

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/387687711>

The Role of Local Staff in the International Organization for Migration (IOM)'S State-Building Work in Djibouti: A Postcolonial Perspective

Article in *Geopolitics* · January 2025

DOI: 10.1080/14650045.2024.2433505

CITATION

1

READS

32

1 author:



Sabine Dini

University of Clermont Auvergne

16 PUBLICATIONS 96 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Sabine DINI- Associate Professor, School of law University Clermont Auvergne, France (sabine.dini@uca.fr)

The Role of Local Staff in the International Organization for Migration (IOM) 'S State-Building Work in Djibouti: A Postcolonial Perspective

Abstract

This paper presents a postcolonial analysis of the role played by local IOM staff in the state-building work in Djibouti, a small state in the Horn of Africa. It argues that the way IOM constructs the role of the local staff reduces the asymmetric nature of its intervention, playing a crucial role in the organisation's state-building objectives. The data is analysed using the 'subaltern standpoint' method and 'postcolonial relationalism' theory. The ethnographic description that follows details how the division of labour between local and international staff aligns with IOM's historical goal of creating a world composed of separate, racially and culturally homogeneous nation-states. It explores how this division between local and international staff shapes the local staff's national identity and seemingly enhances their sovereign power while giving the IOM foreign intervention into state migration policies the face of endogenous dynamics.

Sabine DINI- Associate Professor, School of law University Clermont Auvergne, France (sabine.dini@uca.fr)

Dini, S. (2025). The Role of Local Staff in the International Organization for Migration (IOM)'S State-Building Work in Djibouti: A Postcolonial Perspective. *Geopolitics*, 1–21.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2024.2433505>

Introduction

The paper addresses the role of locally hired staff in the asymmetric governance of international migration in Africa by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It adds to a burgeoning body of research that seeks to uncover the enduring colonial legacy of the division of labour in international interventions and migration management in Global South countries (Maâ, Van Dessel, and Savio Vammen 2023; Pascucci 2019). Centred on an ethnographic field study conducted over almost a decade in the IOM mission in Djibouti, this paper stresses the critical role of the division of labour in the intervention process, linking it with the IOM state-building practices and its rationality in shaping state sovereignty. Building on postcolonial relationalism (Go 2013), it argues that the organisation naturalises the statutory division between local and international staff to limit the asymmetric nature of its intervention, whose aim is to model Djibouti state sovereignty along the lines of border control and prevention

of unauthorised migration expected by its Global North funder states.

The State of Djibouti (surface area of 22,000 km², population of one million) is situated in the Horn of Africa, bordering Eritrea to the north, Ethiopia to the west, and Somalia to the south. The eastern border is formed by the Red Sea, across which lies Yemen. The country's history is closely linked to its port and the movement of its people between Africa and the Arabian Peninsula (Imbert-Vier 2011). Unofficial figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that the average number of undocumented migrants from neighbouring countries crossing the Red Sea from Djibouti reached almost 100,000 per year in 2012 and 2013, dropping slightly to an estimated mean of 70,000 per year since then. In the last decade, the USA, Japan, and the EU have viewed this traffic between the African continent and the Middle East as a security issue, both in terms of maritime piracy in the Red Sea and terrorist attackers travelling between Africa and the Middle East. These states have, therefore, sponsored projects to assist Djibouti with its immigration policy, providing the government with better control over its territory and gaining increased knowledge of the population dynamics in the region. The IOM is the intermediary intergovernmental organisation in charge of implementing the projects.

The literature has addressed the laundering role of Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs) (Abbott and Et Snidal 1998), which orchestrate, like IOM, the transfer of funds between donor and recipient states, thus decoupling the donors' intention from the responsibility for decisions made in the recipient state. This decoupling is critical for the diplomatic cooperation between Global North donor states and African states, notably when intervention could include a motivation to orient state sovereignty. IOM presents itself as a neutral administrator providing services to African states (Pécoud 2018). However, its ideological nature has been highlighted in the literature, which aligns its state-building project with Global North states securitisation projects and promotes a view of state sovereignty based on national homogeneity and sedentarism (Bakewell 2008). This paper looks at the specific technology of power IOM uses to limit the asymmetric nature of its intervention in state sovereignty and promote it locally. It notably highlights the importance of IOM hiring Djiboutian local staff for this technology of power.

The demonstration proceeds as follows. In section one, the paper establishes a link between ethnographic methodology and the postcolonial analytical framework. This section shows how the ethnographer's subaltern position was strategically transformed into a viewpoint that offered a fresh analytical perspective on the role of local staff in the IOM's technology of power. Sections two to four delve into the ethnographic argument. Section two provides the historical background and description of IOM's rationale for dividing the world into homogenous nation-state entities and how this influenced its creation of local and international compartmentation of its staff. The third section demonstrates that this compartmentalisation cannot be exclusively seen as a principle of exclusion of locals from the international realm since it also bolsters the local staff's national identity

and sovereign power. Finally, the fourth section examines how the self-acceptance of this domination process operates daily and fosters acceptance of local staff into the higher levels of Djiboutian administration and politics, channelling the transformation of state migration policies.

1. A Postcolonial Approach to the IOM's Division of Labor in Africa

The literature on global governance has long overlooked the issue of locally hired staff in international interventions, instead focusing on professionals from cosmopolitan elites such as international arbitration lawyers (Dezalay and Garth 1996), diplomatic staff (Pouliot 2016; Sending, Pouliot, and Neumann 2015) or UN staff based in the UN headquarters in New York or Geneva (Fresia 2009, 2012). However, it is now increasingly showing interest in these 'subordinate development professionals' (Heathershaw 2016, 79) to highlight their inferior position in the international governance intervention process (Lecler, Morival, and Bouagga 2018). Humanitarian and development studies have been at the forefront of a new analytical work. This addresses the characters and roles played by aid professionals (Apthorpe 2011; Fechter 2012a, 2012b; Fechter and Hindmann 2011) and sheds light on the economic and social relations at stake in the 'international community' (Heathershaw 2016; Maertens 2016b; Smirl 2008, 2012).

The most critical approaches take a relational turn, favouring a perspective based on the division of labour (Pascucci 2019, Richardier 2024) rather than on profession (Lecler, Morival, and Bouagga 2018) to look at the asymmetrical relations between humanitarian labour forces from the Global North and those recruited locally in the Global South. This paper builds on this relational perspective that challenges the Eurocentric view of economic and social relations in humanitarian organisations (Duffield 2012; Pallister-Wilkins 2021), highlighting their hierarchies and compartmentalisation. Egeland, Harmer, and Stoddard (2011) have stressed the unbalanced staff ratio in the interventions, with 90% being local staff. Elisa Pascucci described the marginalised position of local staff in the international division of labour in NonGovernmental Organisations (NGOs) in the Middle East, stressing their subaltern position and gendered affective work results in the 'forms of everyday and cultural racism' (2019, 754) they are subjected to. Scalettari shed great detail on the cognitive, economic, and spatial compartmentalisation and hierarchy that prevented social links between local and international staff in the UNHCR Afghan intervention (Scalettari 2023).

This paper looks at the situation from the perspective of local staff to propose a postcolonial ethnography of the international division of labour in IOM's projects in Djibouti. This perspective was made possible through a decade of ethnographic fieldwork between 2012 and 2022. The paper builds more specifically on participant observation carried out while working for IOM Djibouti Mission between 2012 and 2014. International governance, particularly that of international migration, is challenging for

those wanting to propose an ethnography of everyday life practices (Dematteo 2011). Along with other researchers carrying out participant observation in the World Health Organization (WHO) (Atlani-Duault 2009) and the UNHCR (Scalettaris 2023), I joined IOM Djibouti as a local staff to be able to observe at length the organisation's mundane life.¹

There is a clear legal differentiation in IGO's bureaucracy between two staff statuses: 'international staff', who are not nationals of the country of intervention, and local 'national staff', who are local citizens of the country of intervention. This statutory division creates a stratified order of values regarding finances and meritocracy. Reputedly hired on merit and expertise, international officials receive pay based on the Noblemaire principle, meaning that their salary should be equivalent to the highest-paid national employees in the world (Ogwezzy 2016). In contrast, locally recruited national staff are paid according to the Flemming principle, in which the employment terms and conditions are based on the most favourable local employment practices (Eckhard and Parizek 2022; Ogwezzy 2016). Someone possessing the nationality of the country of intervention, as was my case, thus falls mandatorily in the national staff category.

As Pascucci points out, there are two categories of locally hired staff: officers and others. One group has had access to Western education and international mobility. In contrast, the social experience of the other group is primarily restricted to their home nation and possibly elsewhere in Africa (Pascucci 2019). At the time of the IOM Djiboutian mission, all national officers, former immigrants from Western countries with dual nationality, had received part of their education in Belgium, Canada and the USA. Conversely, national assistants had never moved or studied outside of Africa. Most of them had studied at the University of Djibouti or, in the case of state scholarship holders, in North or West African countries. Despite having a lower educational capital than the international staff, they were well-placed in the country's lineage stratification. While biographically closer to the internationalised national staff, I made the methodological choice to integrate myself into the national employees 'from below'. It allowed me to establish a fresh epistemological viewpoint without potential confusion from a political perspective associated with a subaltern status.

Building on Julian Go's work on the postcolonial sociology project, I used the 'subaltern standpoint' as a clear starting point: 'The goal of a postcolonial sociology based upon a standpoint epistemology follows: to recover and work from the standpoint of subordinated positions in the imperially forged global hierarchy' (Go 2013, 161). By constructing this standpoint, I was able to denaturalise my position as a subaltern and follow an elementary issue central to the ethnographic gaze: that 'survey materials must [therefore] first be treated as effects of the survey situation, and not as immediate representations of a natural reality before observation' (Schwartz 2011, 346). This constructed postcolonial standpoint allowed me to avoid confusion between a subaltern's social identity, 'being African', 'being a woman', or 'being a local staff', and a constructed subaltern standpoint, making it possible to build an analytical point of view based on an asymmetrical position in the ethnographic field.

Sabine DINI- Associate Professor, School of law University Clermont Auvergne, France (sabine.dini@uca.fr)

This methodological choice channelled a ‘relational ontology’ (Mignolo 2013, 163), revealing ‘hidden connections and relations between events, processes and entities in the colonial matrix of power’ (Mignolo 2013, 164). It stressed that the local staff status should be understood as a relation of exclusion with the international staff. It aligned with postcolonial theory focusing on relational issues, notably Said’s ‘law of division’ (Said 1993, 20). The concept apprehends colonial relations as being based on the compartmentalisation of the world into irreconcilable entities. In agreement with this work, this paper shows how the law of division between local and international staff creates these relationships. However, in a postcolonial context, the local staff’s satisfaction with this division must be addressed. Understanding how the IOM’s law of division between local and international staff works locally provides insight into the IOM technology of power. It notably sheds light on how the organisation moulds the way the local staff subjectively relate to sovereign power as the key to erasing the asymmetrical relation with the international level.

The link between sovereign power and political subjectivation processes has long been debated in political science. Political subjectivation is pivotal in Arendt’s analysis of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes (Arendt 1983). It supports Judith Butler’s work on gender (Butler 1990). It is crucial to Étienne Balibar’s studies on citizenship and the nation (Balibar 2015). Foucault’s research on the relationship between knowledge and power (Foucault 1966, 1969, 1971) can also be read as an extended variation on political subjectivation. These works explore the question: How do subjects relate to power? Do they create their agency with, or in opposition to, sovereign normative power? How does the IOM channel its normative power to foster the subjective adhesion of local staff to their power in Djibouti?

To answer the question, the paper builds on Elsa Dorlin’s work to propose an analytical framework for deconstructing IOM’s power technology. In *Selfdefense, a Philosophy of Violence* (Dorlin 2022), she addresses the issue of political subjectivation in colonial settings to show how sovereign power affects subaltern subject agency. She begins her work with a pastiche on Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 2023), describing a torture technology specifically used to discipline enslaved people in the West Indies. Like in Foucault’s work, the technology epitomises how sovereign power relates to the subject. While Foucault’s vivid description of Damians’ torture emphasised how sovereign power sought to eradicate the subject, Elsa Dorlin shows how colonial sovereign power has a more ambiguous relationship with subaltern subjects. Far from aspiring to destroy the subject, colonial technology of power targets the subject’s capacity to act, inciting his agency to work against him. Here, the sovereign power does not seek to destroy the subject’s agency but rather to channel how the subject exercises his power, which will, in turn, affect him.

These analytics of power, bridging subjective and objective dimensions of social domination, have fuelled various theories in the sociology of domination (Mauss 2023; Bourdieu, 2022) and postcolonial studies (Du Bois 2015; Fanon 2021). These works highlight the dialectic between social

objectification and political subjectification in the colonial and racial relationships of the dominant structure affecting the agency exercised by subaltern persons. Marcel Mauss stresses how the strength of the gift lies in the fact that it constitutes a constraint at the objective level of social relations while being seen as proof of the subject's free will at the subjective level (Karsenti 2011), which cannot be analysed outside of the colonial power relation (Mallard 2019). Fifty years later, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic domination (Bourdieu 1970, 1992, 1997) reveals how social domination significantly influences how dominated individuals perceive the social world, leading them to participate in their submission. It emphasises the alignment of the subjective structures of the dominated with the objective structures that reflect the social order and the pervasive relations of domination within it. Du Bois's (2015) concept of double consciousness shows how racial relations in the USA nurture the concept of a 'double-self' for black American people, who are torn between two conflicting subjective and objective levels of social life: being 'just a man' at the subjective level while being objectified as a 'dark body' socially in the 'eyes of the others'. Fanon develops this analysis of racialised alienation in *Black skin, white masks* (2021) to define colonial subjecthood as a permanent fight against the objectification of the self.

The paper argues that this analytical framework aligns with the IOM's technology of power. In this situation, the division of labour chosen by IOM moulds its subaltern subjects, i.e., local staff, and their rationalities concerning their national sovereignty. National sovereignty is the keystone of IOM's policies and intervention in African states. The organisation's intervention rests on the idea that 'States are the primary actors in migration governance and migration management, and have the sovereign right and authority to determine who may enter and remain within their territories, for what purpose and under what conditions'. (IOM, EMM2). Therefore, IOM's construction of local staff as agents of their national sovereignty contributes to aligning their role with IOM policy expectations. The local staff receive this political subjectification not as a constraint but as a valorisation of their agency.

Simultaneously, the IOM channels its agency in such a way as to better break down and reshape host state sovereignty to be in line with the normative expectations of external political actors. While local staff perceive themselves as exercising their free will objectively at a social and hierarchical level, they unknowingly channel the norms of Global North donor states and IOM.

2. From IOM's 'Law of Division' to Bureaucratic Compartmentation in Third Countries

The debate between the subjective reception of power by the subalterns and its objective effect is critical to understanding the role of IOM's local staff. The IOM power dynamic separates the objective imposition of Global North states sovereign power to control and exclude African nationals from accessing Global North countries from its subjective reception by the local

staff. IOM's compartmentalisation of its bureaucratic work plays a crucial role in this dynamic (De Swaan 2020). Abram de Swaan's concept of compartmentalisation stresses how, in situations of political asymmetry, social relationships enhancing forms of national identification can build political agency, leading to accepted, yet devastating political violence over minorities. The IOM's division of labour builds on bureaucratic compartmentation, creating local and international staff as irreconcilable entities, building the divide between the objective outcome of its intervention and how it is received subjectively by the agents implementing it.

The IOM's policy of compartmentalising the world originates in the organisation's genetic task of dealing with the population displacement crisis following the Second World War. The IOM was established to ensure that intergovernmental cooperation around the management of uprooted populations would restore and preserve a world compartmentalised along racial and cultural lines. The Allies refused the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) proposition of universalist collaboration to manage the displacement crisis (Dini, Fine and Pécoud 2024). Among them, Commonwealth White settler states like Canada and Australia fought to maintain cooperation on migration, in line with their national policy to promote cultural and racial homogeneity and separation (Limnios-Sekeris 2015). They supported the creation of the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME), later known as IOM, as an intergovernmental organisation outside the United Nations (UN) focused on operations.

The IOM established itself as an agency dealing with the logistics relating to the freedom of movement of white European citizens, ensuring migration respecting colour and place of origin, and favouring racially and culturally homogeneous states. For instance, the IOM helped repatriate European settlers from the Congo, Algeria, and Indonesia to Europe; it organized exclusively white labour and settlement immigration to Latin America; and, among other things, carried out a white immigrant settlement programme in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and South Africa, appearing in the words of its leaders as a 'Western club' reinforcing segregationist and apartheid policies (Bradley 2023).

After independence, IOM applied this policy to favour cultural and national homogeneity in decolonised states. Like Western states, these newly independent states can exercise their sovereign power over people in a way that promotes their cultural homogeneity and values their national identity. This policy was applied in 1991 when IOM was given the task by the UN of repatriating South Asian workers from Kuwait during the war. This proved a turning point in the governance of international migration. The norms of protection sanctioned by the refugee regime and the UNHCR were set aside in favour of the IOM's concept of migration, which led the organisation to gain a more favourable reputation among many Global South states (Geiger and Pécoud 2013).

This policy took on a new scope during the following decades. Between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the terrorist attack of 9/11, international

Sabine DINI- Associate Professor, School of law University Clermont Auvergne, France (sabine.dini@uca.fr)

migration became an increasingly pressing security issue for international institutions (Bigo 2002). The framework for handling international migration became progressively institutionalised. It spread the notion that homogeneous national states were vital to ensuring the safety of Western states and favouring the ban of migration from Global South countries (Ashutosh and Mountz 2011). This intersection between security and population homogeneity created a new nation-state landscape, dividing the world into a new political trinity: the Global South, transit states, and European receiving states (Bartels, 2022). European states did not limit themselves to putting up barriers to prevent Global South migrants from reaching their territories (Guiraudon and Lahav 2006); they also attempted to mould states identified as transit states to halt the undesired migrants midway through their journey (Frowd 2020).

Djibouti falls under the latter category and is requalified as a transit country, i.e., one of the many states where the division between the ‘West and the Rest’ should be operationalised. Therefore, IOM intervention consisted of turning Djiboutian sovereign institutions into efficient instruments for processing migrants from the Horn of Africa (around 100,000 people from Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea try to cross the Red Sea every year to reach the Arabian Peninsula and Europe). The organisation’s projects were threefold, consisting of creating and monitoring borders to biometrically filter desirable from undesirable persons (Dini 2018, Frowd 2024); training the border professionals and police coast-guards to familiarise them with these new normative categories (Singler 2021, 2024); and lastly, favouring projects that would hasten sedentarism (Fine and Walters 2022) such as vocational training, Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) (Koch 2014) or changes to the national laws to ensure that the country could legally host those people considered undesirable for Europe.

The challenge in institutionalising migration control in transit states lies in legitimising control from the perspective of the host African State. The designated African state needs to consider control of the African population legitimate. The IOM builds on the norms of national sovereignty to achieve this goal and compartmentalise its intervention. This policy kills two birds with one stone. It legitimises the differentiation and exclusion between African nationals (citizens) and non-national (migrants) while presenting the statebuilding intervention as an asset to foster the state’s capacity to control its territory and look after its population. This logic of the compartmentalisation process is particularly prevalent in the division of labour carried out by IOM during their interventions between the international and local staff.

During the ethnographic observation, between 2012 and 2014, the IOM presence in Djibouti was a ‘small mission’ with twenty staff: three international officials, including the Chief of Mission, the head of Operations in charge of the programme, and seventeen local staff. International officials kept reiterating that it was also a ‘young mission’. While formally fixed by statute, the norms of the relationships between local and international employees were still being established. Local and newly hired international employees were learning to socialise within these

norms, and the Chief of Mission diligently ensured they were respected. As an illustration, we can look at a young programme manager fresh from Europe and a newly employed local employee in the capital who found out the hard way.

Otto Diaz, the head of the programme, had a difficult time when he arrived at the Djibouti mission. He had some experience managing a programme division in Germany and supervised four national employees in Djibouti. To build close relations with his assistants, he spent much time carrying out concrete tasks with them and supervising their work. This attitude, which won him the esteem of his team, regularly earned him vocal reproaches from the head of the mission, who often reminded him that his job entailed ‘supervising’ and that he had to learn to ‘delegate’. The programme officer’s problem with adopting the IOM norms shed unforgiving light on the required compartmentalisation process between international and national staffers within the office. Diaz did not comply with the unwritten rule excluding national staff from carrying out editorial work on significant projects; he repeatedly offered the task to one of his national assistants. The Chief of mission ensured that each attempt failed, dismissing the work without giving any guidelines for potential improvements. This created intense frustration on the part of this local staff member and contributed to his relationship with Diaz deteriorating and ultimately to his leaving the IOM a few months later for a different job. Diaz was mocked by the international staff in charge of the operation and called to order by the Chief of mission. After six months, he gradually took on the ‘accepted’ role of an international official and stopped trying to modify relations.

This episode is also part of the broader context of the impervious nature of local and international spheres. Diaz, for whom the Djibouti mission was a promotion, interacted with the national employees in a spirit of egalitarianism and meritocracy. To him, an excellent national employee was a potential international employee, and he wanted to enable each employee to shine and build a career within the organisation. Diaz had not considered the asymmetry and stigma attached to local African employees. As Rebekka, one of the international staff, pointed out, this stigma is persistent at the IOM. As far as she knew, she was the only African citizen who had been a local African staff member with an African degree before becoming an international staff member. All the other Africans in crucial positions at IOM were either international employees with the United Nations or NGOs or had studied or grown up in Global North countries. She elaborated on how, despite her hard work in the Senegalese mission of IOM, her superiors brutally rejected her aspiration to become an international employee for almost a decade. She owed her international status to an arbitrary decision taken by the Director General of the IOM, who appreciated the quality of her work during a visit to Senegal and decided to promote her. The transition from local to international employee, which was natural for Diaz, was a matter of exception for Rebekka.

3. IOM Shaping of Local Staff into National Staff

Sabine DINI- Associate Professor, School of law University Clermont Auvergne, France (sabine.dini@uca.fr)

The IOM's statutory division of labour is based on a principle of legal and symbolic exclusion of national staff from the international realm while at the same time enhancing the local staff group's national identity and sovereign power. In the IOM contracts and everyday jargon, local staff are termed 'national staff'. The law of division, which separates the international sphere from the local sphere statutorily, legal status forges social groupism dynamics, creating 'sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents' (Brubaker 2006) for IOM's interventions.

The groupism dynamics implemented by IOM at a local level allow the organisation to counterbalance the statutory asymmetry between the local and international spheres. The IOM shapes the local staff's subjective experience of power that legitimises its geographical distribution and compartmentalisation. The building of national identity within IOM offices compensates on a subjective and symbolic level (Fine 2023) for the objective inferiority of the local status. Local staff are endowed with the power of sovereignty as citizens of their state. The ability of candidates for local staff posts to endorse the IOM's normative equivalence between local status and sovereignty is crucial in all local staff interviews. In the spring of 2013, IOM advertised two 'national staff' positions in Djibouti's leading French speaking newspaper, La Nation. One month later, IOM international officials interviewed one of the candidates shortlisted for its Djiboutian mission:

IOM international official: Let's say you are representing IOM at a workshop you are attending on the issue of illegal migrant minors. You represent the IOM. Around the table are representatives of various international organisations, let's say. . . UNHCR and WFP, representatives of NGOs that support vulnerable children, as well as representatives of the state you are in, including a representative of the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Family or Women. . . well, something like that. The executive officer of an Italian NGO involved in migrant school issues starts vehemently criticising how the country's police treat illegal migrant minors, which is notoriously and factually correct, and you. . . well, you are well aware of this, and the NGO official goes on to explain that the police are violating all the international treaties signed by the country. What do you think of such a speech?

The interviewee: Well, it's a clumsy strategy to take state officials to task by saying they are incompetent. It doesn't explicitly say that they are unqualified, but it's implicit because he says that the police are not doing the job properly and announcing it publicly. It's not his place to make such criticisms; it's counterproductive.

IOM international official: Can you elaborate?

The interviewee: Migration issues are sensitive areas under the jurisdiction of the state. So, it's difficult for someone not from the country to make such comments. It's under the authority of the state or its sovereignty if you like.

IOM international official: What do you mean by 'not from the

country’? The interviewee: Well, I mean, not a Djiboutian.

The questions asked during the interview highlight how local identity is reconstructed as national identity in the continuity of national sovereignty. The host state sovereignty as the most critical local norm for the IOM to conform within the intervention or to say it with Achime IOM has displayed ‘remarkably deferential stance to state sovereignty’ (Tendayi Achime 2023: xiii in Pécoud 2024). The IOM places local staff above the non-governmental international staff and, more generally, foreigners and, in particular, illegalised migrants. Conversely, local staff are constructed as the subject and relay of their state’s sovereign power and political orientation. The local staff category is built in the continuity of the host state sovereignty, almost embodying it. Hence, in IOM intervention, local staff are expected to act as national staff. This crossing from ‘the local’ to ‘the national’ explains why the division between the local and international staff groups functions not only as a dynamic of exclusion. It also serves as a principle of identification fostering the inclusion and integration amongst members of the local staff, which is critical to their agency within IOM interventions (Brubaker 2006).

The ethnographic work shows how the bureaucratic practices of IOM shape local staff’s subjective experience to enhance a shared feeling of mutual belonging. How the organisation channels this subjective experience is manifold. The demonstration focuses on commensality practices in the IOM office in Djibouti. It sheds light on how statutory, cultural and national identities are constructed concomitantly and become intertwined, reinforcing the exclusion of local staff from the international sphere while simultaneously strengthening the group boundaries constituted by national employees within the mission (Siméant, 2012). An analysis of dining practices shows how the IOM valorises the framework of mores (Elias 1973), which regulates staff behaviour. It demonstrates that the IOM’s organisation favours certain cultural practices valued as proof of one’s adhesion to a Djiboutian national identity, thereby creating a positive symbolic boundary and fostering allegiance between the national staff.

At 2 p.m. one day in March 2013, Yanis, an IOM driver, returned from the city centre, his arms laden with bags of food. Though this was separate from his official duties, Yanis made the rounds to various restaurants and staff residences to pick up lunches, which he then distributed to the respective offices if he had time. That day, he went into the office occupied by Marcus, the international head of the program. Marcus’ greed was notorious, and he was ravenous at that time of day. He hastily signed the last document I had just given him, ordering Yanis to put his food bag on the table beside his desk. ‘The bag is very greasy! Do not get it all over my papers!’ he added. Except for the annual dinner hosted by the mission leader and ‘leaving parties’, international and national staff eat separately.

The atmosphere of perpetual urgency in the offices is not conducive to the staff all getting together to eat. When, on exceptional occasions, international staff members do eat out – often not by choice but as a courtesy to a visiting international consultant – the prohibitive prices of the restaurants usually prevent local employees from accompanying them,

given that expenses do not cover the meals. Thus, international executives generally eat alone at their desks to avoid interrupting their work or have a rapid meal standing up in the small, basically equipped mission kitchen.

On the other hand, local staff members rarely eat this way. Instead, they tend to eat together in the office. Thus, it would not be uncommon for the mission director's secretary, a few national assistants, Yanis and another driver to meet up to eat. They might be seen sitting on the floor close together on the floor in a tired and collective silence, eating a dish of rice and fish, for which they have all chipped in, with their hands. The head of mission may pass by, exchange smiles with the employees, and wish them bon appétit. The table manners followed by the members of the Djiboutian middle class, to which the national employees belong, signal their position within the prevailing social stratification. They adhere to a strict division in table manners between the public and private spheres. Members of this class eat on rugs on the floor for significant ceremonies such as funerals, weddings or birth celebrations, and they might eat on the floor at home in their living room.

However, in public places in the capital, they eat at a table and always use a spoon or fork rather than eating with their hands. Therefore, eating on the floor, especially in the Westernised context of an IGO, represents a basic flouting of mores. In the light of these social conventions, the actors in this scene take on a transgressive position. This transgressional aspect is transparent to the international staff, who welcome and value it. The IOM mission not only encourages the free exercise of stereotypical cultural habits and religious beliefs but actively seeks to establish an environment in which local staff feel at home and can freely display what is seen as genuine local mores.

These principles of identification become naturalised within the organisation as defining the qualities and singular identity of national employees: self-identification and group categorisation merge within the office, and the statutory identity eventually expands into the dimensions of social identity (Brubaker 2006; Jenkins 2000). This singular cultural identity, seen in practical terms as the ability to mobilise a specific habitus, overlaps with the principle of national identity. The professional competence of IOM national employees combines with their ability to tap into the identity of the nation-state in terms of their cultural knowledge and due to being part of the clan stratification based on patrilineal descent.

Hence, the IOM international staff recognises particularising cultural practices – such as eating on the ground, taking a second wife, showing religiosity by praying ostensibly, exaggerating the accent while speaking French, and using the vernacular – as marks of national identity and proof of the Djiboutian staff's competence to implement IOM projects 'in the field'. Constructing this national identity and culture identification gives local staff a feeling of value in the workplace while concomitantly legitimising normative and statutory compartmentalisation between the national and the international sphere of the intervention and, therefore, between the newly created national staff and the international staff.

4. The IOM's Local Staff as National Sovereignty Brokers

How IOM divides its work between the international and national staff highlights the extent to which the latter primarily acts as the interface with nation-state institutions, managing the co-implementation of the various capacity-building projects with state officials. However, this intermediary role is not limited to cultural specifics but extends to the capacity to facilitate IOM's intervention in orienting Djibouti's national sovereignty dynamics regarding migration policies. Local IOM's staff play the role of national sovereignty brokers.

The role of local employees in relaying sovereignty between IOM and the host state is intricately tied to the historical construction of Djibouti's national sovereignty legitimacy. Like many African states, Djibouti's political order and sovereign power only sometimes align with the national normativity of the modern nation-state system. Instead, political and sovereign power derives its legitimacy from a traditional political stratification inherited from a complex lineage system (Bezabeh 2011; Bradley 2023), which underwent historical hybridisation with Muslim political forms such as the 16th century Adal Sultanate (Houmed Soulé 2011), before partial convergence with the modern nation-state during colonisation (Imbert-Vier 2013). The IOM does not challenge this discrepancy but embraces the relationship between traditional political power and its complex manifestation in the nation-state apparatus. The ways IOM moulds the division of labour allows the national staff to bridge the gap between two types of overlapping, sometimes convergent, sometimes divergent, forms of sovereign power: national sovereignty and sovereignty based on lineage.

Local staff's task consists of interacting with Djibouti's Janus-faced sovereign power, bridging the national legitimacy embodied by the formal state institutions and the lineage-based political institutions characteristic of Djibouti. The IOM intervention requires local actors to acknowledge national sovereignty as a legitimate and essential scale of political action. The national migration policies are mostly empty shell in Djibouti at the beginning of the field in 2012. All the IOM projects are projects comprehensively related to border management and control and are seen as being politically irrelevant by local civil servants. A policeman could rhetorically ask me in December 2012, a few months after the beginnings of the first border management projects in Djibouti: 'Why would we worry about these people [i.e. illegalised migrants] crossing the border? They don't stay. They cross the country and leave. Why would we care? The police have more important things to do'.

The IOM national staff task consists of bridging the gap within the state institutions between lineage and national scale of sovereign power and action. The IOM national staff's role consists of bridging these two levels of political reality to give meaning and sense to the tasks that state civil servants often see as politically irrelevant. The initial stage as a local staff involves implementing everyday routines because they can activate their

lineage-based groups and mobilise the associated social links via a logic of co-optation and recognition to achieve national-scale projects. Examples of tasks that national employees perform include getting government officials to carry out as a favour a task they are reluctant to do, finding the right contact person to address a problem, accessing the overworked advisor of a minister during his free time if the latter has left without making a decision on an ongoing project; obtaining the support of an agent to find the right person to sign a document, or the stamp that must be applied; entering a hostile zone in the company of someone who is linked to the clan allied with the traffickers; and obtaining a discount on goods that must be acquired at a price well below market value because the project has run out of funds. All these soft skills channelled the possibility to transform international projects into actual public policies implemented at the nation-state's level, which legitimises the relevance of national politics while strengthening the symbolic value of national sovereignty.

The local staff broker role is particularly noticeable during the organisation's regular ceremonies, in which the IOM ritualises the State of Djibouti's international relations. A total of seventeen were organised between October 2012 and September 2013. These include projects such as opening or closing ceremonies, or 'diploma ceremonies', which mark the culmination of civil servant training. These ceremonies are displayed and celebrated publicly through abundant media coverage. They are broadcast on national television in French, Arab, and vernacular languages and are covered by La Nation, the leading country newspaper.

In the spring of 2013, IOM organised an official ceremony for the Japanese government to hand over \$500,000 worth of equipment to the Djibouti Coast Guard. The event took place at the fishing port of Djibouti, the site of the coast guard commander's office. The guests arrived in official cars with various licence plates indicating national, diplomatic and UN affiliations under the eye of the Djiboutian radio broadcasters and television cameras. From the parking lot near the main gate, people from the various national bodies and the diplomatic and UN representations came on foot through a gate inaccessible to the general public to the main entrance, a few metres away. They entered without giving their name or showing any invitation. Requiring the members of the state bodies to present such an invitation would have been unthinkable. Thus, all had to be recognised personally, and the status of each one known. Djibouti state officials would have considered anything less as flagrant incompetence, even an insult.

The IOM international officials had only arrived in the country shortly before this big event. They were not yet able to identify the Djiboutian state officials, apart from the highly ranked members of the police forces with whom they spent much time. Some IGOs require specialised staff to take charge of such events and protocols. In IOM, this task was devolved to local staff. Each time a new guest came through the gate, four Coast Guard members, dressed in white ceremonial uniforms and posted at the entrance, would engage in an intricate and perfectly synchronised display of arms. Immediately after, at the entrance, a young Coast Guard officer and a local IOM staff member – whose clan affiliation and ancestry placed them closer

to foreign military command and diplomatic personnel – would greet the Djiboutian official by name and title, ostensibly recognising them and lead them a few metres away to the Coast Guard commander, the IOM chief of mission and the Japanese ambassador. He bridges lineage and national sovereignties, transforming a traditional status into a state-national one. Local staff facilitate their knowledge and entry into the state’s military command levels and political spheres by acting as national sovereignty brokers.

However, the role of local staff as national sovereignty brokers becomes more uncertain when local political logic clashes with IOM’s apprehension of sovereign power as exclusively tied to the nation-state. Nation-state sovereign power does not reach the Djiboutian territory equally. In the country’s rural areas, the population is still primarily organised along traditional lineagebased lines of sovereign power. Nation-state institutions align with lineage stratification in these areas and do not exercise power independently. This was particularly evident in the village of Obock, situated on the country’s northern coast, where the IOM established a Migration Response Centre (MRC) to prevent illegal crossings of the Red Sea and combat trafficking.

In this area, not only positions of power within local state institutions merged with lineage stratification, but local clans have a long history of opposition and rebellion to the central state power (Imbert-Vier 2013) and reign upon the illegal crossing between the African and Arabian shores of the Red Sea (Lauret 2023). In this context, building on national identity and national sovereignty to channel local staff normative relation to the intervention in Obock was inefficient and jeopardised IOM’s intervention aiming at preventing the illegal crossing from Djibouti to the Arabian Peninsula.

When hiring the local MRC team, the usual preference for prioritising and valorising allegiance to the local culture mores and lineage became too much of a constraint for the IOM. Instead, to avoid any potential links with the regional trafficking network, they insisted that the MRC staff did not come from the local lineage. However, local political authorities, all from local lineages, favoured the employment of the largely unemployed local villagers, while local staff from different lineages refused to work in Obock. The local political expectations were not overtly stated, but the IOM rapidly understood that the MRC could only function if they complied with local authorities’ requests.

The IOM tried repeatedly between 2013 and 2018 to hire a head of the MRC who would be estranged from the local lineage and failed dearly. Four people not associated with the local clans tried one after the other without success, eventually giving up, with some fearing for their lives. After a few years marked by a lack of success and constant direction changes, the IOM hired an international staff employee to manage the centre. Despite IOM’s best efforts, in 2022, all MRC local staff shared the same lineage, and the original goal to set clear boundaries between the MRC and local politics and local trafficking had to be abandoned. In the northern areas of Djibouti, national identity and national sovereignty power are not norms conveying

local population adhesion. Conversely, they elicit their defiance, derailing or at least complicating the well-oiled machinery of transforming local staff into brokers of national sovereignty.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper provides an ethnographic and postcolonial analysis of the IOM's state-building intervention in Djibouti. Based on the 'subaltern standpoint' method and 'postcolonial relationalism' theory, it reveals how the IOM's construction of the role of local staff serves to redress the inherent power imbalance in its interventions. The ethnographic analysis highlights how the deliberate division of labour between local and international staff aligns with the IOM's historical agenda of compartmentalising nation-states along racially and culturally homogeneous lines. This division reinforces the national identity and sovereign authority of local staff. It facilitates the organisation's portrayal of international intervention in state sovereignty as an endogenous process rather than externally imposed.

This research underscores the significant role played by the IOM in shaping state-building narratives and policies in Djibouti. It highlights the need for critically examining such interventions within the broader context of the global governance of international migration, particularly Global North externalisation policies. It opens a broader discussion on establishing nationalism in transit states. Future work should be directed towards the outcomes of interventions targeting migration policies to mould African transit states such as Djibouti, Niger or Tunisia, where the citizens have gradually built-up nationalist feelings that are adverse, and even hostile, to African migration.

Note

1. The ethnography conducted during a decade between 2012 and 2022 aligns with Olivier Schwartz's 'maussian ethnography'. Mauss (2021) and Malinowski (2013) were the first anthropologists to propose a precise protocol for the ethnographic approach, in which observation and the researcher's participation are keys. Aligning with their protocol, Olivier Schwartz formalised 'maussian ethnography' (Schwartz 2011), understood as the personal and long-term insertion of the sociologist into the group he is studying, and enabling him to grasp the hidden nature of social practices (Schwartz 2011) and therefore building research hypothesis inductively. Following this methodological path, I engaged in the field for an average of 10 hours daily (including most weekends) for 18 months, diving into the organisation's day-to-day life. I paid frequent 'revisits' (Burawoy 2003) to the field from 4 weeks to two months conducted between 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2022, both in participant and non-participant observation, allowing me to confirm the validity of my analysis and nuance it over a decade (Maertens 2016).

References

Abbott, K., and D. Et Snidal. 1998. Why states act through formal international organizations.

The Journal of Conflict Resolution 42 (1):3–32. doi: 10.1177/0022002798042001001. Apthorpe, R. 2011. With Alice in Aidland: A seriously satirical allegory. In Adventures in

Aidland, ed. D. Mosse, 199–220. Oxford: Berghahn Books. Arendt, H. 1983. La condition de l'homme moderne. Paris: Plon.

Ashutosh, I., and A. Mountz. 2011. Migration management for the benefit of whom? Interrogating the work of the International Organization for Migration. Citizenship Studies 15 (1):21–38. doi:10.1080/13621025.2011.534914.

Atlani-Duault, L. 2009. Au bonheur des autres. Anthropologie de l'aide humanitaire. Paris: Armand Colin.

Bakewell, O. 2008. 'Keeping them in their place': The ambivalent relationship between development and migration in Africa. Third World Quarterly 29 (7):1341–58. doi:10.1080/ 01436590802386492.

Balibar, É. 2015. Citoyen sujet et autres essais d'anthropologie philosophique. Paris: PUF. Bartels, I. 2022. The international organization for migration in North Africa: Making international migration management. Routledge.

Bayart, J.-F. 1996. Avant-propos. In La greffe de l'État, ed. J.-F.-B. Dans, pp. 5–9. Paris: Karthala.

Bezabeh, S. A. 2011. Citizenship and the logic of sovereignty in Djibouti. African Affairs 110 (441):587–606. doi:10.1093/afraf/adr045.

Bigo, D. 2002. Security and immigration: Toward a critique of the governmentality of unease.

Alternatives: Global, Local, Political 27 (1_suppl):63–92. doi:10.1177/03043754020270S105. Bourdieu, P. 1970. La reproduction. Paris: Édition de Minuit.

Bourdieu, P. 1992. Réponses, pour une anthropologie réflexive. Paris: Le Seuil. Bourdieu, P. 1997. Méditations Pascaliennes. Paris: Le Seuil.

Sabine DINI- Associate Professor, School of law University Clermont Auvergne, France (sabine.dini@uca.fr)

Bourdieu, P. 2022. *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*. Berlin.: de Gruyter.

Bradley, M. 2023. Colonial continuities and colonial unknowing in international migration management: The International Organization for Migration reconsidered. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 49 (1):22–42. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2022.2127407.

Brubaker, R. 2006. *Ethnicity without Groups*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Burawoy, M. 2003. *Revisits: An outline of a theory of reflexive ethnography*. *American*

Sociological Review 68 (5):645–79. doi:10.1177/000312240306800501.

Butler, J. 1990. *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. London: Routledge. Dematteo, L. 2011. *Les maîtres du clair-obscur : transparence et secret dans la communication*.

In *Des anthropologues à l'OMC. Scènes de la gouvernance mondiale*, ed. M. A. Dans, 33–79. Paris: CNRS Éditions.

De Swaan, A. 2020. *The killing compartments: The mentality of mass murder*. Yale: Yale University Press.

Dezalay, Y., and B. G. Garth. 1996. *Dealing in virtue: International commercial arbitration and the construction of a transnational legal order*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dini S. 2018. Migration management, capacity building and the sovereignty of an African State: International Organization for Migration in Djibouti. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(10), 1691–1705. doi: 10.1080/1369183X.2017.1354058.

Dini, S., S. Fine, and A. Pécoud. 2024. International organisations and migration governance. In *Handbook of migration and globalisation*, 42–57. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing

Dorlin, E. 2022. *Self defense: A philosophy of violence*. London: Verso Books. Du Bois, W. E. B. 2015. *Souls of black folk*. London: Routledge.

Duffield, M. 2012. Challenging environments: Danger, resilience and the aid industry. *Security Dialogue* 43 (5):457–92. doi: 10.1177/0967010612457975.

Eckhard, S., and M. Parizek. 2022. Policy implementation by international organisations: A comparative analysis of strengths and weaknesses of national and international staff. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 24 (3):254–70. doi: 10.1080/ 13876988.2020.1813032.

Sabine DINI- Associate Professor, School of law University Clermont Auvergne, France (sabine.dini@uca.fr)

Egeland, J., A. Harmer, and A. Stoddard. 2011. To stay and deliver: Good practice for humanitarians in complex security environments. New York: Policy Development and Studies Bureau, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).

Elias, N. 1973. *La civilisation des mœurs*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy. Fanon, F. 2021. *Black skin, white masks*. London: Penguin

Fechter, A. 2012a. The personal and the professional: Aid workers' relationships and values in the development process. *Third World Quarterly* 33 (8):1387–404. doi:10.1080/01436597.2012.698104.

Fechter, A. 2012b. 'Living well' while 'doing good'? (missing) debates on altruism and professionalism in aid work. *Third World Quarterly* 33 (8):1475–91. doi:10.1080/09700161.2012.698133.

Fechter, A., and H. Hindmann. 2011. *Inside the everyday lives of development workers: The challenges and futures of Aidland*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.

Fine, S. 2023. Symbolic rewards as migration diplomacy: Crisis and containment in eu–Turkey migration cooperation.

Fine, S., and W. Walters. 2022. No place like home? The International Organization for Migration and the new political imaginary of deportation. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 48 (13):3060–77. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2021.1984218.

Foucault, M. 1966. *Les mots et les choses*. Paris: Gallimard. Foucault, M. 1969. *L'archéologie du savoir*. Paris: Gallimard. Foucault, M. 1971. *L'ordre du discours*. Paris: Gallimard.

Foucault, M. 2023. Discipline and punish. In *Social theory re-wired. New Connections to Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Wesley Longhofer, Daniel Winchester, 291–99. London: Routledge.

Fresia, M. 2009. Une élite transnationale : la fabrique d'une identité professionnelle chez les fonctionnaires du Haut-Commissariat des Nations unies aux réfugiés. *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 25 (3):167–90. doi: 10.4000/remi.4999.

Fresia, M. 2012. La fabrique des normes internationales sur la protection des réfugiés au sein du comité exécutif du HCR. *Critique Internationale* n° 54 (1):39–60. doi:10.3917/crii.054.0039 .

Frowd, P. M. 2020. Producing the 'transit' migration state: International

Sabine DINI- Associate Professor, School of law University Clermont Auvergne, France (sabine.dini@uca.fr)

security intervention in Niger. *Third World Quarterly* 41 (2):340–58. doi:10.1080/01436597.2019.1660633.

Frowd, P. M. 2024. The ‘Datafication’ of borders in global context: The role of the international organization for migration. *Geopolitics* 1–19. doi:10.1080/14650045.2024.2318580.

Geiger, M., and A. Pécoud. 2013. Migration, development and the ‘migration and development nexus’. *Population, Space and Place* 19 (4):369–74. doi:10.1002/psp.1778.

Go, J. 2013. For a postcolonial sociology. *Theory & Society* 42 (1):25–55. doi:10.1007/s11186-012-9184-6.

Guiraudon, V., and G. Lahav, Eds. 2006. *Immigration policy in Europe: The politics of control*, 1st ed. London: Routledge.

Heathershaw, J. 2016. Who are the ‘international community’? Development professionals and liminal subjectivity. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 10 (1):77–96. doi:10.1080/17502977.2015.1137395.

Houmed Soulé, A. 2011. *Deux vies dans l’histoire de la Corne de l’Afrique* (1). Addis-Abeba: Centre français des études éthiopiennes.

Imbert-Vier, S. 2011. *Tracer des frontières à Djibouti: des territoires et des hommes aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, Karthala Editions ed. Paris.

Imbert-Vier, S. 2013. Afars, Issas . . . and Djiboutians: Toward a history of denominations. *Northeast African Studies* 13 (2):123–50. doi:10.14321/nortafirstud.13.2.0123.

Jenkins, R. 2000. Categorisation: Identity, social process and epistemology. *Current Sociology* 48 (3):7–25. doi: 10.1177/0011392100048003003.

Karsenti, B. 2011. *L’Homme total : Sociologie, anthropologie et philosophie chez Marcel Mauss*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.

Koch, A. 2014. The politics and discourse of migrant return: The role of UNHCR and IOM in the governance of return. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 40 (6):905–23. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2013.855073.

Lauret, A. 2023. Histoires et récits du trafic de migrants: le soft power des passeurs djiboutiens. *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 4 (4):43–65. doi: 10.4000/remi.24419.

Lecler, R., Y. Morival, and Y. Bouagga. 2018. *Pour une ethnographie des*

Sabine DINI- Associate Professor, School of law University Clermont Auvergne, France (sabine.dini@uca.fr)

professionnels de l'international. *Critique Internationale* N° 81 (4):9–20. doi: 10.3917/cii.081.0009.

Limnios-Sekeris, I. 2015. Stakeholders and competition in the transportation of migrants: Moving Greeks to Australia in the post-War era. *The Journal of Transport History* 36 (1):97–115. doi:10.7227/TJTH.36.1.7.

Maâ, A., J. Van Dessel, and I. M. Savio Vammen. 2023. Can migrants do the (border) work? Conflicting dynamics and effects of “peer-to-peer” intermediation in North and West Africa. *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 38 (6):995–1013. doi:10.1080/08865655.2022. 2108111.

Maertens, L. 2016a. Ouvrir la boîte noire. *Terrains/Théories* 5 (5):1–19. doi:10.4000/teth.749.

Maertens, L. 2016b. Quand les Casques bleus passent au vert : environnementalisation des activités de maintien de la paix de l'ONU. *Études internationales* 47 (1):57–80. doi: 10.7202/ 1039469ar.

Malinowski, B *Argonauts of the western Pacific: An account of native enterprise and adventure in the archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. London: Routledge. 2013.

Mallard, G. 2019. *Gift exchange: The transnational history of a political idea*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mauss, M. 2021 *Manuel d'ethnographie*. (Paris: Payot)

Mauss, M. 2023. *Essai sur le don : forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques*. Paris: Puf.

Mignolo, W. D. 2013. Introduction: Coloniality of power and de-colonial thinking.

Globalisation and the Decolonial Option 21 (2-3): 155–167.

Ogwezzy, M. 2016. The noblemaire principle in the context of international civil service. *Cosmopolitan Law Journal* 4 (2):14–28.

Pallister-Wilkins, P. 2021. Saving the souls of white folk: Humanitarianism as white supremacy.

Security Dialogue 52 (1):98–106. doi: 10.1177/09670106211024419.

Pascucci, E. 2019. The local labour building the international community: Precarious work within humanitarian spaces. *Environment & Planning A: Economy & Space* 51 (3):743–60. doi:10.1177/0308518X18803366.

Sabine DINI- Associate Professor, School of law University Clermont Auvergne, France (sabine.dini@uca.fr)

Pécoud, A. 2018. What do we know about the International Organization for Migration? *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies* 44 (10):1621–38. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2017.1354028.

Pécoud, A. 2024. IOM Unbound? Obligations and Accountability of the International Organization for Migration in an Era of Expansion. Edited by Megan Bradley, Cathryn Costello, and Angela Sherwood. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xxiii, 467. *American Journal of International Law* 118(2): 409–416. doi:10.1017/ajil.2024.6. Pouliot, V. 2016. *International pecking orders: The politics and practice of multilateral diplomacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richardier V. 2024. Spatialité racialisante et (im)mobilités professionnelles : carrières humanitaires en Afrique de l’Ouest et au Sahel. *Espaces et sociétés*, 190(3), 151–168. doi: 10.3917/ esp.190.0151.

Said, E. 1993. *Culture and imperialism*. New York: Knopf; Distributed by Random House.

Scalettaris, G. 2023. *The UNHCR and the Afghan crisis: The making of the international refugee regime*, vol. 3. New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Schwartz, O. 2011. L’empirisme irréductible. La fin de l’empirisme? In Dans N. Anderson, *Le Hobo. Sociologie du sans-abri*, 335–84. Paris: Armand Colin.

Sending, O. J., V. Pouliot, and I. B. Neumann, Eds. 2015. *Diplomacy and the making of world politics* (no. 136). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Siméant, J. 2012. Localiser le terrain de l’international. *Politix* 100 (4):129–47. doi:10.3917/pox.100.0129.

Siméant-Germanos, J. 2012. Localiser le terrain de l’international. *Politix* 100 (4):129–47. doi: 10.3917/pox.100.0129.

Singler, S. 2021. Biometric statehood, transnational solutionism and security devices: The performative dimensions of the IOM’s MIDAS. *Theoretical Criminology* 25 (3):454–73. doi:10.1177/13624806211031245.

Singler, S. 2024. “Do it Yourself!” Pedagogical Performances, Technical Expertise, and Crimmigration Control in the IOM’s Capacity-Building Practices in Nigeria. *Geopolitics* 1–25. doi:10.1080/14650045.2024.2331802.

Smirl, L. 2008. Building the other, constructing ourselves: Spatial dimensions of international humanitarian response. *International Political Sociology* 2

Sabine DINI- Associate Professor, School of law University Clermont Auvergne, France (sabine.dini@uca.fr)

(3):236–53. doi:10.1111/j.1749- 5687.2008.00047.x.

Smirl, L. 2012. The state we aren't in: Liminal subjectivity in aid worker autobiographies. In *State building and state formation*, ed. B. de Guevara B, 230–45. London: Routledge.

Tazzioli, M. 2023. Extractive humanitarianism: Unpaid labour and participatory detention in refugees' governmentality. In *Handbook of research on the global political economy of work*, 312–21. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Tendayi Achiume, E. 2023. Foreword. In *IOM Unbound?: Obligations and Accountability of the International Organization for Migration in an Era of Expansion*, ed. M. Bradley, C. Costello, and A. Sherwood. Cambridge University Press :xi-xiii.

Wimmer, A., and N. Glick Schiller. 2002. Methodological nationalism and beyond: Nation– state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global Networks* 2 (4):301–34. doi:10.1111/ 1471-0374.00043.

Young, R. 2012. Postcolonial remains. *New Literary History* 43 (1):19–42. doi:10.1353/nlh. 2012.0009.

FINAL DRAFT