1 **Managing Migration with Stories? The 'i am a migrant' Campaign of the International Organisation of**

2 **Migration**

3 **Abstract** This article offers an analysis of the aim, audience, form and content of the 'i am a migrant' campaign

4 of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM). We suggest that the campaign manages public opinion in

5 Western 'host countries' and that providing a platform for migrants' voices is not antithetical but rather a logical

6 extension of the mission of the IOM to manage migration according to a logic of productivity and rationality. We

7 further argue that the migrant narratives presented not only confirm, but also disrupt the assumed naturalness of

8 migrants' strong ties with their countries of origin, commonly underpinning policy on the migration-

9 development nexus.

12 **1. Introduction**

13 Since the nineties, there has been a shift from thinking migration policy in terms of (only) migration control to

14 understanding migration as something that needs to be managed. Though it is too simplistic to draw a hard line

15 between migration control and migration management, a main characteristic of migration management is that it

16 presents migration as an inevitable phenomenon, which should be pragmatically approached to make the 'best'

17 out of it, rather than merely contained. Migration is no longer presented as a problem *per se*. Rather, the logic

18 goes, *mis*management of migration makes migration problematic for all involved. Migration management has

19 been considered an expression of a new form of politics and power, which goes beyond coercion and discipline

20 (Andrijasevic/Walters 2010: 980; Kalm 2010). A review of the critical literature on migration management

21 shows that a governmentality framework has emerged "as a particularly salient way to analyse the workings of

22 […] migration management" (de Jong 2016: 352), since it can capture the soft power of persuasion, the

23 constitution of subjectivities, and the role of expert knowledge at work as technologies of government. In line

24 with a neoliberal agenda, 'making the best out of migration' has been defined in migration management as the

25 so-called 'triple win' with 'host' countries, countries of origin, as well as migrants themselves benefitting in

26 economic terms. This depoliticising approach negates the fact that the interests of migrants, sending and

27 receiving countries do not always align (Geiger/Pécoud 2010: 11). Proponents of migration management

28 expressly support a liberal human rights framework as guiding their policies. Critics, however, argue that

29 neoliberal migration management is in conflict with human rights oriented global migration governance, since it

30 prioritises neoliberal market interests over rights (Basok/Piper 2012). While advocates for migration

31 management position themselves as more progressive compared to approaches that seek to stop or control

32 migration, they are far removed from an open or no border politics.

33 Migration management is not just a set of policies but also a discourse, which produces a certain way of

34 understanding what migration 'is' and which knowledge, capacity and policies are needed to deal with migration

35 (Geiger/Pécoud 2010: 2). This article offers an analysis of the discursive production of an increasingly important

36   international actor in migration management, the International Organisation of Migration (IOM). Before

37   presenting our specific case study, the IOM campaign 'i am a migrant', launched in December 2015, we will

38   introduce the IOM and its programmes, especially in relation to the migration-development nexus and the role of

39   return migration, as a relevant backdrop to our subsequent analysis. We depart from the assumption that

40   discursive and material practices relate to one another, though not in a straightforward manner. Therefore, this

41   article explores what at first sight might seem like a tension or discontinuity between IOM's *operational*

42   *practices*, in particular IOM's controversial migrant return programmes, and its *discursive work* articulated in the

43   'i am a migrant campaign'. Previously, Basok and Piper's comparative study of the programmes and rhetoric of

44   International Organisations in relation to migrant women found discontinuities between the discourse of rights

45   on the one hand, and a practice of neoliberal management, on the other hand. As they state: "While at the

46   discursive level, IOM attempts to balance [a human right oriented and a neoliberal management oriented trend],

47   its specific programmes clearly privilege migration management" (2012: 53). In this article, instead of

48   *comparing* practice and rhetoric, we will look at what the IOM's discourse as constructed in the 'i am a migrant'

49   campaign *does* for migration management.

50   **2. The IOM and Migration Management**

51   As several accounts reveal, the IOM has become an important player and global leader in migration management

52   (Geiger/Pécoud 2014; Georgi 2010), although it is often overlooked in research (Andrijasevic/Walters 2010;

53   Ashutosh and Mountz 2011: 22). In fact its mission can be argued to epitomise the productive and rational logic

54   of migration management. As the IOM states: "IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly

55   migration benefits migrants and society"[i]. The IOM is an intergovernmental organisation, and since September

56   2016 a 'Related Organization' in the United Nations (UN) structure[ii]. It was created with a precise mission,

57   namely to support states to resettle refugees produced by the Second World War. To provide services for its

58   member states is still the major task of the IOM. Increasingly, however this is conducted in the context of

59   regulating migration in general, especially through migrant return (Koch 2014).

60   The IOM is, however, more than just a service deliverer to its now 165 member nation-states. The IOM also

61   plays a significant role in constructing the 'reality of migration' by identifying and framing problems, which they

62   subsequently can offer to solve in a continuous competition for resources and mandates. Since the IOM only

63   recently became a 'Related Organization' of the UN organisation, it has needed to justify its legitimacy by

64   reference to the discourse on the growing need for global migration management (Korneev 2014: 890). The IOM

65   does not have a legal protection mandate like the UNHCR, but nevertheless wants to be considered as an

66   organisation, which protects and represents migrants and refugees. Hence, the IOM continuously, and seemingly

67   successfully, engages in constructing this image. For instance, when the IOM announced their new status as

68   'Related Organization' of the UN on their website, it framed this as follows: "Through the Agreement the UN

69   recognizes IOM as an indispensable actor in the field of human mobility. This includes protection of migrants

70   and displaced people in migration-affected communities, as well as in areas of refugee resettlement and

71   voluntary returns, and incorporates migration in country development plans"[iii].

72 The IOM is a fast-growing organisation. It proudly presents on its website a range of key indicators for its

73 growth, including its increasing membership from 67 States in 1998 to 165 in 2016, its growing expenditure

74 (from USD 242.2 million in 1998 to an estimated USD 1.4 billion in 2014) and an increase in active projects

75 from 686 in 1998 to more than 2,400 in 2014. When looking at the history and development of the IOM, it can

76 be observed that the organisation is striving to extend its mission in relation to changing circumstances and that

77 their role in design and implementing migration policies and their portfolio of activities was growing over the

78 last years (Gabrielli 2016: 6; Geiger/Pécoud 2010). Simultaneously the IOM was and is also doing important

79 humanitarian work, for instance in Sri Lanka during the aftermath of the tsunami. The IOM is according to the

80 sociological perspective taken by Branett and Finnemore one of the International Organisations, which through

81 taking an embodied rational-legal authority "…gives them power independent of the states that created them"

82 (1999, 699). Following this perspective Koch argues that therefore the IOM is not just implementing so-called

83 voluntary return and integration projects or organising regional consulting processes around the world to manage

84 mobility, but has also room for manoeuvre to structure them (2014: 911f.).

85 The IOM has also managed to established itself as a trusted intermediator between states and migrants,

86 legitimising their actions and shaping public opinion through research, the World Migration Reports, journals,

87 information sheets, handbooks and flyers and thereby actively framing what migration is and how it needs to be

88 managed (Betts 2011; Geiger/Pécoud 2010). For quite some decades the IOM has supported the European Union

89 (EU) and its member states, vital donors for the IOM (Wunderlich 2013), to legitimise and implement their

90 immigration policies as part of the process of the securitisation of migration (Bigo 2002). Furthermore, as argued

91 by Ashutosh, and Mountz, the border enforcement strategies rely increasingly on the ability of the IOM to

92 operate on behalf of, yet beyond the traditional bounds of the sovereign state (2011: 22f.). At the same time,

93 however, the IOM presents itself as an important actor to protect and represent migrants and their rights and as

94 counterweight to increasingly coercive immigration and border enforcement strategies. The IOM thus "…stands

95 at the intersection of the nation-state, international human rights regimes and neo-liberal governance" (Ashutosh

96 and Mountz 2011: 22). As Fabian Georgi (2010: 65) points out, the IOM can be categorised among the "liberal

97 global migration governance" camp, which "includes progressive notions of a more humane, just and open

98 regulation of migration, while stressing that this can only be realized within a firm framework of migration

99 governance or migration management". This camp struggles to become hegemonic in global migration policy

100 against at least two other dominant political projects, the national sovereignty project and the rights-based

101 approach.

102 **2.1** *The IOM and the migration-development nexus*

103 In recent decades, IOM also played a decisive role in the process of incorporating international development into

104 migration management, in line with migration management's understanding of the migration-development nexus

105 as one of its main pillars. Lavenex and Kunz describe the IOM and ILO as actors that "adopted a broad approach

106 focusing on protecting migrant's rights and harnessing the potential development impact of their return to the

107 country of origin" in contrast to the World Bank and the IMF which took a narrow financial approach (2008:

108 449). Since the new millennium, the IOM actively addresses development issues with the aim, in its own words,

109 "…to contribute to a better understanding of the links between international migration and development in order

110   to harness the development potential of migration for the benefit of both societies and migrants and to contribute

111   to sustainable development and poverty reduction"[iv]. This statement has to be read in the context of the

112   'discovery' of remittances and the economic potential of migration, and thus the perceived developmental

113   significance of migration, migrants and their remittances, which has been especially pronounced since the

114   findings of the Global Development Finance Report of 2003 by the World Bank (Faist 2008).

115

116   The hype around the migration-development nexus has been accompanied by debates,

117   policies and strategies on how governments and international organisations in collaboration

118   with each other can cultivate the positive relationships between migration and economic and

119   social development (Gamlen 2014: 582). One example of this cooperation is the agreement

120   between the IOM and the European Union which was released in 2011 by the European

121   Commission Press: "The EU and IOM work together on a daily basis on projects which

122   promote international cooperation in areas such as legal migration, irregular migration and

123   development. This new agreement will […] make our work together much more efficient"[v].

124   This meant for example that Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR)

125   programmes, which have a long history, are getting increasing integrated in the field of

126   development cooperation and presented and framed as a strategy to foster social and

127   economic development in the countries of migrant's origin. Project components with the aim

128   to assist migrants in setting up businesses in their countries of origins or vocational trainings

129   can be interpreted in that line, since they aim, according to the IOM, to link return to local

130   development[vi]. These new projects have to be understood in light of the fact that earlier

131   promises of the migration and development nexus and the initiated activities, like promoting

132   diaspora engagement, have not led to the results anticipated by national and international

133   policy offices (Vammen/Bronden 2012: 34; Sinatti/Horst 2014). This explains the enthusiasm

134   for return migration as a possibility to keep migration and development on the international

135   agenda, yet with an emphasis on migrants' and returnees' agency. Connecting return

136   migration and post-return reintegration assistance to development and embedding the projects

137   in the international human rights regime, as the IOM does or calling return programs

138   'development' as national governments such as the Netherlands and Great Britain do

139   (Vammen/Bronden 2012: 38), increases the social and political acceptability of state induced-

140   migrant return.

141

142   This acceptability is, however, widely challenged by academics and international and national NGOs like

143   Amnesty International or Human Watch (Koch 2014: 911). Whereas Koser for example states that there is a fine

144   line between facilitating return and encouraging it (2015: 15), others focus more on IOM's definition of

145   voluntarism and criticise its practice (see f.ex. Noll 1999; Dünnwald 2014; Koch 2014). While the

146 aforementioned criticisms of the IOM remain on the terrain of "legalistic points and a rights-based approach",
147 others offer what Georgi and Schatral consider a much needed radical critique of the premises of the IOM, by
148 underlining that "migration controls *as such* can never be fair and just and adequate to the ideal of humans as
149 free and equal beings" (2012: 213). As Georgi writes elsewhere, this radical critique does not preclude
150 recognising that "on an individual basis, IOM has benefited many refugees and migrants by providing food,
151 shelter, medical aid, advice or transport services (and) on an individual level most IOM staff members genuinely
152 want to 'help' migrants" (2010: 67).

153

154 Between 2001 and 2003, the IOM, including its return programmes, was the subject of a
155 critical counter-campaign led by the NoBorder network under the name 'Stop IOM! Freedom
156 of Movement versus Global Migration Management' (Noborder Network; IRR 2002; Georgi
157 2010). When the IOM opened its first London office in 2002, the British Institute of Race
158 Relations (IRR) featured a critical article on the IOM, inspired by the work of the European
159 NoBorder network, asking "should NGOs be co-operating with the IOM?". It noted that
160 return schemes require co-operation with partners such as academics and NGOs, some of
161 which have a history of supporting migrants and warned that while IOM's programmes
162 "appear perfectly worthy", there are reasons for "alarm bells" to ring (CARF 1 Oct 2002). At
163 the occasion of the opening of IOM's Manchester office, Manchester No Borders's website
164 featured an article on the "shadowy organisation" IOM in which they describe its return
165 programmes as follows: "If forced removals are so costly and cause a lot of fuss, the logic
166 goes, why not do it another way, while pretending to be compassionate and humane. If
167 detention is the stick, the IOM are the carrot. Both are part of the same system of migration
168 management." (Manchester No Borders 13 October 2008). In response to these public attacks,
169 IOM "avoided the spotlight" (Georgi 2010: 45).

170

171 More recently, arguably, the IOM started to actively seek, rather than avoid the limelight. In
172 the following, we complement the studies on and critical engagement with IOM's return
173 programmes, by shifting the attention from IOM's operational programmes to its discursive
174 production by analysing the new global IOM campaign 'i am a migrant'. With this, we want
175 to shed further light on IOM's active role in migration management through public
176 campaigns, which have increasingly attracted scholarly attention (Andrijasevic 2007; Pécoud
177 2010; Basok/Piper 2012; Heller 2014; McNevin/Missbach/Mulyana 2016). After a short
178 introduction about the history of the campaign, we will show that the campaign should be
179 read as an instrument to manage public opinion and to legitimise the organisation. We will
180 demonstrate that the project of providing a platform for migrants' voices is not antithetical to
181 the IOM's mission, but rather a logical extension of it. Based on analysis of the cases

182   presented we will propose that in line with migration management and the migration-

183   development nexus, the entrepreneurial migrant as a good migrant is created and presented

184   throughout the campaign. This is done especially through the testimonies of returned migrants

185   whereby return to the place of origin is constructed as the natural inclination for every

186   migrant, despite there being narrative strands that challenge this logic, as will be shown.

187

188   **3. The 'i am a migrant' Campaign**

189   'i am a migrant' is, according to the IOM, both a campaign and platform[vii]. The website offers

190   a platform to "create a place for the personal stories of migrants" in order to "challenge the

191   anti-migrant stereotypes and hate speech in politics and society". It invites migrants to tell

192   their own stories, with the invitation to "create your personal i am a migrant poster to put on

193   your wall, to send to your family and friends and to make your social media profile". It also

194   asks non-migrants to share the captivating stories of migrants[viii]. The website features the

195   stories of people from all over the world, identifying people by a photo and their first name.

196   Each story displays a luggage tag with the number of kilometres the migrant is removed from

197   her/his 'country of origin'.

198

199   The campaign and platform has two 'predecessors'. On the one hand, it grew out of IOM's

200   own 'Migrant Heroes' campaign, which itself was following from the 2013 IOM 'Migrants

201   Contribute' campaign. The Migrants Contribute campaign was an attempt to "change the

202   conversation about migration" by "putting the spotlight not on where migrants come from, but

203   on what they bring"[ix]. #MigrantHeroes, which was an extensive media campaign, including a

204   film festival, sought to highlight "ordinary people […] doing extraordinary things" according

205   to Rosebell Kagumire, IOM's social media manager at the time. As she explained in a radio

206   interview, the campaign wanted to address the negative one-sided media coverage about

207   migrants where the "only story [European audiences] see about a migrant is a migrant dying

208   to reach the country, not a migrant who has actually transformed the society", affecting their

209   perception of migrants (Kagumire 2015). Initially, the #MigrantHeroes campaign was planned

210   to culminate in a public election of migrant heroes who would become IOM Goodwill

211   Ambassadors[x]. The initial plan changed, as Itayi Viriri, IOM's Media & Communications

212   Officer explained, and #Migrant Heroes changed into the 'i am a migrant' campaign[xi].

213

214   The other key forerunner of the 'i am a migrant' campaign was an externally organised poster

215   campaign called 'I Am An Immigrant' (IAAI). This IAAI campaign was initiated by the

216   national British charity Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), and run through

217   the Movement against Xenophobia in the lead up to the 2015 UK general election. These

218   organisations started a hugely successful crowd-funded campaign, raising £54,101 within a

219   three-week period to print posters in which immigrants' contribution to and integration in

220   society was highlighted, to counterbalance the election's anti-immigrant rhetoric. The posters,

221   showing 15 stories selected from submissions by immigrants themselves, were displayed at

222   hundreds of Underground stations in London and 550 rail stations across the country. As the

223   JCWI explains on their website, combining the IAAI and IOM's #MigrantHeroes campaign

224   was a "natural next step"[xii]; a step they announced a few days before its global launch on

225   Friday 18th December 2015, International Migrants Day[xiii].

226

227   According to a spokesperson of JCWI, IOM, which had the capacity and funding to do so,

228   "took the idea [of the IAAI campaign] globally"[xiv]. This reflects IOM's general (not

229   uncontested) approach to work through partnerships with NGOs, the private sector, as well as

230   the UNHCR (Pécoud 2010). The IOM used the concept of the original JCWI campaign, and

231   extended its focus by including emigration, and therefore renaming the campaign 'i am a

232   migrant' to encompass both emigration and immigration. Currently, there are therefore two

233   websites that coexist alongside each other: www.iamanimmigrant.net by JCWI and IOM's

234   www.iamamigrant.org, with portraits on the JCWI website also featuring on the IOM's

235   website with basically the same format, style and story[xv]. The 'i am a migrant' campaign

236   clearly bears the traces both of its internal IOM predecessors in its focus on stories and of its

237   external JCWI forerunner in its explicit denouncement of "anti migrant stereotypes and hate

238   speech in politics and society"[xvi]. The collaboration between JCWI continued when JCWI

239   launched the 'I am a refugee' campaign for Refugee Week 2016, displaying plaques with the

240   stories of refugees, with the IOM introducing a web-based 'I am a refugee' campaign,

241   together with UNHCR[xvii]. The 'i am a migrant' website is consistently growing, and also

242   dynamic in responding to new developments and emerging political agendas, as is illustrated

243   in the increased attention to refugees, recently for instance featuring testimonies of Syrian

244   refugees in Turkey who are presented as beneficiaries of various IOM programmes[xviii].

245

246   In September 2016, there were around 500 individual stories[xix] featured on the website

247   covering more of less an equal number of men and women. Most of the migrants and refugees

248   who present themselves or are being presented by the IOM and their partners, are currently

249   residing in Europe, especially Germany, the UK, Ireland, Italy Switzerland, and the United

250   States and Canada. This is supplemented by stories of migrants and refugees who now live in,

251   for instance, the Ukraine, Thailand, Paraguay, Albania and Mauritania, but these are fewer in

252   numbers. While the Western clustering with regard to the countries of current *residence* is

253   striking, with regard to the countries of so-called *origin* of those portrayed on the website, the

254   picture is much more diverse. The website leaves the strong impression that migrants and

255   refugees residing in the so-called western developed countries are privileged in the sense that

256   they have the possibility to articulate themselves, thus have agency, whereas migrants in the

257   countries of the so-called global South hardly seem to have a voice.

258

259   While the first impression of the 'i am a migrant' website suggests that the majority of the

260   stories are uploaded by individual migrants themselves, the origin of the testimonies is more

261   complex. Some stories can be traced back to earlier IOM publications, as well as to external

262   sources, such as BBC news. There are a number of instances where this is made explicit with

263   reference to the original source, such as "This story was provided by i am a migrant's partner,

264   One Young World". At other times, when a seemingly autobiographical narrative ends with a

265   line of information about the migrant featured, it is more ambiguous who the narrator is:

266   "*Shanika was able to seek assistance and reside in a shelter run by the Government of*

267   *Kuwait."[xx]*.This raises the question how much "narrative authority" (Malkki 1996: 398)

268   migrants had over 'their' stories and the selection of the tagline, which accompanies each

269   feature. The prominent role of the IOM as a supporting organisation in many of the

270   testimonies (such as in facilitating return and providing settlement services for Syrian

271   refugees in Turkey), also suggests that while the overt agenda of the website is the

272   foregrounding of the stories of migrants, the platform is also used as a strategic showcase of

273   the IOM's work.

274

275   In the following sections, we present three angles that we consider instructive in analysing the

276   IOM 'i am a migrant' campaign. We first focus on the goal and audience of the campaign,

277   then on its form, and lastly on a selection of its content.

278

279   **3.1 The Management of Public Opinion**

280

281   A useful starting point to analyse the aim and audience of the 'i am a migrant' campaign is

282   Antoine Pécoud's study of IOM's information campaigns for would-be migrants (2010), in

283   particular his insights about the important role attributed to information, and about

284   governance through partnerships and coaxing. The information campaigns warned aspiring

285 migrants of the dangers of migration, working under the assumption that once people are well

286 informed, they will act according to a rational logic, and hence be deterred (cf. Heller 2014).

287 Seeking to affect the conduct of people through persuasion rather than force, these campaigns

288 are a good example of govermentality. IOM's coalition with civil society organisations,

289 underpinning the campaigns, managed to diffuse the locus of power.

290

291 We suggest that juxtaposing Pécoud's analysis of previous IOM campaigns with the 'i am a

292 migrant' campaign also reveals some significant and rapid shifts in IOM's strategy. Pécoud

293 (2010) still found two paradoxes when comparing the global policy *rhetoric* of migration

294 management and the *practice* of information campaigns. First, at the level of global policy,

295 migration is presented as something positive, but the information campaigns he looked at,

296 emphasised the dark side of migration, still caught in the logic of migration control rather than

297 productive management. Second, Pécoud found another gap between action and rhetoric as

298 there were no "initiatives that would promote the usefulness of migration among the

299 population of destination countries" (2010: 193), even though policy documents articulated

300 that "anti-immigrant feelings are fuelled by the ignorance of the public regarding migrants'

301 usefulness" (2010: 186). Policy documents also proposed to address this "not only [as] a

302 matter of increasing the acceptance of immigrants, but also of enabling governments to design

303 more open migration policies", because "ignorant public opinions would […] block much-

304 needed policy reforms" (2010: 187).

305

306 In 2015 Laura Thompson, Deputy Director General of the IOM, uncannily echoes Pécoud's

307 findings: "There is a long history of using information campaigns in the migration field. […]

308 A new type of information campaign is needed today *targeting the general public in*

309 *destination countries*" (2015: 7 italics added). Whether Pécoud's publication has been read by

310 the IOM as invaluable PR advice (at affordable academic rather than consultancy rate) or

311 whether there was internal recognition of these contradictions, remains speculation. What is

312 clear is that the 'i am a migrant' campaign is exactly closing the initially observed gap

313 between discourse and practice, reaching out to populations with the aim to address

314 xenophobia. As the campaign states: "The negative memes about migration that fill our media

315 are usually based on prejudice and *misinformation*."[xxi]. Moreover, as will be discussed in

316 more detail below, the representation of migration is not merely negative anymore. That

317 means that Pécoud's observation concerning the earlier information campaigns that they

articulate that "migration is an option only for the losers, clever and hard-working people stay at home" (2010: 193), holds no longer true today.

Other important sources to help to understand the aim and audience of the 'i am a migrant' campaign are the 2011 World Migration Report: Communicating Effectively About Migration and IOM's 2015 report 'How The World Views Migration'. These reports drew on analysis of two questions on migration from the Gallup World Poll, the largest globally comparable data set: one asked the respondent to evaluate the current level of migration in their country, the other to consider whether immigrants worked in jobs undesired or desired by citizens in the country (IOM 2015). As the IOM states in an announcement of the report, they found that the perception about migration is generally more positive than media coverage suggests, but the perception in *receiving countries* is more negative. Without referring to the 'i am a migrant' campaign, the concluding remarks of this 6-page announcement describe neatly its rationale:

> "Negative public perceptions of migration restrict the ability of policy-makers to manage migration effectively. There is a risk that migration policies in such countries will be increasingly shaped by fears and misconceptions rather than evidence. (…) We need to continue to monitor on a regular basis public perception of migration (…) This type of information is essential for policy-makers and practitioners who seek to influence public opinion. Such data can also contribute to the design of more effective information campaigns which seek to combat negative public perceptions of migration. Given the limited funds available to implement such campaigns, it is important that efforts to influence public attitudes are targeted at the right groups in society." (IOM 2015: 6).

In summary, the IOM holds that there is an objectively optimum way to manage migration, bringing out the economic benefits for all parties concerned. Fear of public backlash might prevent those 'in the know', such as policy makers, to pursue this optimum. With the correct information, the ignorant and misinformed will shed their xenophobia. In order to feed them this correct information in the most efficient way, IOM wants to know who and where these people are, to steer them towards recognising the true value of migration. As they write, the "IOM understands that migration is inevitable, necessary and desirable – if well governed": its necessity lies in the challenge to meet "labour demands and ensure the availability of skills and the vibrancy of economies and societies", which is desirable for migrants and receiving

352 societies "when governed humanely and fairly as a path to the realisation of human
353 potential"[xxii]. Following this logic, IOM sees it as their task to enlighten the general public to
354 recognise the truth. In other words, migration management and the remit of the IOM now
355 encompass the management of public opinion, or in Heller's terms, engages in "perception
356 management" (2014: 304).

357

358 The language options of the 'i am a migrant' website (English, French, German, Italian and
359 Spanish) indeed reveal that the primary audience is exactly those European host country
360 populations, especially in Southern Europe, which the survey found to be most negative
361 concerning migration. Hence, non-migrant visitors from the so-called global South, especially
362 Asia and Africa, are not the main target audience of the campaign. This could also explain
363 why migrants living in Asian countries are hardly present on the platform, although Asia hosts
364 the largest number of migrants after Europe (see the latest report by UN 2015[xxiii]). Although
365 the ILO underlined already in 2011 the need for a campaign to change the public attitude
366 towards migrants in Asia, the regional strategy of the IOM for Asia and Pacific[xxiv] focusses
367 primarily on so-called vulnerable migrants, thus the 'shadow side' of migration. For instance,
368 a recent IOM campaign in Indonesia sponsored by the Australian state focussed on
369 discouraging fishermen from 'smuggling' migrants (McNevin/Missbach/Mulyana 2016)

370

3.2 The Role of Testimonies

371
372 It might initially seem puzzling that the IOM, which attributes much weight to information as
373 evidence, coordinates a campaign that largely features people's personal stories. Their
374 Migrants Contribute campaign already presented 'moving stories', similar to the ones
375 presented on the 'i am a migrant' website, but also featured a tab called 'Reality versus
376 perception', where the IOM contrasted popular discourse with data correcting erroneous
377 assumptions[xxv]. While there remains a factual information component on the 'i am a migrant'
378 website (an interactive graph of global migration flows), personal testimonies play an even
379 more prominent role.

380

381 IOM's interest in telling migrants' stories extends beyond the 'i am a migrant' campaign:
382 IOM Director General William Lacy Swing wrote an Op-Ed in the Bangkok Post, entitled
383 'See the World Through Migrants' Eyes'[xxvi] (2015) and IOM UK participates in the 2016
384 Migration Museum exhibition 'Call me by my name - Stories from Calais and beyond'.
385 Different from the earlier myth busting and factual approach, these initiatives introduce a

386 strong affective dimension, both in "the *essence* of [migrants'] testimony [a]s emotional rather

387 than analytical" and in "that what is *produced* by the testimony (the public's compassion)"

388 (Fassin 2008: 537, 539 italics added). While the 'i am a migrant' campaign still present stories

389 to 'correct' what the IOM considers a skewed negative media discourse, its focus on

390 testimonies is arguably a shift away from the technocratic, depoliticised approach commonly

391 associated with migration management. The emphasis on individual personal stories, rather

392 than on structural power relations in migration regimes, can be seen as depoliticising.

393 Seemingly paradoxically, "both the singularity of individual trajectories and situations and the

394 specificity of collective processes and issues are effaced" (Fassin 2008: 552).

395

396 However, that the campaign grew out of the deeply political initiative of the JCWI as a

397 response to the UK election and that 'giving voice' has a long progressive political history,

398 make the 'i am a migrant' campaign politically ambivalent. There has been a recent upsurge

399 of political solidarity expressed through 'I am …' epitaphs from 'Je Suis Charlie' to 'I am

400 Eric Garner'[xxvii]. While these statements have come under critique, they have arguably also

401 led to the formation of new collective identities. A similar political impulse of identification,

402 while in excess of the intention of the 'i am a migrant' campaign, is not foreclosed. As

403 McNevin, Missbach and Mulyana's state in their recent analysis of a public IOM campaign in

404 Indonesia, "governing rationalities at stake in the campaign break down, shift, and mutate in

405 ways that generate unpredictable disruptions to technocratic control" (2016: 225).

406

407 We also propose that it is useful to situate the 'i am a migrant' campaign in relation to

408 international development initiatives that preceded it. Critical development scholarship has a

409 longstanding engagement with analysing development testimonies, the most famous of which

410 is the Voices of the Poor project by the World Bank in 2000. For this project, the World Bank

411 approached the UK Institute of Development Studies with a proposal to widely consult the

412 poor. Robert Chambers, who led the project, revealed recently that he and his colleagues

413 struggled over the following issues: "Were we being coopted? Was this exercise merely

414 cosmetic?" (2013: 8). Chambers' questions were echoed more recently by researcher and film

415 maker Charles Heller who describes that "his [activist artistic] practice encountered a moment

416 of deep crisis" after he found that the IOM produced similar images of migrants' suffering as

417 he had done in his own films, but with the expressed opposite purpose, namely to govern

418 migrants' mobility, not to criticise migration regimes (2014: 304). These questions about co-

419   optation are also pertinent for the partnerships between the IOM and civil society in the 'i am

420   a migrant' campaign.

421

422   The judgment of John Pender[xxviii], who condemned the use of soundbites and quotations out

423   of context in the Voices of the Poor project, bears relevance for the 'i am a migrant'

424   campaign, which also uses single strap lines to accompany each story. Moreover, the focus on

425   the stories of 'others' could facilitate "comfortable diversion and evasion, looking away from

426   where we should be looking", as Chambers warned (2013: 17). Drawing on Kalpana Wilson's

427   analysis of contemporary visual representation in development, we can also see that even if

428   the 'i am a migrant' campaign presents migrants' agency, rather than their victimhood, this

429   agency might still be "limited to the 'rational self-interested' individual" (2011: 329). Also,

430   the recognition of this agency remains dependent on the benevolent non-migrant visitor of the

431   'i am a migrant' website. Moving from the format of the campaign to its content, we will now

432   analyse selected featured stories in relation to the migration-development nexus.

433

434

435   **3.3 The Migrants' Narratives**

436

437   As we have discussed above, the academic literature on transnational migration from the first

438   decade of the new millennium, which proposed that migrants can contribute to the

439   development of their countries of origin through transnational activities (see f.ex. Nyberg-

440   Sorensen et al. 2002), fuelled an optimism in international and national policymakers' circles

441   that migrants and their remittances (financial and social) could have a major impact on the

442   economic and social development of countries of origin (Vammen/Bonden 2012). More

443   recently, however, the academic literature can be divided in studies that observe positive

444   effects on development and other research that finds a rather negative relation between

445   migration and development (de Haas 2012). The latter more critical studies range from

446   criticising the neoliberal orientation with its strong focus on individual agency in the current

447   policy papers and strategies, to questioning the categories used as well as pointing to the lack

448   of empirical evidence. Moreover, this research argues that migrants' own visions and ideas

449   about development and as such the role migration may play in social change and the shaping

450   of contemporary societies is hardly taken into account (Dannecker 2009; Raghuram 2009).

451

452 Interestingly, the individual stories on the IOM platform support the latter sceptical views

453 with regard to the development of the so-called countries of origin through migration: hardly

454 any migrant or refugee featured on the 'i am a migrant' website defines his or her main task in

455 'developing' his or her country of origin. There are few accounts of activities which

456 correspond to the taken for granted meaning of development, which international

457 organisations as well as national development actors (re)produce through the migration and

458 development discourse, such as remittances. Instead, most migrants and refugees describe

459 their individual contributions to the 'development' of their current societies of *residence*.

460 Sentences like '*So many of us are contributing', 'For the past years I have been contributing*

461 *to the biggest infrastructure projects in UK'*, '*I am a legal aid lawyer and proud of my*

462 *contribution to this country', 'I am cleaner and I help to organise hundreds of workers and*

463 *create a safe environment for thousands of students', 'I am an immigrant and I have created*

464 *more than 200 jobs in the UK', 'For five years I have been committed to protecting you, the*

465 *public, and reducing prisoner reoffending', 'Despite the difficulties faced by Syrians*

466 *everywhere, they are able to prove their abilities and contribute to the development of host*

467 *societies'* or '*I have helped so many people in need here'* are just some examples from the 71

468 stories of migrants living in UK.

469

470 Furthermore, in many instances 'development' refers to 'self-development': '*I got the*

471 *opportunity to study here', 'But once you get to know them, you realize that they just take*

472 *longer to open up to people, you need to understand that'* or '*Learning the language was*

473 *essential to find my way'*. The testimonies affirm that through mobility the way people belong

474 or relate to places is changing. The places most of the migrants refer to, is first of all the place

475 of current residency although every photograph has a yellow luggage label indicating the

476 number of kilometres the person is away from 'home'. '*I feel Indian but I feel British too. UK*

477 *is my main home, India is my former home', 'Home is where my heart is'* or '*My dad is*

478 *Indian, My mum is Kenyan, Most of my family are immigrants. We're all Londoners and this*

479 *is our home'*. Thus the individual stories challenge the discursive stereotype (re-)produced

480 about the 'natural' link between migrants and their countries of origin and the image of

481 migrants as important development actors and its translation into political strategies. While

482 the individual stories are just snapshots and many of the migrants presenting themselves

483 might support their families in the so-called countries of origin in one or the other way, the

484 'natural' urge and thus the assumption of the inevitability of these ties, as put forward by

485 many development actors and organisations, gets partly questioned through the stories and the

486   coexistence of several 'homes'. This also has the effect of questioning the envisioned

487   optimum of migration management, namely to bring out benefits for all three parties,

488   including the so-called countries of origin. This questioning of the triple win effect, especially

489   with regard to the 'home' countries, seems to get compensated by a reference to the

490   Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which the IOM only added in autumn 2016 at the

491   bottom of each testimony. The SDGs do, at least on a conceptual level, challenge the idea of

492   development as a transfer of models and standards from North to South and the goals should,

493   at least theoretically, apply to every nation. The references to the SDGs and its goals thus can

494   be read not only as the IOM's commitment to the new global framework but furthermore

495   highlights the migrants' contribution to 'achieving' the goals (in contrast to other actors,

496   especially states, which have not yet moved from naming symptoms to action).

497

498   As Berg and Rodriguez have noted for the discourse around migrants from the Americas:

499   "One might even say that migrants are the most ideal transnational neoliberal subjects because

500   they are highly responsible, and self-motivated individuals who not only sustain their families

501   at home but they also sustain themselves abroad" (2013: 653). The narrative of productivity

502   features strongly in the campaign in relation to the countries of residence. Testimonies like *'It

503   is our duty to do whatever it takes to show the government how productive we, the

504   immigrants, can be. Moreover, there are many people who still can give more and more to

505   make a great difference in the British Community'* or *'This is my home now and I am proud to

506   be part of this diverse and tolerant culture'* provide insights not merely into the relationship

507   between the narrators of the stories and broader society, but primarily into how the discourse

508   on migration management is framing their experiences in a normative yet depoliticised way.

509   This representation of the 'ideal migrant' as productive, has normative implications not only

510   for the campaign's primary audience, the so-called 'host communities', but also for migrants

511   as readers of and contributors to the website.

512

513   Whereas most migrants who present themselves on the website are indeed these ideal

514   'migrants', responsible, able to sustain themselves and contributing to the societies they reside

515   in and even addressing the goals of the SDGs, the IOM presents a number of returned

516   migrants in the campaign. Most of the approximately 70 stories are either taken from earlier

517   IOM publications such as 'Seventeen Return Stories' (2014) or collected through other

518   organisations[xxix]. All photographs of the returned migrants have a yellow luggage tag saying

519   'back home' (instead of providing the distance to 'home'). All the stories presented are

520 'success' stories, thanks to hard work, an entrepreneurial spirit and the financial support by

521 IOM. These read as follows: '*This is why the reintegration support of IOM is so important for*

522 *us, it gave us the first push, it gave us the confidence to begin a new life in Albania'*, '*IOM's*

523 *support helped me to feel more useful at home and more participative to my community,* or

524 '*IOM has helped Ilir and his family to open and manage a coffee bar through the payment of*

525 *the rent and the purchase of some furniture. After the start-up period, the income is now*

526 *sufficient to cover the café's operating expenses and ensure a fix and solid revenue to the*

527 *family'*.

528

529 As Lietaert, Broekart and Derluyn have noted for the Assisted Voluntary Return Programmes

530 in Belgium, "reintegration support is now increasingly used as a governmental tool for

531 managing and controlling migration flows, in line with the broader move towards 'migration

532 management'" (2016: 13). Return migration is not only presented as a success but also as a

533 'natural' and 'obvious' phenomenon of the ending migration circle, especially if the narratives

534 feature illegalised mobility: "*I don't know if Europe is really a paradise or not. But I know*

535 *that if reaching that paradise means losing what I lost, suffering what I suffered, seeing what*

536 *I saw, enduring what I endured, then I would much rather be home.*" This underlines the

537 paradox in the logic of migration management: on the one hand, it emphasises the complexity

538 of migration, while on the other hand migration management programmes work with a

539 simplistic distinction between legal and illegal migration, with the former referring to "any

540 movement of persons regarded as productive, efficient and framed as a lawful act" and the

541 latter "any mobility which deviates from the norm" (Oelgemöller 2011: 409). As such the

542 individual stories trace a line from a place of departure to a place of arrival in a country of

543 destination and back to the former through return (Sinatti/Horst 2014: 14). Through

544 integrating these cases into the campaign the pervasive dichotomy voluntary versus forced

545 return gets blurred. However, as the following quotes reveal, not all presented returned

546 migrants define return as a natural inclination (Black/Koser 1999), in contrast to what the tag

547 'back home' implies and constructs: '*Most of my family lives in the Netherlands, so I knew it*

548 *would be difficult to start a life on my own'* or '*I had no savings, no family, and no contacts*

549 *left in Russia after being away for such a long time'* or '*I returned to Ukraine because I had*

550 *no other choice'*. However, through the returnees' individual success stories, the economic

551 macro forces, which set the framework for migration as well as for return, are either obscured

552 or presented as mitigated through entrepreneurship.

553

554   4. **Conclusion**

The i am a migrant' campaign, which provides a platform for the stories of migrants, might at first sight appear inconsistent with regards to IOM's operational programmes, in particular in light of the by now well-established critique against IOM's migrant return programmes. In this article, we have offered an analysis of the campaign on the level of aim and audience, form and selected content to show that the campaign's aim to address xenophobia should not necessarily be understood as expressing a concern with migrants' welfare or rights, which motivated the original IAAI campaign, which 'i am a migrant' builds on. Rather, we have argued, it needs to be interpreted in light of IOM's own existential concern with its legitimacy, which is tied to migration, and, more specifically, in the context of productive and rational migration management it espouses. In this logic, the campaign is a necessary intervention to optimise the potential gains of migration, responding to fears that politicians make irrational anti-migration decisions when faced with xenophobic publics, potentially jeopardising the desired 'triple win', including achieving the SDGs. Since affect is considered a crucial mechanism to change public opinion, this campaign foregrounds testimonies and narratives over evidence and expertise, which are genres which have been more classically associated with migration management.

A more detailed analysis of the content revealed that some migrants' narratives 'escape' the discursive format of the campaign - such as the luggage tag indicating the number of kilometres that migrants are 'away' from 'their' country of origin – which disrupts common assumptions in development interventions linked to migration management about the 'natural' link between migrants and their country of origin. The affective dimension has the potential to exceed the managerial governmentality of the 'i am a migrant' campaign, for instance by inspiring political solidarities. This complicates assessing the partnership that is behind the campaign, which included a British charity, the UNHCR, corporate partners, as well as an activist crowdfunding initiative, in terms of co-optation.

Fifteen years after No Border's 'Stop IOM!' campaign, a period in which the IOM expanded significantly and xenophobia has been rising, questions around whether IOM reaching out to NGOs for collaboration should be considered co-optation or movement success, are more relevant than ever. Our argument that the campaign takes the management of migration to a new level, by extending it to the management of public opinion in Western 'host countries' and by 'using' migrants to further illustrate and construct the 'ideal migrant' figure, underlines the relevance of a governmentality framework, with its attention to persuasion and

589   the constitution of subjectivities, for understanding migration management. Our analysis has

590   furthermore demonstrated the importance of systematic investigation of concrete

591   programmes, projects and campaigns, in light of the development, versatility and flexibility of

592   migration management, which allows the mapping of both its consistencies and

593   contradictions.

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the research.

xv The only difference is that the IOM leaves out the surnames of the portrayed migrants.

xvi http://iamamigrant.org/about

xvii http://refugeesmigrants.org/

xviii As part of a new development, the website can now be searched by 'tag', one of which is
  #iamarefugee. Since this function was added after completion of our analysis, a detailed
discussion on how refugees versus how migrants are featured lies outside of the scope of this paper.

xix The number of stories is changing on a daily basis with new stories added and others deleted.

xx http://iamamigrant.org/stories/kuwait/shanika

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xxiii
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