rationalities of government underpinning these returns. The second section describes the critical discourse analysis approach used by the working paper to examine the problematizations of policy documents. The third section indicates that the MCOF draws on disciplinary rationality to outline a process of successive immobilization and mobilization of crisis-affected populations during which IOM monitors, cares for, transports, and immobilizes individuals in their countries of origin. The fourth section finds that the Policy Framework builds on biopolitical rationality to elicit spontaneous returns of populations by reshaping the milieu of return by constructing infrastructure and restoring social services. The conclusion discusses that both policy documents merge a biopolitical concern for the milieu with the disciplinary control of individuals, which indicates that IOM and UNHCR expanded their role in return governance to shape the economic, social, security, and, ultimately, political conditions in the countries of return.

2. The role of IOM and UNHCR in returning crisis-affected populations

Migration scholars increasingly consider the role of IOM and UNHCR in the return of crisis-affected populations in humanitarian settings. However, while the various reasons (e.g. organizational entrepreneurialism, depoliticizing migration control objectives, state pressures) that lead both organizations to return crisis-affected populations have garnered much attention, less is known about the rationalities of government that underpin these returns.

2.1 IOM, the return of crisis-affected migrants and the sovereignty of states

Bradley interpreted the emerging role of IOM in the return of crisis-affected populations as resulting from its organizational entrepreneurialism. To ensure continuous work to its country offices, IOM adopts a 'practical strategy of analyzing gaps in existing systems and moving to fill them, creating demand for its services by raising awareness of underexamined issues and […] helping to constitute target populations for IOM interventions' (Bradley, 2020, p. 50). The IOM's emergency evacuation and return operations of stranded migrant workers in conflict or disaster situations result from such a practical strategy. As these migrants are not fleeing their countries of origin and fall outside the UNHCR's protection mandate, evacuation and return

operations 'fill an important gap in humanitarian response' (Bradley, 2020, p. 54). Furthermore, they allow IOM to cultivate its moral authority as a humanitarian organization that protects the rights of the hitherto overlooked category of 'migrants in crisis' (Bradley, 2020, pp. 60–61).

However, Brachet (2016) criticized the humanitarian framing of the return of stranded migrants for depoliticizing the IOM's role in controlling migration in countries of origin and transit on behalf of destination countries. Examining the IOM's evacuation of about 250,000 migrants during the Libyan civil war in 2011, he argued that the organization did not intervene to remedy a crisis as 'its humanitarian emphasis might lead one to believe' (Brachet, 2016, p. 273). Instead, it sought to put a distance between stranded migrants and the Mediterranean Sea and 'reject all problematic cases beyond [the Sahara]' for the benefit of European governments (Brachet, 2016, p. 281). The lacklustre provision of assistance to returnees and the fact that many who IOM helped cross the Libyan border into a country other than their country of origin 'finished their trip [back home] with their own means' (Brachet, 2016, p. 281) illustrate the IOM's primary focus on driving away migrants. Moreover, the objective of removing migrants far from the Mediterranean Sea did not emerge in response to the crisis; it preceded and followed the civil war. When the latter officially ended in 2012, IOM resumed its AVR program, which was first implemented under Gaddafi's regime (Brachet, 2016, p. 283). Predominately funded by the European Union (EU), the resumed program returned thousands of migrants detained by the new Libyan authorities. Nonetheless, IOM ignored the coercive background of these returns, celebrated them as a humanitarian achievement which took migrants out of detention centres, and rebranded its AVR program into a Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) program (Bradley, 2020, pp. 87–88).

Despite the IOM's ambiguous role in Libya, Frowd argued that the '[organization's] words on humanitarianism do not simply operate as a mask' (2018, p. 1661). Rather, they reflect the 'blending of the will to mitigate states' control reflex and the methods and tools of humanitarianism' (Frowd, 2018, p. 1658). In fact, 'IOM has leveraged the migration crisis in Europe to position itself as a critic of the EU's overly control-focused approach to managing migrant flows' (Frowd, 2018, p. 1669). The adoption of the MCOF and its approach to 'humanitarian border management' epitomized this critical position. '[As] borders have certain externalities which must be reconciled with the needs of mobile and vulnerable populations' (Frowd, 2018, p. 1669), humanitarian border management seeks to 'keep border control functioning [during crises] in the name of protecting trapped migrants' (Frowd, 2018, p. 1664). By offering a third option between stopping controls to ensure a 'utopian' free movement and the complete closure of borders that endangers crisis-affected populations, the MCOF 'enable[d] IOM to maintain its obligations to migrants whilst ensuring that its [member states] do not have to relinquish control of their borders' (Frowd, 2018, p. 1669).

Nevertheless, the MCOF is not only an attempt by IOM to balance contradictory commitments. Its adoption accompanied 'efforts [within IOM] to bring together previously siloed divisions such as border management, migrant assistance, and development' (Frowd, 2018, p. 1662). '[As] it demonstrates the organization's reframing towards intervening on the whole 'chain' of phenomena related to migration' (Frowd, 2018, p. 1666), Frowd interpreted the MCOF's convergence of heterogeneous logics and practices as aimed at expanding the scope of IOM activities However, this convergence also reflects a shift in terms of the rationality of government. It suggests that IOM seeks to intensify and expand its ability to

discipline the behaviour and mobility of crisis-affected populations (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000, p. 610; Ahouga, 2022, p. 153).

2.2   UNHCR's role as a surrogate state and the voluntary repatriation of refugees

While IOM is more or less beholden to the sovereignty of states, scholars interpret the interventions of UNHCR on crisis-affected populations as those of a 'surrogate state' to which states 'abdicate' the responsibility of caring for refugees in host countries (Slaughter & Crisp, 2009; Miller, 2017; Nah, 2019). Despite lacking sovereignty, UNHCR has state-like properties such as 'its own territory (refugee camps), citizens (refugees), public services (education, health care, water, sanitation, etc.) and even ideology (community participation, gender equality)' (Slaughter & Crisp, 2009, p. 8). In other words, the role of surrogate state puts UNHCR directly in charge of addressing the biological and quasi-natural events surrounding the populations of refugees.

Yet pressured by host states and donor states reluctant to support expensive and long-term care programs, UNHCR progressively came to consider voluntary repatriation as the preferred durable solution to phase out its role as a surrogate state (Koch, 2014, p. 913; Cole, 2018, p. 1498). This shift has put less emphasis on voluntariness and more on the notion of 'safe return' (Koch, 2014, p. 913; Chimni, 2004, p. 60). If UNHCR considers that the country of origin has become secure and stable, it can use the cessation clause to strip refugees of their refugee status and strongly 'encourage' them to return (Nah, 2019, p. 76; Cole, 2018, p. 1497). Therefore, scholars criticized UNHCR for having become more focused on repatriation than refugee protection (Barnett, 2001; Barnett & Finnemore, 2004; Betts, 2009).

However, less attention has been paid to the rationality of government that underpins the UNHCR's preference for voluntary repatriation. The latter confronted the organization with 'problems of returns' stemming from 'the reality that the countries of origin are very often poorer than the countries from which refugees are being returned' (Chimni, 2004, p. 68). Consequently, UNHCR had to abandon 'its traditional approach to repatriation, which focused on the immediate consumption needs of returnees and did little to initiate and sustain a development process necessary to prevent further crisis and population displacements in the country of origin' (Chimni, 2004, p. 68). Instead, UNHCR became concerned with reshaping the milieu of return where '[h]abitability and productive capacity have been reduced' (UNHCR, 1993, p. 110). This shift suggests an expansion of the UNHCR's biopolitical rationality that stems from its role as a surrogate state. Rather than being limited to the host countries, this role had to encompass the countries of origin to ensure the return of refugees.

3. Analysing the MCOF and Policy Framework

The working paper argues that the MCOF and Policy Framework reflect and drive the intensification and expansion of their organizations' rationalities of government. To examine these rationalities, it conducts a critical discourse analysis of both policy documents based on Bacchi's (2009) WPR approach. The latter introduces six questions designed to examine how policy documents do not solve problems that exist, but rather 'produce or constitute a particular representation of the "problem" they purport to address' (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 16):

1. What's the problem represented to be in a specific policy?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?

3. How has this representation of the problem come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?
6. How/where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated and defended?

The first question identifies the 'concrete proposals [for intervention] to reveal what is represented to be the 'problem' within [a policy document]' (Bacchi, 2009, p. 3). The second question exhumes the implicit patterns of problematization, such as rationalities of government, that determine the 'ways in which 'problems' are thought about […] across a range of policies' (Bacchi, 2009, p. 6). The third question traces the contingent history of problem representations by 'identifying specific points in time when key decisions were made, taking an issue in a particular direction' (Bacchi, 2009, p. 10). The fourth question highlights the 'limits in the underlying problem representations' by examining how policy documents 'are constrained by the ways in which they represent the 'problem'' (Bacchi, 2009, pp. 12–13). The fifth question asks how problem representations have a material impact on the lives of people and establish asymmetrical power relations (Bacchi, 2009, p. 17), notably through the implementation of disciplinary and security techniques. The sixth question analyzes the 'means through which particular problem representations reach their target audience and achieve legitimacy' (Bacchi, 2009, p. 19). The legitimation of the MCOF and Policy Framework is outside the scope of the working paper. The latter focuses first and foremost on examining the policy documents' discursive problematizations. Therefore, the sixth question is set aside. Moreover, the working paper does not rely on interviews with IOM and UNHCR staff members or government officials. Such interviews would have been relevant to shed light on the legitimation of the MCOF and Policy Framework.

4. IOM's disciplining of the mobility patterns and returns of crisis-affected individuals

This section examines the MCOF's problematization of crisis-affected populations, which draws on a disciplinary rationality to outline a process of successive immobilization and mobilization of crisis-affected populations during which IOM monitors, cares for, transports, and immobilizes individuals in their countries of origin.

IOM designed the MCOF in 2012 to 'improve and systematize [its] response to migration crises' (IOM, 2012, p. 1). This policy document brought together 15 'sectors of assistance' that IOM should selectively set in motion depending on whether a given crisis is in its 'before', 'during' or 'after' phase (IOM, 2012, p. 3):

> 1. Camp management and displacement tracking; 2. Shelter and non-food items; 3. Transport assistance for affected populations; 4. Health support; 5. Psychosocial support; 6. (Re)integration assistance; 7. Activities to support community stabilization and transition; 8. Disaster risk reduction and resilience building; 9. Land and property support; 10. Counter-trafficking and protection of vulnerable migrants; 11. Technical assistance for humanitarian border management; 12. Emergency consular assistance; 13. Diaspora and human resource mobilization; 14. Migration policy and legislation support; 15. Humanitarian communications.

These sectors of assistance constitute the mobility patterns of crisis-affected populations as a policy problem. Indeed, the MCOF's definition of the notion of migration crisis puts these

patterns at the forefront: '[MCOF] is based on the concept of "migration crisis", a term that describes the complex and often large-scale [...] mobility patterns caused by a crisis which typically involve significant vulnerabilities for individuals and affected communities and generate acute and longer-term migration management challenges' (IOM, 2012, pp. 1–2). Based on this definition, the sectors of assistance aim to resolve two 'types of consequences that emerge from these [mobility] patterns': 'massive humanitarian needs in terms of food security and shelter' and 'needs for large-scale transportation of populations to a safe haven' (IOM, 2012, p. 2). In other words, the MCOF's problematization merges humanitarian concerns with the objective of organizing the physical movement of crisis-affected populations through the use of 'migration management tools [...] such as technical assistance for humanitarian border management; liaison to ensure that migrants have access to emergency consular services; referral systems for persons with special protection needs; and the organization of safe evacuations for migrants to return home' (IOM, 2012, pp. 2–3).

Although designed as a response to the population movements caused by armed conflicts in the Middle East and North and Sub-Saharan Africa during the 2010s, the MCOF builds on the long-standing expansion of IOM activities to the humanitarian field. Since the 1990s, IOM has been involved in the management of the living conditions and movements of crisis-affected populations (Ahouga, 2024a, p. 108; Bradley, 2020, p. 50). Contested sometimes by states for overstepping its mandate (Ahouga, 2024a, pp. 32–33), IOM formalized this involvement in 2005 by joining the so-called cluster approach of the United Nations. Coordinating the humanitarian responses of international organizations and NGOs, this approach designated IOM as the co-leader of the 'Camp Coordination and Camp Management' cluster together with UNHCR. In this capacity, IOM provided humanitarian assistance to crisis-affected populations living in spontaneous or planned camps. This co-leading role also allowed IOM to work towards 'stabilizing groups of people who had lost their livelihoods and homes and were therefore more likely to migrate' (IOM, 2006, p. 42). Indeed, the co-leading role facilitated the exponential growth of IOM's emergency and post-emergency operations,[3] which respond to the urgent needs of mobile populations, ensure the safe migration of returning populations, monitor spontaneous returns, facilitate voluntary returns, and track and register displaced persons (IOM, 2009, pp. 93–94).

The MCOF continued these long-standing efforts of IOM to stabilize the movements of crisis-affected populations. To resolve the problem of the mobility patterns caused by crises, its 15 sectors establish a process of successive immobilization and mobilization of crisis-affected individuals. The process reflects an implicit disciplinary rationality that aims to discipline mobility in crisis situations by monitoring individuals, caring for their vulnerabilities, transporting them across various circumscribed spaces, and durably immobilizing them in their countries of origin (Ahouga, 2024a, p. 103).

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[3] The budget dedicated to the emergency and post-emergency operations of IOM increased from 23.4 million USD in 2005 to 121.3 million in 2010 and 132.3 million in 2015 (IOM, 2004, p. 53, 2009, p. 90, 2014, p. 92).

4.1 Immobilizing crisis-affected individuals in camps and monitoring circumscribed spaces

The process of immobilization and mobilization 'can apply to all types of population movements resulting from a crisis situation […] including international migrants' (IOM, 2012, p. 2). It begins with the MCOF's first sector of assistance:

> Sector 1 Camp Management and Displacement Tracking: To improve living conditions of displaced persons and migrants in transit, by monitoring displacement flows, facilitation the effective provision of assistance and protection in camps and camp-like settings, advocating for durable solutions and ensuring organized closure and phase-out of camps. (IOM, 2012, p. 3)

This sector identifies and manages the gathering places of crisis-affected populations to transform them into 'heterotopias of crisis' (Foucault, 1994, pp. 756–757), that is, circumscribed spaces radically different from their surroundings and dedicated to individuals in a state of crisis. Building on its role as co-leader of the 'Camp Coordination and Camp Management' cluster, IOM seeks to organize the gathering places into camps as orderly as their surrounding milieu is disorderly and unstable. In these camps, which are fenced to temporarily immobilize and separate crisis-affected individuals from the milieu, IOM acts on the most vulnerable individuals by providing emergency and transitional shelter (sector 2), health care (sector 4), psychosocial support (sector 5) (IOM, 2012, pp. 4–5), and information about the return process (sector 15) (IOM, 2012, p. 9).

However, the assistance provided in the camps establishes an asymmetrical power relation between IOM and crisis-affected populations. To intensify its control over the immobilized individuals, IOM conditions the access to its assistance to their biometric registration. The latter consists of detailed interviews where each individual has to have their photos taken and give their fingerprints, identify documents, name, age, sex, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, point of departure, date and reason for departure, education and employment, and phone number (IOM, 2017a, p. 8). This individualizing technique of control is crucial for the IOM's ability to return crisis-affected populations. It fixes each individual to unique and unalterable physiological and behavioural traits that can be routinely verified until their immobilization in the country of origin (Ajana, 2013, p. 3; Ahouga, 2022, p. 150).

Although fenced, the camps organized by IOM have to remain linked to their surrounding milieu. To this end, the MCOF's first sector combines camp management tasks with the monitoring of displacement flows within and outside the camps. By tracking the movements of crisis-affected individuals, IOM aims to render legible in real time those that require assistance. This surveillance is conducted through the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), a digital system developed by IOM to produce data on mobility patterns caused by crises (Ahouga, 2022). To identify and capture crisis-affected individuals, the DTM creates spaces where the movements and socio-demographic characteristics of individuals are made legible. Specifically, the digital system divides the milieu of crisis-affected populations into a set of circumscribed spaces (e.g. village, neighbourhood, building, camp, detention centre) that are mapped, georeferenced, and monitored to ensure that 'in and out movement is routinely captured' (IOM, 2017a, p. 8).

This surveillance across multiple circumscribed spaces hinges on data collected by local IOM staff members. They notably conduct direct observation in the field, direct or telephone interviews with key informants (government officials, leaders, humanitarian actors,

transporters, displaced individuals) and focus group discussions (IOM, 2017a, p. 3). Based on the data collected, they fill out standardized forms about crisis-affected individuals' numbers, ages, sex, vulnerability categories (pregnant women, unaccompanied minors, disabled or elderly individuals), origins, reasons for and dates of their displacement, location, type and accessibility of their shelters, degree of access to humanitarian assistance, and needs in terms of water, food, health care, education and safety (IOM, 2015, p. 2, 2017a, pp. 3–5). The completed forms are then corrected for errors and analyzed in a centralized database to produce regular quantitative estimates of the presence and characteristics of individuals moving into and out of each circumscribed space (IOM, 2017a, p. 3; Ahouga, 2022, p. 144).

The willingness to identify and immobilize crisis-affected individuals is also central to the tenth sector of MCOF:

> Sector 10 Counter-trafficking and Protection of Vulnerable Migrants: To provide protection and assistance to vulnerable migrants, including victims of trafficking, exploitation or abuse and unaccompanied migrant children, during a crisis situation. Crises may lead crisis-affected populations to undertake high-risk migration, creating opportunities for organized criminal groups, including traffickers and smugglers, as traditional support structures are often disrupted in a crisis, thus making the identification and protection of vulnerable migrants challenging. (IOM, 2012, p. 7)

The use of protection language reflects a more granular and intense form of monitoring than the one enacted by the DTM. The tenth sector aims to capture and discipline the mobility practices of particularly invisible crisis-affected individuals and prime candidates for returning to their countries of origin. To identify and verify the vulnerability of trafficking victims, IOM established a 'case management process' facilitated by a global database (IOM, 2012, p. 7). Case management first emerged during the 1970s in the context of hospital health care before diffusing to social security and criminal justice (Dean, 1999, pp. 218–219). It represents a disciplinary technique that assesses the vulnerability of individuals in a state of crisis (e.g. patients, unemployed persons, prisoners) and plans for their care and recovery.

Accordingly, IOM subjects suspected victims of traffickers to standardized and in-depth screening interviews conducted in its field offices. These interviews collect biometric data and information about the individual's nationality, age, sex, marital status, education, travel route, type of exploitation, relationship with traffickers, duration of trafficking, etc. (IOM, 2007, pp. 50–52). The data collected determine the type of 'direct assistance measures' provided to the victim in terms of temporary housing, health care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, security protection, and return (IOM, 2012, p. 7). IOM also anonymizes and complies the collected data in a dedicated global database. The latter intensifies disciplinary forms of control by supporting quantitative and qualitative research on the routes and trends of trafficking and the modus operandi of organized criminal groups (IOM, 2005, p. 3; UNHCR & IOM, 2020, p. 15).

4.2 Remobilizing crisis-affected individuals through institutionalized sites of mobility

However, the immobilization of crisis-affected individuals is only temporary. The MCOF's third sector puts them back on the move by making use of the long-standing expertise of IOM in transporting migrants and refugees and its 'robust partnership with a large network of airlines and transport companies' (IOM, 2012, p. 4):

> Sector 3 Transport Assistance for Affected Populations: To provide protection through the provision of humane and orderly transport assistance to individuals or groups who are going, either temporarily or permanently, to a place of origin, transit or destination within one country or across an international border (programmes involving transport assistance include, inter alia, evacuations, resettlement, repatriation, return of internally displaced persons (IDPs), assisted voluntary return and reintegration, and relocation or emergency transportation). (IOM, 2012, p. 4)

This remobilization aims to discipline the mobility practices of crisis-affected individuals and, ultimately, to return them to their countries of origin. It funnels them into 'institutionalized sites of mobility' (e.g. airports, ports, railway and bus stations, border crossings) which monitor, register, and discipline their entry into or exit from a territory through 'rites of passage' such as biometric identity checks, verification of travel documents,[4] or the assignment to a category of traveller (Salter, 2007, pp. 51–52). However, the remobilization of crisis-affected individuals requires that institutionalized sites of mobility and borders remain operational throughout any crisis. IOM argues for the need to keep borders functioning through the MCOF's eleventh and fourteenth sectors:

> Sector 11 Technical Assistance for Humanitarian Border Management: To support States in building robust immigration and border management programmes supported by appropriate policies, laws, procedures and information systems to facilitate the movement of people which arises from a crisis. (IOM, 2012, p. 7)

> Sector 14 Migration Policy and Legislation Support: To support States, individually and collectively, in building the policy, as well as the administrative and legislative, structures and capacities that will enable them to manage migration during crises effectively and humanely and fulfil their responsibilities in identifying, assisting and protecting vulnerable mobile populations affected by crisis. (IOM, 2012, p. 8)

To illustrate the impact of these sectors, the MCOF cites the example of the 'Libyan crisis [during which] IOM helped the authorities in neighbouring Tunisia to maintain their borders open by aiding them in the identification of those fleeing the crisis and making appropriate referrals' (IOM, 2012, p. 7). In other words, the MCOF's humanitarian border management aims to transform borders into permanent zones of passage that facilitate the remobilization of crisis-affected individuals. Instead of protecting the territory of the state by 'arbitrarily' preventing all forms of mobility, borders should be focused on filtering and disciplining all types of movements (Leese, 2016, p. 413). To support the continued functioning of borders, IOM has developed since 2009 the Migration Information Data Analysis System (MIDAS), a technology which consists of portable document readers, webcams, fingerprint scanners, and surveillance trucks. Used by national security institutions in crisis-affected countries such as Mali, DR of Congo, South Sudan, and Somalia (Ahouga, 2022, p. 151; IOM, 2023, p. 3), MIDAS monitors the entries and exits of individuals at remote border crossings and airports. It notably allows border guards to verify the identity documents, visas, and biometric data of

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[4] To ensure that every crisis-affected migrant has travel documents, the twelfth sector of the MCOF 'support[s] States in providing their nationals caught in a crisis with […] emergency consular services, including the issuance of emergency travel documents or laissez-passer' (IOM, 2012, p. 8). If the issuance of travel documents by the consular authorities is impossible, IOM can request travel documents from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (IOM, 2016a, p. 6).

travellers with international databases (e.g. Interpol alert list); capture biometric data and health information; store data in a central database about non-nationals to regularize and monitor their mobility (IOM, 2023, p. 2).

4.3   Immobilizing returned crisis-affected individuals in places of return

For the crisis-affected individuals that IOM returned to their countries of origin, the MCOF seeks to ensure their long-term immobilization by resorting to more indirect interventions on their milieu. The sixth sector of the MCOF links the end of displacement situations to the 'provision of immediate, medium- and longer-term [reintegration assistance] that includes addressing housing, protection, stability, livelihood and economic concerns' (IOM, 2012, p. 5). The MCOF is particularly keen to respond to the livelihood and economic concerns of returnees. Its ninth sector aims to 'address land and property issues to prevent future forced migration [...] by [...] clarifying land ownership and tenure' (IOM, 2012, pp. 6–7); and its thirteenth sector seeks to 'mobilize the skills and financial resources of the diasporas [...] to support the national development, rehabilitation and reconstruction processes in countries recovering from crisis' (IOM, 2012, p. 8).

The biopolitical concern for the milieu of returnees represents a shift in how IOM usually problematized crisis-affected populations. It stemmed from the observation made by the organization that the stranded migrants it evacuated from Libya in 2011 pressured the resources of their countries of origin, leading some returnees to consider emigrating irregularly (Ahouga, 2024a, p. 111). Thus, the MCOF's sectors that target the milieu addressed the inability of IOM to immobilize crisis-affected migrants through disciplinary techniques alone. By drawing on both disciplinary and biopolitical rationalities, the MCOF illustrates that security techniques complement the disciplinary rationality when the comprehensive and continuous control of all the individuals evolving in an open milieu is either costly or unfeasible (Macmillan, 2010, p. 50).

The IOM's policy papers on reintegration emphasize the relevance of security techniques for the immobilization of crisis-affected migrants. They argue that 'structural interventions aiming at improving the provision of essential services' (IOM, 2017b, p. 1) are required to foster 'an environment conducive to reintegration' (IOM, 2019a, p. 9). Accordingly, the MCOF's sixth sector involve the construction of water points, small-scale irrigation infrastructure and greenhouses in countries of origin (IOM, 2019a, p. 56). Moreover, if the initial cause of the returnees' displacement is a natural disaster, the MCOF's eighth sector aims to 'reduce and mitigate the risk of displacement' by transforming the milieu through the construction of drainage and watershed infrastructure, tree planting, and the rehabilitation of evacuation shelters (IOM, 2012, p. 6). The importance of the eighth sector increased in the 2022 updated version of MCOF. The latter included the reduction of disaster risk and adaptation to climate change as one of five new cross-cutting issues,[5] meaning that 'all MCOF sectors of assistance' should be mindful of their 'potential impacts on fragile environments' and 'mitigate hazards, reduce vulnerability, [and] avoid risk' (IOM, 2022, pp. 5–6).

However, despite the shift towards the use of security techniques, a large part of the IOM's reintegration efforts targets individual returnees rather than the milieu. Indeed, these efforts

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[5] The other four cross-cutting issues are data evidence, protection mainstreaming, gender equality, and law and policy.

seek to conform returnees with the model of the autonomous and resilient entrepreneur (Fine & Walters, 2022, p. 3070). To encourage returnees to 'empower' themselves and their communities by starting their own small business, the MCOF's sixth and thirteenth sectors favour individualized forms of 'support' such as the provision of micro-grants and the organization of entrepreneurial training workshops[6] (IOM, 2019a, p. 64). IOM actively promotes the positive impact of its support by collecting and presenting returnees' testimonies in ways that depict reintegration as a matter of personal investment and market participation (Fine & Walters, 2022, p. 3070).

This continued focus on the individual stems from the MCOF's failure to problematize the milieu of return. The MCOF's concern with the latter appears as an afterthought that does not supersede the main objective of IOM, which remains disciplining the mobility patterns of crisis-affected individuals. However, the organization recognized the limit of the MCOF's problematization by designing a complementary framework in 2016: the Progressive Resolution of Displacement Situations (PRDS) (IOM, 2016b). The latter argued that a 'preoccupation with ending mobility and movement' is incompatible with 'fluid post-crisis environments' (IOM, 2016b, p. 5). In fact, '[f]or many [forced migrants] there is seldom a predictable path from displacement to a finite physical end point and a fixed outcome, such as return to an original / fixed abode' (IOM, 2016b, p. 5). Therefore, instead of the mobility practices of individuals, the PRDS constituted their milieu as a problem by calling for the creation of 'conducive environments by addressing the root causes of crisis and displacement' (IOM, 2016b, p. 5). Nevertheless, the PRDS did not translate into significant organizational change within IOM (Ahouga, 2024a, p. 122), which left the MCOF as the IOM's central reference point despite its limits.

5. UNHCR's biopolitical shaping of the milieu of return

This section analyzes the Policy Framework's problematization of crisis-affected populations, which builds on a biopolitical rationality to elicit spontaneous returns of populations by reshaping the milieu of return through the construction of infrastructure and restoration of social services.

UNHCR developed the Policy Framework in 2008 to outline the principles, practices and activities of refugees' reintegration following their spontaneous return or voluntary repatriation.[7] The Policy Framework is concerned with addressing the 'devastation and neglect of areas' where millions of returnees 'find it very difficult to establish new livelihoods, access basic services and benefit from the rule of law' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 1). Contrary to IOM interventions that seek to immobilize crisis-affected individuals, UNHCR does not consider reintegration as 'consist[ing] of "anchoring" or "re-rooting" returnees in either their places of origin or their previous social and economic roles' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 5). Rather, it defines reintegration as the 'progressive establishment of conditions that enable returnees and their communities to exercise their social, economic, civil, political and cultural rights' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 6).

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[6] This is also the case for the MCOF's seventh sector which aims for the reintegration of former combatants through the provision of micro-grants to 'support community stabilization and transition' (IOM, 2012, p. 6).

[7] The voluntary repatriation of refugees intervenes after the conclusion of a peace agreement and once UNHCR signs a tripartite agreement with the countries of origin and asylum (UNHCR, 2004a, p. 141).

This definition constitutes the inadequate conditions of the milieu of returnees as a policy problem. UNHCR is not concerned with disciplining the returnees' present and future practices of (im)mobility. The latter are the result of the conditions in the areas where reintegration occurs. These areas in countries of origin are often 'remote and isolated', 'affected by chronic poverty and instability, and [...] may not feature very prominently (if at all) in national recovery and development programmes' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 8). If these adverse conditions are unaddressed, returnees can 'feel that they have no choice but to settle in alternative locations' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 5). But if they are resolved, then the areas of reintegration can 'provide an important 'pull factor' for spontaneous returns' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 57).

Therefore, the Policy Framework reflects a biopolitical rationality that seeks to shape the milieu to indirectly elicit the return of crisis-affected populations (Foucault, 2007, pp. 36–37). The interventions on the milieu do not aim to end specific behaviours of individuals. Instead, in a characteristically biopolitical fashion, the Policy Framework strives to shape the milieu to progressively bring the characteristics of a group of individuals (the population of returnees) in line with the average and acceptable level of the overall population (the population in the country of origin) (Foucault, 2007, p. 91):

> The notion of reintegration also entails the erosion (and ultimately the disappearance) of any differentials that set returnees apart from other members of their community, in terms of both their legal and socio-economic status. (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 7)

To organize the milieu in ways that 'normalize' the population of returnees, the Policy Framework aimed to initiate and sustain a development process that goes beyond short-term humanitarian relief. The Policy Framework's problematization responded to the failures of the UNHCR's traditional approach to repatriation in the 1990s. It was not enough to address the immediate needs of returnees before 'hand[ing] over [UNHCR] reintegration activities to [international and national] development actors' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 14). Instead, the Policy Framework expanded the reintegration activities of UNHCR to address the 'dangers of the "gap" between initial humanitarian assistance and longer-term development activities' carried out by national governments and international organizations such as the World Bank or UNDP (UNHCR, 2008b, p. 10).

However, this expansion should not entail a continuation of the UNHCR's role as a surrogate state in the countries of return. The Policy Framework emphasized that 'UNHCR does not consider itself a development agency nor does it have the mandate or resources to sustain indefinitely its involvement in return and reintegration' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 29). Therefore, the reintegration activities will not result in 'high construction or recurrent costs (e.g. a hospital or a tertiary education facility) or large-scale and complex infrastructural projects (e.g. building highways, main roads and large bridges) [which] fall outside UNHCR's mandate and competence' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 51). And the Policy Framework outlined a process of 'measured disengagement' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 65) in which UNHCR will only cover 'minor recurrent costs for a limited period of time (normally up to three years)' before starting a phased 'transfer of responsibility to the authorities or specialized partners' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 52).

The self-limitation of UNHCR interventions did not only dispel the concerns of donor states about the risk that the organization 'was venturing too far into development activities'

(UNHCR, 2008a, para. 18). It also reflected the recognition of the inherent complexity of the reintegration process and that interventions will likely struggle to achieve perfect and irreversible results. In fact, the Policy Framework argued that UNHCR's 'reintegration activities cannot bring about fundamental changes to those [adverse] conditions [in areas of return], the roots of which are usually to be found in longstanding political, social and economic processes' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 10). And since adverse conditions in the milieu of returnees are likely to remain, UNHCR expected that the 'reintegration process may be slow and suffer from periodic set-backs' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 10).

Resulting from a process of policy learning from past failures, the acknowledgment of the inability to enact a comprehensive and predictable control of the returnee population is typical of a biopolitical rationality (Macmillan, 2010, p. 41). Contrary to the MCOF, the Policy Framework did not outline a static plan that UNHCR must carry out systematically to ensure the ideal repatriation and reintegration of refugees. In fact, '[a] "one size fits all" approach to the reintegration process is not feasible" (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 42). Instead, UNHCR should be ready to 'respond to unexpected events and changing realities on the ground' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 51). Consequently, the Policy Framework outlined 'targeted' and 'time limited' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 29) interventions that would not achieve perfect outcomes, but rather would progressively minimize the likely risks facing the population of returnees (Foucault, 2007, p. 34).

5.1 Stock-taking the milieu through a situation analysis

The type and eventual scope of the UNHCR interventions are to be determined on a case-by-case basis through the security technique of the situation analysis (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 50). Indicative of the 'pragmatism' and 'flexibility' of the UNHCR reintegration policy (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 51), the situation analysis produces knowledge about the history and characteristics of the milieu by collecting data on:

- the length of time and conditions of displacement;
- the nature of the conflict which resulted in displacement;
- the degree of destruction in the area of return;
- the capacity of national and local authorities;
- the presence or absence of humanitarian or development actors; and,
- the presence or absence of peacekeeping forces. (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 42)

Unlike the case of IOM, UNHCR data collection does not divide the milieu into circumscribed spaces to better identify and control the mobility of crisis-affected individuals. Instead, it takes stock of the milieu as a whole to 'determine whether refugees can return in safety' (UNHCR, 2004a, p. 128) and to 'understand rehabilitation and reconstruction needs [...] and the overall macro-economic and political situation' (UNHCR, 2004a, p. 153). The data collection also identifies the actors that are, or will be, involved in reshaping the milieu:

> [...] careful analysis of the prevailing situation in areas of return is necessary in order to identify ongoing or planned early recovery, development, human rights and reconciliation initiatives, whether by national or local authorities, development agencies, humanitarian partners or other actors. (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 45)

Therefore, the stocktaking of the milieu determines the 'limits of UNHCR's engagement' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 50), that is, the minimal scope of intervention required to produce acceptable conditions for the reintegration of returnees. The stocktaking exercise also surveys

the returnees to determine the level of UNHCR intervention in the country of origin. The situation analysis does not only collect data through 'rapid surveys' on the potential returnees' age, sex, educational background, vulnerability (e.g. unaccompanied children, rape victims, minorities), property ownership, and requirement for transport (UNHCR, 2004a, pp. 129–130). It additionally considers their skills, coping mechanisms, and intentions towards return to identify those that UNHCR can mobilize during the reintegration process (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 43, 2004a, p. 128). In fact, the Policy Framework argued for the need '[d]uring their period of exile [...] to ensure that refugees [...] are provided with education, skills training and livelihood opportunities that will support their eventual return and reintegration' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 46). The skills targeted by UNHCR are not only entrepreneurial to ensure 'individual self-reliance' (UNHCR, 2004a, p. 132). They also have to do with 'leadership, advocacy, human rights, peace education, mediation and conflict resolution skills' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 46).

The concern for these skills that would mitigate social and political turmoil in the milieu emphasizes the political dimension of repatriation and reintegration. Refugees persuaded UNHCR to consider this dimension following instances where their political mobilization led to spontaneous returns in Central America during the 1980s (Bradley, 2023, pp. 994–995). However, while the stocktaking of the milieu suggests a positive relationship between UNHCR and the population of refugees, it can also establish an asymmetrical power relation between them. UNHCR can end the refugee status of populations to strongly 'encourage' their voluntarily return even when refugees contest the situation analysis' conclusions about the safety of the area of return (Nah, 2019, p. 76).

5.2 Shaping the milieu through infrastructure construction and provision of basic services

Depending on the results of the situation analysis, UNHCR can deploy several security techniques to allow the returnee population to durably occupy their milieu. Two components of UNHCR budget fund these techniques that have a material impact on the lives of returnees. First, the Global Refugee Programme component, which 'includes all activities undertaken to facilitate and support the voluntary repatriation of refugees (e.g. preparations for return in the countries of asylum and origin, measures to address material obstacles to return, transportation, financial and material assistance packages, as well as immediate assistance for a limited period following return' (UNHCR, 2009a, p. 12). Second, the Global Reintegration Projects component, which 'covers all longer-term activities to reintegrate returning refugees in their country of origin' such as activities related to health, education, livelihood and infrastructure needs (UNHCR, 2009a, p. 12). Contrary to the first component, the second 'operate[s] on the basis of "project' funding' (UNHCR, 2009a, p. 12), meaning that the funding of long-term reintegration activities depends on the donor states' willingness.

The Policy Framework emphasized the need to first resolve the 'constraints' on the 'homeward movement of refugees' by repairing the road infrastructure and 'border crossing facilities' (UNHCR, 2004b, p. 3), constructing 'small-scale bridges, way stations, transit centres and other transportation facilities', and 'supporting' mine clearance (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 57). These efforts reflect a biopolitical rationality that encourages the 'best possible circulation' of the population within the milieu, while also 'minimizing what is risky and inconvenient'(Foucault, 2007, p. 34). To encourage positive circulation and occupation of the milieu, UNHCR 'prioritize[s] activities that are required to ensure the basic means of survival and to support the livelihood strategies of returnees and their communities' (UNHCR, 2008a,

para. 61). These activities involve the transfer of moveable assets (e.g. animals, household furniture and other property) (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 47), the issuance of cash grants to help cover basic expenses upon arrival, the provision of agricultural inputs such as seeds and tools for the first planting season, microcredit schemes, and skills training (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 61, 2004b, pp. 3–4).

The 'immediate activities' concerned with the circulation and survival of returnees should be followed by efforts to 'kick-start mid- to longer-term efforts to restore social services' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 62). These efforts that were lacking in previous UNHCR interventions aim to meet 'at least minimum standards' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 50) in the provision of basic services in the milieu through 'investments in shelter, potable water, primary schools […], primary health care' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 61). By guaranteeing the 'non-discriminatory access to services' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 63), these investments would bring the characteristics of the returnee population in line with those of the general population. However, the Policy Framework seeks to limit the role of UNHCR in the provision of basic services. The organization should 'undertake the construction of infrastructure […] only where absolutely necessary to ensure access to basic rights, such as primary education' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 63). Furthermore, UNHCR should intervene mainly in partnership with transition and development actors (e.g. UNDP, UN Habitat, UNICEF, FAO, etc.) previously identified by the situation analysis (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 62).

5.3 Securing the milieu through the restoration of the nation-state's disciplinary institutions

Along these biopolitical interventions, the Policy Framework outlined additional activities that strive to secure the milieu of returnees by reactivating the disciplinary institutions of the nation-state and restoring the 'rule of law': 'UNHCR will also seek to contribute to the effective functioning of national judicial and law enforcement structures, including civilian police, where appropriate' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 58). Although tempered by the UNHCR's engagement to support 'nascent protection structures, including Human Rights Commissions and NGOs offering legal advice and support' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 58), the reactivation of judicial and law enforcement structures would order the milieu by monitoring and disciplining the behaviour of individuals to 'ensure safe places of return', 'respect for minority rights', and 'prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 58). These structures would also take care of determining 'land property rights' (UNHCR, 2008a, para. 58) and providing 'access to national documentation' necessary for the identification of individuals, such as birth certificates for children born in the host country (UNHCR, 2022b). In other words, the reactivation of disciplinary institutions would encourage spontaneous and durable returns by addressing two of the main challenges faced by UNHCR interventions: 'fragile security in certain areas of return; housing, land and property rights' (UNHCR, 2009b, p. 7).

The concern of UNHCR with the reactivation of disciplinary institutions to stabilize returnees in the milieu confirms Foucault's (2007, p. 22) observation that disciplinary techniques proliferate under a biopolitical rationality and are necessary for security techniques to function. It also suggests that the Policy Framework's biopolitical rationality aims to achieve a disciplinary end, that is, 'retransforming the 'anomaly' of refugees back into the 'normality' of state citizens' by restoring the nation-state (Scheel & Ratfisch, 2014, p. 938). In fact, the Policy Framework is representative of various 'programmes of international refugee regimes, [which] rather than being in opposition to the sovereignty game, play a crucial role in

sustaining the order of territorial states' (Lui, 2004, p. 117). Nevertheless, some scholars criticized the UNHCR's efforts to restore this order for not recognizing that nation-state building is 'based on the systematic use of violence, by which refugees are created as a permanent phenomenon in the first place' (Scheel & Ratfisch, 2014, p. 938).

6. Conclusion

The MCOF and Policy Framework problematize crisis-affected populations according to different rationalities of government. The former draws on a disciplinary rationality to outline a process of successive immobilization and mobilization of crisis-affected populations during which IOM monitors, cares for, transports, and immobilizes individuals in their countries of origin. And the latter builds on a biopolitical rationality to elicit spontaneous returns of refugee populations by reshaping the milieu of return through the construction of infrastructure and restoration of social services. These findings confirm previous assessments which consider that IOM and UNHCR 'do speak differently; they do not use the same words and therefore vehicle different worldviews' (Green & Pécoud, 2023, p. 3). The findings also reflect different path-dependent dynamics within both organizations. The MCOF's disciplinary rationality stems from the creation of IOM as a logistical agency which historically adopted 'logistical mindsets imported from the military and private sectors' (Bradley, 2024, p. 5) to manage the physical movement of people. And the Policy Framework's biopolitical rationality expands the UNHCR's long-standing role as a surrogate state in host countries to the milieu of returnees.

However, the difference between IOM and UNHCR is not clear-cut. Their policy documents similarly merge a biopolitical concern for the milieu with the disciplinary control of individuals. On the one hand, the MCOF aims to durably immobilize returnees by shaping their milieu through the construction of infrastructure and the resolution of land and property issues. On the other hand, the Policy Framework seeks to achieve durable returns by securing the milieu of return through the restoration of the nation-state's disciplinary institutions. This complementarity between disciplinary and biopolitical rationalities contradicts many Foucauldian scholars who argue for their incompatibility (Macmillan, 2010, pp. 40–41). Contrary to this widely held view, the MCOF illustrates that security techniques complement the disciplinary rationality when the comprehensive and continuous control of all the individuals evolving in an open milieu is either costly or unfeasible. And the Policy Framework suggests that disciplinary techniques proliferate under a biopolitical rationality and are necessary for security techniques to function.

The complementarity between disciplinary and biopolitical rationalities also reflects a deeper involvement of IOM and UNHCR in the circumstances of returnees and the domestic affairs of the countries of return (Barnett, 2001). Seemingly driven by concerns for the long-term stabilization of returnees, both organizations expanded their role in return governance to shape the economic, social, security and, ultimately, political conditions in the countries of return. This expansion also suggests that return governance intersects with the humanitarian and development regimes to stabilize the populations of returnees. Therefore, further research is required to understand to what extent internal shifts or donor states' preferences drive the expansion of the role of IOM and UNHCR, as well as the role of the principles, practices, and actors of the humanitarian and development regimes in return governance.

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