Translations of Policy Templates by International Organizations' Country Offices: A Common Strategic Framework in the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract: Research on International Organizations (IOs) has yet to examine policy template translations closely. These are documents routinely produced by IO country offices to compile templates coming from headquarters. The article asks how country offices shape the translation of templates and when a translation fails. It conceptualizes country offices as organizations in a field and proposes the case of the Common Strategic Framework as a failed template translation defended by the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office in the United Arab Emirates between 2016 and 2018. Through direct observations, interviews and text analysis, the article argues, first, that template translations carry the fingerprints of the dispositions and positions of the country office in charge. Second, a translation fails when the office in charge is uncomfortable in its organizational field. The office finds itself adopting incoherent position-takings or stances through the text and may abandon the document altogether. By proposing a methodological solution to analyse template translations in their context and taking country offices seriously, the article sheds light on the adaptation and success of IO policy advice, including in countries traditionally at the margins of multilateralism.

Introduction[1]

Between 2016 and 2017, I was on a six-month assignment in an international office in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). During my stay, I had regular access to the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office (UNRCO or 'Coordinator Office'). The office was in Abu Dhabi and had the task of coordinating United Nations (UN) entities in the country. I conducted desk research for my assignment and, outside office hours, academic fieldwork on International Organizations (IOs) in the UAE. These were often humanitarian IOs due to logistic infrastructures and funding available to respond to emergencies elsewhere.

At the time, the Coordinator Office was working on the Common Strategic Framework (CSF or 'Framework'). This is a policy that UN offices in a country or UN Country Team (UNCT) used to frame their assistance to the development of that country. The Coordinator Office supervized the drafting of the Framework in consultation with national authorities and drew on the template for an UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) or 'Template'. The Framework stood out to me because it discussed humanitarian issues that had little to do with Emirati national development. It was very complimentary towards the UAE, when the UN should not treat one of its many member states so preferentially. It supported the country's 'ambitions as a Global Leader' and 'of becoming "one of the best countries in the world" by 2021' (UAE UNCT 2016a: 1, 12). Finally, despite this tone, Emirati authorities were neither signing nor engaging with the document. The UAE was left without a policy that was common in any country with a Coordinator Office.

International Relations scholars increasingly appreciate micro moves to rethink global politics (Solomon and Steele 2017). This may mean 'opening up' IOs and studying their offices in specific localities (Holthaus 2021) or using texts and documents (Cornut and de Zamaróczy 2020; Neumann 2007; Sending and Neumann 2011). I examine a policy draft based on a template, as it was produced and defended by the Coordinator Office. Since the *development*

of national capacities was the core of its mandate, I understand the Coordinator Office as the country-level organization of the UN 'Development Group' or UNDG based in New York. Thus, I understand the Development Group as an IO with a secretariat and that includes other country and regional offices outside the UAE. The analysis of a template advances our understanding of IOs because it sheds light on the state of the office that translated it (see Brechin and Ness 2013). The article echoes constructivist research where IOs are considered as autonomous agents (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Jakobi 2012; Mele and Cappellaro 2018), yet not necessarily authoritative vis-à-vis member states (Sending, 2015).

How do IO country offices shape the translation of templates that are produced at their headquarters? And when does a translation fail? I use the case of the Framework as a translation of the Template by the UAE Coordinator Office. I consider the period 2016–2018, when the Coordinator Office had finalized a draft of the Framework and was seeking governmental approval for it. I define templates as the written blueprint of a policy prepared at the leadership level of an IO. To fit a context, templates must be compiled into actual policies, which effectively are 'translations' of those templates.[2] As a translation that could not be approved, the case of the UAE Framework is well-placed to uncover the social logic of country offices in charge of translations. I situate my analysis within 'organizational fields' using the three related concepts of 'dispositions', 'positions' and 'position-takings', as in Emirbayer and Johnson (2008) who borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu (1993, 2000, 2001). Position-takings are the stances an organization necessarily takes at any given time, as it navigates its organizational field, taken between its dispositions and its positions.

I argue, first, that a template translation shows the dispositions and positions of the country office in charge of it (see Figure 1). Templates inform dispositions whereas positions depend on the power of the office in its environment. The translation I analyse, the Framework, shows the Coordinator Office's disposition and position from 2016–2018. The key disposition

consisted in the urge to follow the global template produced at headquarters, specifically in its call to frame UN work as a support to national development. The office's position derived from the scarce resources the office enjoyed vis-à-vis relevant organizations in its specific field, such as Emirati national counterparts and other UN local agencies. Both dispositions and positions leave their tracks or fingerprints in the text. Second, I argue that a translation is a failure when the dispositions of the country office in charge are misaligned with positions in the field. This may result in the office dropping the translation. But before that, the misalignment trickles down to the text in the form of a mismatch between fingerprints. Positional fingerprints may even denote an 'excessive' adaptation of IO policy advice to a country context. As a result, the office adopts incoherent position-takings that depart from the purpose of the template. Overall, the UAE Coordinator Office put its humanitarian work at the service of one member state's reputation, instead of intervening in proper national development as expected by the Template.

I make three contributions. First, by introducing the study of template translations and the role of country offices within this, I inform research on IOs and their policy advice. The coherence of a policy should be another indicator of policy success, and its adaptation to a country context can be counterproductive when taken too far. Also, Bourdieusian scholars in International Relations should take country offices and their work on texts and documents more seriously in their analyses of IOs. Second, on a more empirical level, studying a translation of the Template allows a systematic assessment of a UNCT in its country context. I show an underexplored side of how UAE public authorities confront IOs and have a say in global humanitarian affairs. Third, the article makes a methodological contribution to Bourdieusian scholarship on documents. It shows how to read template translations to draw out information on the organization that produced them.

Template Translations in Context

Existing policy research explores whether UNDAFs broadly comply with global guidelines (Haugen 2015), how IOs produce templates or scripts (Kentikelenis and Seabrooke 2017), or how templates constitute a set of broad principles (Yi-Chong 2005). However, it overlooks that policy documents may be 'translations of templates'. These differ from policy transfer, when policy documents turn into action (Busch et al. 2021; Eckhard and Ege 2016), or policy (not *policy template*) translation (Lendvai and Stubbs 2007).

The Social Sciences have long studied texts and documents. Analyses of resolutions, reports, transcription of speeches or policies are a cornerstone of research on IOs (e.g. Heathcote 2018; McNeill and St Clair 2011; Sending and Lie 2015). They are a source of information on an organization (Freeman and Maybin 2011; e.g. Campos 2021) or of text for computational linguistics (e.g. Baturo et al. 2017). Alternatively, policy documents are appreciated for their meaning or as embedded in social relations and 'embody[ing] the political process by which they are produced' (Freeman and Maybin 2011: 165–166; see also McNeill and St Clair 2011; Riles 2006; Smith 2001). They are discussed in their materiality as inscriptions that travel across space and time, coordinate agents (Freeman and Maybin 2011), and function as 'scripts' for action (Smith, 2001). Scholars examining practices increasingly consider documents in this vein to complement data from interviews and observations (Adler-Nissen and Drieschova 2019; Bueger 2023; Cornut and de Zamaróczy 2020). Similarly, I use the Framework not so much for information on an issue area, like human rights or migration, but as an expression of the Coordinator Office (e.g. Haugen 2015; Naujoks 2022; Rose 2006). I consider it as a document in its materiality and as an object in the world that depends on the office's position and disposition. I also look 'through' the document (Cornut and de Zamaróczy 2020: 5) through Bourdieusian lenses and focus on its text to find fingerprints and advance the study of that country office in its environment or field.

The article combines the study of template translations with an approach to documents that looks at their meaning. It sheds new light on IO policy advice in three ways. Firstly, some scholars perceive IOs as vehicles for universal scripts that induce isomorphism among nation-states (Meyer et al. 1997) or criticize IOs for writing one-size-fits-all policies (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Broome et al. 2018). Conceiving policy templates as a way for IOs to standardize their operations (Berge and St John 2021; Yi-Chong 2005) is simplistic because template translations are imbued with politics.

Secondly, scholars increasingly recognize that IOs can adapt to national contexts. Their country-specific knowledge and presence benefit their performance (Busch et al. 2021; Honig 2020; see also Campbell 2018). On the one hand, IO success is often measured in terms of good project implementation and not in terms of the coherence of their written policies (e.g. Haugen 2015: 52). On the other hand, scholars see national embeddedness, or 'being entrenched in national debates and decision-making processes' (Busch et al. 2021: 781), as leading the way to success. Yet, the Framework shows that conforming to the UAE context by addressing national priorities can still result in an incoherent policy that fails to be implemented. Those who studied IO failures or inefficiencies overemphasize IO internal bureaucratic features or a particular organizational culture (see Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Finnemore 2021; Sending and Neumann 2011; Weller and Yi-Chong 2010). In this paper, I propose a framework that draws from organizational sociology and that is more mindful of the impact of specific national environments on IOs and their country offices (see Brechin and Ness 2013; Finnemore 2021).

Thirdly, the literature on IO country offices and their policy advice is severely underdeveloped (Campos 2021; Naujoks 2022), especially when compared to research on their secretariats (Eckhard and Ege 2016: 973). When studied on the ground, IOs remain that 'undifferentiated composite' whose internal mechanisms are not properly disaggregated

(Weller and Yi-Chong 2010: 216; see Sending and Lie 2015). Or, the focus is on 'field missions' of peacekeeping troops (e.g. Campbell 2018; Barnett 2002)[3] or on individual staff like country directors or local personnel (Honig 2020; Weller and Yi-Chong 2010). Yet, power relations – or Bourdieusian field dynamics – in which each country office as a distinct organization is embedded, are specific to it. They require separate consideration because they differ from other country offices of the same IO.

The second set of contributions is about the UN and the UAE more specifically. Work on UNCTs is rare, especially in countries like the UAE that are not recipients of aid (see Clarke 2013), or policy-oriented (e.g. Campos 2021; Dupont and Skjold 2022; von Einsiedel 2018; Rose 2006). I will contest Hitchcock's (2017) argument that the de-politicization tendencies of headquarters override country offices' ability to shape policies, or the idea that headquarters' guidelines are necessarily an imposition. I show these guidelines can be internalized as dispositions. Existing studies on the reasons for UNCTs' fragmentation (Dupont and Skjold 2022; Mele and Cappellaro 2018) or the importance for UNDAFs to conform to national priorities (Naujoks 2022) lack a systematic framework like field theory to explain the relations between UNCT members and national actors. They also lack empirical details (Campos, 2021).

Research on Emirati humanitarian assistance considers their relations with recipients (Young 2023) or with the UN, but on a large scale and not in the UAE (Tok 2015). The UAE participates in IOs on its own terms, including for nation-branding purposes (Ulrichsen 2011; see Eggeling 2020), and disagrees with UN donorship strategies on many levels (see Mawdsley 2015). Yet, the Coordinator Office in Abu Dhabi nuances these tensions. The Coordinator Office went far in addressing UAE national priorities but it did so when compiling a template with a binary North-South approach to national development that was inadequate for the UAE. The result was a document bound to fail.

Organizational Fields as a Framework for IO Country Offices and Their Templates

I understand IO country offices in charge of template translations at the country level as organizations in a field. There, they operate alongside other organizations, hence the label 'organizational' field. I propose to find in the Framework, or translation of the Template in the UAE, clues about how the organizations that produced it operate in their space. To conceptualize this research, I position myself within Bourdieusian analyses of IOs, organizations and text.

I embrace existing Bourdieusian scholarship on IOs (Eagleton-Pierce 2013; Hopewell 2015; Pouliot 2016) with some caveats. Instead of the usual transnational, international or multilateral fields (see Ydesen 2022), I discuss IOs in a field dominated by the national authorities of one member state and whose dispositions do not stem from the domestic environment of their staff (see Pouliot 2016) but are vehiculated through headquarters' guidelines. Therefore, the national and international spheres do not essentially oppose one another (see Sending, 2015). The realization of global guidelines by the Coordinator Office is dependent on its environment in the UAE. Moreover, interviews and especially extended direct observations are highly recommended for Bourdieusian approaches (Adler-Nissen, 2013; Lequesne, 2017). However, they are unusual when studying non-Western locations. New research settings reveal new objects to investigate (Holthaus, 2021), like failed template translations. Finally, Bourdieusian research on IOs typically looks at individual diplomatic practices (Kuus 2015; Pouliot 2016), whereas I prefer organizations as units of analysis.

I side with Bourdieusian scholars in organizational sociology, especially Emirbayer and Johnson (2008). They take organizations – instead of individuals – as the agents of interest. From this perspective, organizations necessarily operate within organizational fields because they are consistently found interacting with other organizations (see Everett 2002; Leander 2011; Fligstein and McAdam 2012; Vaughan 2008). Organizations take standalone stances as

the 'compromise product of a whole complex of negotiations and contestations unfolding over time within that organization *understood as itself a field*' (Emirbayer and Johnson 2008: 19, emphasis in original). Taking organizations as units of analysis allows extracting the fundamental forces shaping template translation and mapping the field more synthetically and efficiently. Choosing individuals as units of analysis would weaken my theoretical framework. The frequency of IO international staff turnaround or their individual trajectories should not mask the endurance and consistency of IO country offices and their strategies. For example, the staff in the Coordinator Office in 2016–2018 had inherited drafts from their predecessors. Therefore, they all shared a drive to prepare and formalize the Framework.

But what is a field with organizations as agents? A field is a 'structured space of positions' (Bourdieu 1993: 72) or a hierarchical terrain of contestation around a specific struggle that organizations in the field navigate. Fields embrace a complex and relational approach to the social where, against substantialism, agency exists in relation because it is fundamentally impacted by its environment (Emirbayer 1997; Jackson and Nexon 1999). Organizations inhabit different fields simultaneously, depending on the number of struggles they are engaged in, and they can leave old spaces or enter new ones. Bourdieu's original field analysis comprises many concepts that do not exist in the abstract but are actualized in and through fields. Like others (see Leander, 2008), I am selective and choose the three – dispositions, positions and position-takings – that grasp the incongruences of a template translation by a country office as an organization in its field.

Dispositions are a system of 'tacit know-how' and the most agential component of fields. For individuals, dispositions are shaped by a particular biography. Organizations have dispositions too, as their individual members share 'categories of judgement and action' in virtue of having been 'subjected to similar social conditions and conditioning' (Wacquant in Vaughan 2008: 73). Organizations have 'institutionalised beliefs, rules, and roles' which, once

abided by unreflexively, are part of staff's dispositions like shared 'cognitive systems' (Scott in Vaughan 2008: 73). For IOs, I see organizational dispositions trickling down to country offices (see Emirbayer and Johnson 2008: 6). The Coordinator Office's staff had experienced working on UNDAFs in other countries. They worked on the document collaboratively, as the thing they were supposed to do. Their shared commitment to the Template overrode any individual disposition that might have opposed the translation.

Besides what their dispositions allow, each organization occupies a position or a place in the hierarchy of a field. This position depends on the resources – or capital – an organization can exercise in and only in relation to a field. Capital can be economic or material, cultural or social, but Bourdieu foregrounds 'symbolic' capital as 'the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognised as legitimate' (Bourdieu 1989: 17; Thompson 1991). That recognition can turn capital into actual power and elevate the position of an organization. After all, field theory posits that organizations navigate a social space in a conflictual mode or within a structure of power relations made of the positions organizations occupy vis-à-vis one another in the field. Organizations with less capital and power strive to diminish or overturn the dominant organizations. These operate to preserve their privileged positions, but everyone has a stake in that confrontation and wants the field to endure (Bourdieu 1993, 2000). Where the least powerful can't overturn the dominant, they would still try to remain afloat and survive in the space.

When organizations move within a field, they necessarily do so through patterns or practices limited by their dispositions to act and their positions to either subvert or preserve the game in that field. However, when the dynamic unfolding of positions and dispositions in practice is captured at any given point in time or statically, the researcher can grasp the stances or position-taking the organization adopts at that moment. These are the 'works, services, acts, arguments and products' through which an organization distinguishes itself from others

(Emirbayer and Johnson 2008: 14). Interestingly, field theory also predicts that when the dispositions an organization has accumulated do not fit well with the space of positions in the field, like for the Coordinator Office, that organization adjusts clumsily to this uncomfortable situation (Bourdieu 2003; Neumann and Pouliot 2011).

Methodology

How should these three features of an IO country office in its field be operationalized on a template translation? I propose to (1) grasp that country office's disposition and (2) map its position within its field. This requires approaching the template translation *as a document* or an object in the world that moves through an organizational social space. Next, I move to a close analysis of the translation *as text*, and (3) identify dispositional and positional fingerprints as a basis from which to interpret the office's position-takings (see Table 1). This solution in three steps is the article's methodological contribution. Bourdieu wrote about language without precise guidance on analysing documents or text (Bourdieu 2001; Pouliot 2013: 49–52). Those who came after usually chose 'practices' to study diplomatic cables (Cornut and de Zamaróczy 2020) or multilaterally negotiated texts (Adler-Nissen and Drieschova 2019). Even when they analysed documents as the product of organizational relations in a social space (e.g. Sending and Neumann 2011), they did not engage with field theory. Pouliot's (2013) guidance encourages studying dispositions and positions jointly for a 'Bourdieusian methodology', but he is oriented towards uncovering (dynamic) practices. Instead, I use text to extrapolate (static) position-takings because they capture and synthetize the field forces that forge the translation of a template, while shedding much-needed light on IO country offices.

First, I will grasp dispositions or the tacit know-how, which agents follow unreflexively, usually without discussing them overtly (Pouliot 2013). Dispositions are always actualized in practice because they are activated only '*in relation* to a field' (Williams 2007: 27, emphasis in original). At the same time, they work like pre-existing categories of judgement

and perception an agent embraces against all odds because they are deeply embedded within it. Dispositions are hard to identify, especially when an agent is so acclimated to a field that what is unreflexive could be mistaken for the most rational strategy from its position in that context. Conversely, when an agent sits uncomfortably in a field, dispositions are more easily identifiable. Like in 'breaching experiments' from Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology, dispositions may breach the logic the observer – in this case, me, as a researcher knowledgeable on the UAE – expects from that social space. The mechanisms of the space are thus uncovered. This is the scenario of the UAE Coordinator Office, whose disposition towards the Template was part of its organizational baggage and the 'natural thing' to do for any other UNRCO around the world. However, this disposition clashed with what seemed to me more appropriate in the Coordinator Office's field, whose interlocutors were unresponsive.

Second, I will map the set of positions with a focus on the Coordinator Office. I will describe the type of capital agents can enjoy in a field, both in general and in relation to the specific production of the template translation. I will concentrate on symbolic capital. When they are recognized as legitimate, other forms of capital ultimately become symbolic, reflecting well how power is field-dependent. An agent's capital does not exist in isolation. The capital of the Coordinator Office depended on other agents in the field, like UNCT agencies or Emirati public entities, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC or 'the Ministry').

To capture dispositions and positions, I conducted semi-structured interviews and used observations between 2016 (the year typed on the Framework) and 2018 (when the Coordinator Office abandoned the Framework). During this period, the Framework was circulating as a draft for approval and carrying the Coordinator Office's position-takings. Existing desk reviews of UNDAFs in the Middle East do not mention the Framework in the UAE (see Naujoks, 2022). I learnt about it once exposed to the UNRCO in Abu Dhabi between 2016 and

2017. My analysis does not examine all the Framework's drafts that might have followed one another since the start of the negotiations in 2010 or the Coordinator Office's position-taking during those times. In my interviews with senior officials at UNCT agencies, the Ministry or national charities through 2018, I asked about their perceptions of the UN and Coordinator Office in the UAE and whether they approved of the Framework.

Third, I will shift the analysis to the text to interpret position-takings. The Framework works like a repository of the Coordinator Office's position-takings. It is a 'snapshot' of the amalgamation of the office's disposition and position in the field (see Leander 2011: 298). After all, at any point in time, a field becomes 'a *state* of the power relations among the agents or institutions engaged in the struggle' (Bourdieu 1993: 73, emphasis added). More specifically, I will propose to focus on how dispositional and positional dynamics show in the text and shape the office's stances. Firstly, I will identify textual fingerprints that are markers of the office's disposition. Pursuing the logic of the 'breaching experiment', I will show that the urge to compile the Template trickled down to the text. I will read the Framework alongside three sections of the Template (Introduction, Narrative and Matrix). I will demonstrate through textual excerpts how, in each of these three instances, the office embraced the Template provisions when that appeared inappropriate to the UN situation in the UAE. Secondly, I will show how, in each instance, the Coordinator Office left positional fingerprints, which, this time, appropriately reflect its (weak) position in the field and its attempt to revert the order as expected from agents in disadvantaged positions. I interpret the two sets of fingerprints jointly to show what stances the Coordinator Office effectively and necessarily took. The image of fingerprints captures well how dispositions and positions can manifest themselves sparsely and as short textual fragments. They leave indices the researcher must chase and collate to interpret position-takings. Position-takings matter not only because they are what makes an agent distinguishable in a social space. For this article, they are also the conceptual device that brings

to light a profound failure of the Framework as a template translation. The Framework failed because of its textual incoherence, which took it far from the purpose of the Template and of the UN more generally.

The case is instrumental to learn that a template translation's text bears the fingerprints of the office in charge. This is thanks to the breaching effect originating from observations on the Framework. It would be difficult to identify fingerprints – especially dispositional fingerprints - in an UNDAF that met the researcher's expectations. A second reason for the Framework as a case is its nature as an outlier among UNDAFs. In 2020, only 0.1% of all UN personnel worked in the UAE, a small UN member.[4] Any harsh generalization from my case would be an overstatement. Yet, the UAE Framework is a clear outlier among UNDAFs drafted in the same period. Of 131 UNCTs worldwide in 2016, the UAE UNCT was one of the five – with Kuwait, Bahrein, Mauritius and Malaysia (UNDOCO 2016) – without an approved template translation, but that nonetheless presented a draft that can be analysed textually. Outliers are methodologically important, including in interpretivist research, because they try to explain 'the atypical finding to produce a modified and more complex theory and explanation' (Agius 2013: 206), thus favouring theoretical transferability. I will link the failed coherence of the Framework, with its hypes and 'excessive' adaptation to the UAE context, to a remarkable mismatch between the Coordinator Office and its field. The mismatch explains also a second form of failure or the abandonment of the document at the end of my observation period in 2018. As an outlier, my case suggests that (degrees) of success of all the approved UNDAFs or other template translations could be tied to the (better) conditions in their field of the country offices in charge.

The Coordinator Office and UNDAF Template in the UAE

The UN system has a thick network of country offices. The Coordinator Office coordinates resident and non-resident agencies[5] making up the UNCT in one country (UAE UNCT 2016a:

12), where 'resident' means that agency has a permanent physical presence in that country. Up until the 'de-linking' reform at the end of 2018 when the two roles were separated, the Resident Coordinator in charge of the Coordinator Office also served as the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) representative in the same country. A Coordinator Office received support and guidelines from the Development Group and its secretariat (UNDOCO 2016).

UNCTs are dynamic because member agencies leave and join. Between 2016 and 2018, there were 13 resident offices in the UAE and, based on my calculations, approximately 330 staff members who worked towards a variety of goals: carrying out programmes in the UAE, liaising with national and regional partners including for resource mobilization, using Dubai as a logistics hub for the delivery of humanitarian assistance (UAE UNCT 2016a: 10). About 210 of the total staff members worked towards a humanitarian mandate, as part of the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Coordinator Office in virtue of its coordination role.

The UAE is not directly suffering from humanitarian emergencies. In 1992, it became a net 'Contributor Country' or a country in charge of funding the services of UN programmes like UNDP instead of receiving their funds (UNDP 2012: IX). However, the size of humanitarian operations skyrocketed in the 2000s, when agencies like WFP, UNHCR and WHO moved their warehouse and logistics support units to Dubai (UNDP 2012: 17), which offered a logistic space serving emergencies in third-party countries. Other factors include the funds available in rich Gulf monarchies (Interviewee 1 2017), and a dire humanitarian situation after the Arab Spring, especially in Syria and Yemen, with pressures on Gulf donors to do more to respond to proximate emergencies (Kerr 2015).

Subject to government agreement, the Coordinator Office was 'encouraged' to coordinate UN agencies to assemble an UNDAF in negotiation with national authorities and

with the objective of assisting that country's development (UNDG 2010a: 3). UNDAFs can be named CSFs or otherwise, usually in middle-income countries, as for 14 of 125 total UNDAFs in 2016 (UNDOCO 2016). However, I will show the 'assistance' character of the Framework remains at the forefront. At the time of the Framework, the most updated guidelines on how to prepare an UNDAFs had been published in 2010 and required a signature on the document by the relevant government.[6] Sample UNDAFs existed for inspiration.[7] Guidelines included the Template, which summarized concisely the expected 'structure and content' of an UNDAF (see UNDG 2010a: 14, 2010b: 29–30) and which will be my reference point to identify dispositional fingerprints.

As for the structure of UNDAFs, the Template expected the following sections: 'Executive Summary'; 'Signature Page'; 'Introduction'; 'UNDAF Results'; 'Initiatives outside results matrix'; 'Estimated resource requirements'; 'Implementation'; 'Monitoring and Evaluation' (UNDG 2010b: 29–30). A 'Result Matrix' table could be added as an annex (UNDG 2010a: 14). The Framework included most of the sections. UNDAF results were titled 'CSF Vision, Strategic Priority Areas and Expected Results' and discussed four distinct Strategic Priority Areas (SPAs) for the Framework. Annexes were 'Annex A: CSF framework Results Matrix for the UN in UAE 2016–2021' and 'Annex B: Agency Contribution to CSF Strategic Priority Areas and Outcome'. As for the content, I will examine below how the Framework embedded Template provisions within its Introduction, UNDAF Result's Narrative and Matrix. I reproduce the essence of these provisions in Table 1.

Grasping Dispositions

The preparation of the Framework started in 2010 and took six years of consultations within the UNCT, and with the Ministry and other 'government entities' (UAE UNCT 2016a: 1). I focus my analysis on 2016–2018, when the Coordinator Office sent reminders to the

government and waited for the approval of the finalized draft of the Framework. I argue that the office felt compelled to complete the translation of the Template until its formal signature by Emirati authorities. The drive to produce a 'strategic programme framework that describes the collective response of the UN system to national development priorities' like an UNDAF and to operate within that framework was a key disposition for the Coordinator Office (UNDG 2017: 3). As a concept, disposition captures well the Coordinator Office's 'stubbornness' to compile the Template, which seemed unreasonable due to the lack of encouragement if not resistance from all sides. The concept holds much better explanatory power than the compliance to formal guidelines from headquarters by a rational bureaucracy. Also, there was no legal obligation to undertake the exercise. This disposition had several practical manifestations.

First, I observed how the Coordinator Office kept reminding their counterparts in government that the draft needed formal endorsement and pushed for approval. This stopped in 2018 due to the continuous lack of Emiratis' engagement. Interviewees 2 (2018), 3 (2017) and 4 (2018) confirmed my observation. Second, the corporate brochure of the UNCT discussed the Framework's content and talked about the policy as if official (UAE UNCT 2016b: 12). UNICEF's programmatic document for 2013–2017 in the UAE also referred to the Framework as if it had been approved (UNICEF 2014). Third, the Framework formed part of my induction pack, when I was asked to familiarize myself with the work of the Coordinator Office. Fourth, the Framework was uploaded on UN platforms, even if just a draft. It was also briefly published on the UNDP UAE website early in 2018, as required for an official framework. However, it was taken down because it was not official.[8]

Dispositions are learnt from past experiences and can be 'applied by simple transfer, to the most dissimilar areas of practice' (Bourdieu in Mutch 2003: 389). '[T]he guidelines for preparing the (…) UNDAF bear the greatest weight in the strategy work of the UNCTs'

(Haugen 2015: 49) and only a small number of UNCTs deviated from this trend. Also the Coordinator Office's staff had worked with them elsewhere. Hence, even if an UNDAF was not mandatory for a Contributor Country like the UAE (UNDP 2012: 18), the Coordination Office saw this as a natural thing to do. It was also expected from the Regional Bureau in Amman (Interviewee 4 2018). Even Saudi Arabia, a geographically close Contributor Country, had an approved UNDAF,[9] as explained by the Coordinator Office in Riyad in a 2012 report:

> Saudi Arabia is not an UNDAF country, but rather a [Contributor Country]. However, UNCT has just finalised a voluntary exercise of a strategic document named the UN Common Country Strategic Framework.[10]

At the same time, not every agent's disposition aligns well with the rules of a field (Mutch 2003) and the Coordinator Office was manifestly ill-suited to its organizational field. By the end of 2018, it was unable to sustain the exercise further. In consultation with the Development Group and its Regional Bureau, it decided the Framework would 'remain an internal document for the UNCT and (to) no longer insist with the government' (Interviewee 4 2018). Despite this being a blatant failure of the Framework, which was dropped altogether, interestingly, it 'remained an internal document', signifying it was difficult to let go of it completely.

Mapping Positions

The 'lack of sufficient leadership, prerogative, impartiality, management tools, experience and skill sets' (UN General Assembly (UNGA) 2017; see also Campos 2021: 59) of UNRCOs in the UN explain the recent reforms to restructure them globally (UNGA 2017). The problem was accentuated for the UAE Coordinator Office, whose material resources were minimal as it relied on UAE funding to UNDP. Plus, the Coordinator Office was small with a Resident Coordinator and a few assistants. Conversely, WPF in the UAE employed over a hundred staff

(Interviewee 5 2018). Overall, the office lacked significant symbolic power vis-à-vis agents that mattered in its field, such as other UNCT member organizations and Emirati partner organizations, particularly government bodies.

On the one hand, the Coordinator Office struggled to have its leadership recognized by UNCT members and to gather UN resident agencies around common strategies. These worked in different areas, reported to their managers in regional and global hubs and had separate programmatic documents agreed upon with national partner organizations. Humanitarian agencies, the most visible component of the UNCT, focused on solving crises abroad instead of tackling UAE development. Also, due to its close link with UNDP and development matters, the Coordinator Office lacked recognition from a UN team that was heavily humanitarian. On this point, a senior UN official in the UAE said:

> different agencies simply worked on fulfilling their own mandate and there was not sufficient dynamism within the context of the country team nor leadership of the country team (Interviewee 2 2018).

A senior Ministry official shared a similar view on the UNCT's lack of unity (Interviewee 6 2018). Interviewee 2 (2018) also highlighted the excessively bureaucratic character of UNCT discussions, too often spent discussing IO privileges and immunities in the UAE, rather than genuine coordination on activities. The notorious rivalries between self-preserving bureaucracies that may prevent productive cooperation were aggravators (see Moretti 2021). In particular, because they could mobilize funds within the same community of local donors, UN agencies were in competition and refrained from sharing too much information on their partners (UNDP 2012: 18; Interviewee 3 2017).

On the other hand, for Emirati authorities, particularly the Ministry as the focal point of IOs in the country, the Coordinator Office was not a strong interlocutor, including because of its association with UNDP. In the words of one Ministry's official:

we are supporting the de-linking. So, we want the Resident Coordinator to be representative of all the UN not a specific agency [UNDP]. It also requires that the agencies allow themselves to be coordinated, which is not just UNDP's fault, it is all the agencies. All of them saying: thank you for your guidance but we are going another way (Interviewee 6 2018).

The government also perceived the UNDAF format as inadequate 'largely because of our economic status' (Interviewee 6 2018). The Ministry now preferred to sit at the table of 'donors' and not of developing countries needing an UNDAF to support national development priorities (Interviewee 4 2018). Moreover, UNDP had become anachronistic and uncompetitive. The UAE was now a developed country no longer in need of development assistance (see UNDP 2012). The UNDP office did try to be proactive by becoming a liaison and fundraising office or proposing new projects such as the World Green Economy Organization (Interviewee 3 2017). However, ultimately, the UAE government requested its closure. This took effect in 2018, in parallel with the implementation of the 'de-linking' reform, after which only the Coordinator Office remained in Abu Dhabi.

More broadly, the symbolic resources of the Coordinator Office were weakened by the scepticism of the UAE towards foreign and humanitarian aid channelled through multilateral organizations (Tok 2015; Mawdsley 2015). The UAE has traditionally been a remarkable donor, particularly through the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development and the Emirates Red Crescent (Almezaini 2012). Its aid sector had become increasingly institutionalized (see Barber

2014) and, by 2018, the Ministry coordinated about 40 private and public donor organizations (Interviewee 7 2018), including charities and foundations. These cooperated sometimes but were also autonomous in their fundraising and programming (Interviewee 8 2017). Traditionally fused with development aid, the humanitarian sphere started appearing in separate sections of national policies and reports (MOFAIC 2017a, 2017b).

Hence, the organizational environment where the UAE Coordinator Office operated included both private and public Emirati entities. Governmental offices disbursed most of UAE aid (MOFAIC 2019: 24), including humanitarian funds (MOFAIC 2019: 61). In charge of the political directions of the country, the Cabinet defined the National Vision[11] and the Ministry coordinated and published foreign aid policies (MOFAIC 2017b). These material and political resources that a government usually exercises in the domestic sphere naturally translated into strong symbolic capital that affected the Coordinator Office's positioning.

From its position, the Coordinator Office had to acknowledge the 2021 National Vision's priorities as set by the government or UAE foreign assistance policies. Often, aid policies prioritized national agencies over multilateral ones (MOFAIC 2017b) or opposed formal recognition of international conventions, including on refugees. Forcibly displaced people living in the UAE remained illegal in the country, which complicated the protection role of UNHCR and other international human rights organizations (Human Rights Council 2018). Also, UNCT members needed to acknowledge and work within official funding strategies. The UAE government was more inclined to channel aid bilaterally through the Abu Dhabi Fund and Emirates Red Crescent than multilaterally through the UN. Based on data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2017, 2018),[12] in 2016, 2017 and 2018, respectively 98.3%, 97% and 90.2% of Emirati official aid assistance was bilateral.

The constellation of positions in the Coordinator Office's organizational field had specific implications for the Framework. The difficulties the office encountered in 2016–2018 when trying to get the translation approved signalled the office's weak position and scarce recognition. Senior members of the UNCT did not necessarily support or understand the Framework. One of them defined it as a 'fait accompli' and a text made of 'esoteric headlines' (Interviewee 2 2018). Asked why the Framework wanted to make the UAE 'one of the best countries by 2021', senior staff members from two other agencies distanced themselves from the statement:

> that is not me. It is UNDP. No, for us from a humanitarian point (…) we cannot say that we want to make the UAE one of the leading countries in humanitarian response. We want to make everybody as a leading humanitarian responder, but we want to diversify (Interviewee 1 2017).

> Of course, we (in this office) are interested in supporting and there are soft ways to do that, not like deliverables which implies a project-oriented thing (…) I am not exactly sure where this (sentence) is coming from (Interviewee 9 2017).

On its side, the government resisted committing funding to the Framework and, in general, did not meaningfully engage with the UNCT as a group (Interviewee 6 2018).

From Dispositional and Positional Fingerprints to Position-Takings in Text

Considering the scarce support from others in the field, by 2016, the Framework was the expression of the Coordinator Office's position-takings rather than of the entire UNCT. I extract three position-takings, from a broader stance on 'enabling' UAE national development (in the Introduction) to more specific ones on 'prioritizing' (in the UNDAF Results Narrative)

and 'measuring' humanitarian objectives (in the Matrix). The dispositional and positional fingerprints in Table 1 are the most explicit for each section of the Framework.

UNDAF Introduction

The Template provision explained that an UNDAF Introduction should describe 'the position and potential of the UN in the country (…) in relation to national development priorities' (UNDG 2010b: 29) and, more generally, the same guidelines encouraged the 'full involvement of specialized and non-resident agencies' in any UNDAF (UNDG 2010a: 3). Accordingly, the overall 'vision' of the Framework is to 'support the UAE' by 'capitaliz[ing] on different Agencies', including OCHA, WFP or UNHCR (UAE UNCT 2016a: 12–13). I see dispositional fingerprints where the Framework complies with the provisions of the Template but is in tension with the UN work in the country. The Introduction describes how agencies both working for and – like humanitarian ones – in the UAE would contribute to national development. However, including all the agencies misrepresented the work of two-thirds of UN staff, in a country with already one of the highest GDPs and no humanitarian emergency.

Dispositional fingerprints stood for the Coordination Office's institutional baggage to present the entire work of its UNCT through a national development lens. The office's position left different marks in the Introduction. The lack of governmental support for national assistance and the foreign humanitarian aid strategies the office coordinated weakened the symbolic capital of the Coordinator Office. The office was seeking to improve its position in the field, moved by a logic of practice. Faced with the higher symbolic weight given to local partners, the office tried to cut corners and be seen more favourably. Thus, it proposed to match 'UAE ambitions to maximise global leadership' while also promoting the UN recurrently and unapologetically in the text as a system 'uniquely positioned to play a catalytic and promotional role on behalf of UAE' (UAE UNCT 2016a: 10). Identifying their comparative advantages was

something UNCT members were usually required to do (UNDG 2010a: 11), but this escalated in the Framework. The escalation was due to positional pressures and the need for the UN to build 'visibility and credibility' with UAE partners (UAE UNCT 2016a 9), as the text says explicitly. In comparison, the Saudi CSF did not employ such flattering language.

Position-takings emerge from the joint interpretation of both sets of fingerprints as the stances the office took through the Framework's text. In the Introduction, the *Coordinator Office enables UAE national development by enhancing the country's global profile*. This is also a point of poor template translation. UNDAFs should be a tool for *national* development instead of *global* leadership, especially when there were enough domestic areas where the Framework recognized that the UAE needed assistance (e.g. economic diversification, income inequality, see UAE UNCT 2016a: 8). Further, the stance makes the UN look partial, raising equity issues with the rest of the UN member states.

UNDAF Results – Narrative

I replicate the analysis on the 'Narrative' part of 'UNDAF Results'. The Template provisions expected this section to elaborate on the information presented schematically in the result matrix that is usually annexed to an UNDAF. The Narrative ought to describe the results from UNCT cooperation in the country in the areas where the UN and the national government were set to collaborate; to what national priority each area corresponded; and which UNCT agency was in charge.

Here dispositional fingerprints were: 'The CSF focuses on four broad strategic priority areas (…) Strategic Priority Area 1 (…) Strategic Priority Area 2 (…) Strategic Priority Area 3 (…) Strategic Priority Area 4'; 'Vision 2021/National Priorities' to which each SPA was paired; and 'UNDP' 'UNEP' 'OCHA', 'UNHCR', 'WFP' and 'UNDSS Logistics' as 'Co-Leads' agencies for SPAs (UAE UNCT 2016a: 16, 19, 22, 25). These dispositional fingerprints

effectively unpacked those in the Introduction. Once again, the Template pressed agencies in the UNCT to think about their work as a form of national development and present it in that way in the final document. Based on the Template, the inclusion of major agencies in the country, like UNHCR, WFP and, to some extent, OCHA, is no surprise. However, in the specific UAE context, this continued to misrepresent these agencies' real purposes. These were fundraising, resources mobilization, refugee protection, aid logistics, and advocacy to encourage the alignment of Emirati emergency to UN standards (e.g. in aid transparency, reporting). Further, the inclusion of these agencies clashed with other information in the same section of the Framework. The UAE was 'one of the world's largest donors' or the 'largest and busiest hub for humanitarian aid' and, logically then, in no need of assistance (UAE UNCT 2016a: 25–26).

The specific position of the Coordinator Office and the humanitarian UN it represented left positional fingerprints, which amplified and specified positional fingerprints in the Introduction. Moved by a practical logic of a weak agent in the field, the office acknowledged the position of the strong whilst trying to remain afloat and make room for itself and its team of agencies. 'Enhanced international standing' is the *first* of only two national UAE priorities to which SPA3 and SPA4 are aligned (UAE UNCT 2016a: 22, 25). These are the SPAs co-led by OCHA, WFP and UNHCR. The choice can be interpreted as the Coordinator Office's attempt to present SPA3 and SPA4 under a light that was not ideal for the UN but that the Emirati counterparts might have accepted. 'Enhanced international standing' was the only principle in the UAE Vision 2021 that mentioned foreign assistance,[13] but more as a means of enhancing the nation's prestige than for the good of people or the fulfilment of religious obligations and international conventions. Interestingly, SPA1 and SPA2 on improving institutional processes more generally and the green economy were less controversial. They did not call for an alignment to the same extravagant national priority. In other words, no other

principle of the 2021 Vision could have worked as a hook to bring into the Framework UN humanitarian work, like WFP projects in Ethiopia or FAO projects in Yemen and the Gaza Strip, as mentioned in Annexe B (UAE UNCT 2016a: 52, 56). The Coordinator Office tried to carve out a legitimate role for itself and its humanitarian UNCT also in another way in the text. It strongly promoted the comparative advantage of these agencies in ways we do not find, for instance, in the Saudi CSF.[14] The Framework says that 'in terms of deepening humanitarian response and coordination, the United Nations is well placed' (UAE UNCT 2016a: 26). It also dedicated two out of only four SPAs to outlining the contribution of its humanitarian team to the UAE Vision. These were SPA3, 'Broadening Strategic Partnerships and Highlighting UAE Leadership in International Cooperation', and SPA4, 'Deepening Emergency Preparedness, Response and Coordination' (UAE UNCT 2016a: 22, 25).

The second position-taking of the Coordinator Office specifies the first. Through the Framework, the office *prioritizes enabling UAE national development through the humanitarian work it can do to enhance the country's global profile*. This is, again, a point of poor translation. On the one side, the Framework proposes to benefit national development by tackling emergencies happening elsewhere. On the other, it contradicts UN principles. OCHA, for instance, 'coordinates the global emergency response to save lives and protect people in humanitarian crises'.[15] Its mandate is not to promote one country's global standing over another.

UNDAF Results – Matrix

Every UNDAF Results Narrative elaborated on a Matrix, often annexed as a table. The Template provisions asked UNCTs to identify specific outcomes in the Matrix. These were the changes a UNCT needed to enact to foster national development and achieve the priorities of its UNDAF. The template also asked for measurement of this progress with indicators (UNDG

2010a: 14). The Matrix must be analysed separately because its level of detail reveals another position-taking of the Coordinator Office, which is connected although more specific than the other two. I focus on SPA4 in the Matrix for brevity and to pursue my analysis of the uncomfortable state of the Coordination Office and its humanitarian work.

Here, dispositional fingerprints are the alignment in the text of a 'Strategic Priority Area 4' with 'Vision 2021' and the pursuit by 'OCHA, UNHCR WFP and UNDSS Logistics' of four 'Outcome[s]' tied to this SPA, measured through 12 separate 'Indicators' (UAE UNCT 2016a: 40–42). These textual marks could appear as unproblematic compliance with a set of guidelines. Instead, I argue, they were the result of the incorporated disposition of UN agencies in a UNCT, especially WFP, UNHCR, OCHA and also the Coordinator Office. In the Matrix, the office measured the success of its work as a function of national development and the achievement of national priorities. In reality, the UN mostly worked from the UAE to support emergencies abroad.

In this third instance, I associate positional fingerprints to the titles of all four outcomes for SPA4, for example, 'Outcome 4.1: By 2021, national, regional and global resilience is informed by a clear crisis/disaster response policy in UAE' (UAE UNCT 2016a: 40). The four titles signal how the Coordinator Office presented any change operated by the UN in emergency response as a step towards UAE global leadership. It did so to make a controversial area that was crucial for the UN more acceptable. At the same time, the Coordinator Office was moved by a practical logic of self-preservation in a hostile environment. As a result, it proposed to measure the achievement of outcomes through indicators that reflected much better true UN humanitarian objectives, such as alleviating the suffering of people in emergencies. Indicators were, for example, 'Percentage of [UAE] assistance going through multilateral agencies' or '[UAE] Participation in international forums related to the forcibly displaced' (UAE UNCT 2016a: 41). However, Emirati authorities did not unconditionally support

multilateral contributions and refugee-related initiatives. By tying these indicators to outcomes on UAE national development, the Coordinator Office was normalizing in text what was controversial in the day-to-day discussions between the UNCT and Emirati counterparts. An increased 'warehouse capacity' (Indicator 4.1.5), typically hosted by the free zone of the International Humanitarian City in Dubai, and an increased 'number of beneficiaries' (Indicator 4.2.2) were also objectives that did not strictly benefit UAE national development (UAE UNCT 2016a: 40–41).

These two sets of fingerprints show how field forces shaped the translation of the Template clumsily. A third position-taking emerges that is even more specific than the previous two. This time, the Coordinator Office *measures progress towards UAE national development, particularly its global standing, through improvements in the conditions of people affected by crises*. Put differently, the number of aid beneficiaries or the amounts of assistance disbursed for them by the UAE through multilateral bodies turned into a measure of UAE leadership. Once again, this contrasts with what one would expect from an UNDAF and the UN more generally. The Framework proposes to tackle national development outcomes through unrelated means that instrumentalize people's sufferings and are also controversial in the UAE.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article asked how IO country offices shape translations of policy templates and when these translations fail. Translations of IO policy templates have much to reveal about the country offices that compiled them and may be more or less successful. I situated my contribution within research on IO policy advice and their country offices and on UN relations with less traditional donors. I conceptualized country offices like organizations in a Bourdieusian field and advanced a methodological solution for analysing template translations' documents and text. I chose the case of the Framework as a translation of the Template by the Coordinator

Office or the UAE office of the Development Group. The case was significant for its properties of being a breaching experiment and an outlier among other UNDAFs.

My first argument is that template translations bear the imprints of the office that compiled them and its status in the field. I demonstrated that the Framework is a snapshot of the Coordinator Office taken between its disposition and position in the organizational field in 2016–2018. The disposition was the office's drive to formalize a Framework that presented the UN work in the country as a form of national development. I connected this disposition and corresponding Template provisions with textual fingerprints in the translation. I then exposed the office's weak capital and position, which pushed the office to carve out its space in the field and also left fingerprints in text. Thus, dispositional and positional dynamics made sense of the hypes in the stylistic surface of the text. These are the inclusion of humanitarian agencies, on the one side, and the flattering tone towards the UAE or the seemingly unnecessary space spent discussing humanitarian response, on the other. Observational data on the Coordinator Office's discomfort worked on me as the researcher like a breaching experiment. It was a methodological opportunity for identifying dispositions and their fingerprints. Ultimately, my findings can shed light on other UNDAFs or template translations, especially when these are not breaching experiments due to the alignment of their country office to the field.

My second argument is that translations fail when the dispositions of the country office in charge are misaligned with its positions in the field. Eventually, failure due to this misalignment may manifest in the abandonment of the policy. By the end of the period I considered, the Coordinator Office could no longer oppose the challenging conditions of its field and embraced organizational change (see Emirbayer and Johnson 2008: 30). Before that, the misalignment between dispositions and positions had a more subtle manifestation. This was the lack of textual coherence in the translation, which departs from the purpose of its template. This is the second type of failure for a translation and that I demonstrate through the

interpretation of position-takings from dispositional and positional fingerprints. Position-takings are the stances that offices like the Coordinator Office effectively, but largely unintentionally, end up occupying in their field as they stand by their translation and push for its approval.

I interpret three clumsy position-takings from separate sections of the Framework and that moved from the general to the specific. The office presented itself as: enabling UAE national development by enhancing the country's global profile; prioritizing the UN humanitarian work as a means of achieving that global standing; measuring progress of UAE national development and global standing through the improvement of the condition of people in humanitarian emergencies. By exposing position-takings, I demonstrate that the Framework failed because UNDAFs should present a roadmap for UN contribution to the national development of a country. A UNDAF should not be overly preoccupied with how the UN can promote the global role of the UAE. The Framework also failed the mandate of the UN more generally. This is not about boosting the reputation of one of its member states, especially in a humanitarian setting. As an outlier, the Framework corresponded to a country office remarkably out of tune with its field. This case indicates that the level of alignment to the field of the country office in charge could be used to explain (degrees of) success of UNDAFs that were approved, and possibly of translations of other templates.

Template translations deserve to be researched rigorously and Bourdieu's organizational sociology is an ideal solution. They are not a mechanistic compilation (Rose 2006) but full of clues about the IO unit in charge. One can learn about an IO country office not just from how the document moves across a social space or from its textual surface or fingerprints. The meaning interpreted from that text as position-takings signals how a document can take its agent into unintended directions (see Lendvai and Stubbs 2007). I showed that a country office muddles through all the way, acting in more unanticipated ways

than expected from an international bureaucracy and with real failures, like reputational boosting on behalf of a member state. Hence, focusing on country offices shows there are cases of profound – if not excessive – adaptation of IOs to specific contexts, including in the UAE, a country relatively new to this type of multilateralism.

Acknowledgements

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Interviews

Interviewee 1 (2017) Interview with OCHA staff, Abu Dhabi.

Interviewee 2 (2018) Interview with senior staff of an UN resident agency, Abu Dhabi.

Interviewee 3 (2017) Interview with UNDP/UNRCO staff, Abu Dhabi.

Interviewee 4 (2018) Interview with UNDP/UNRCO staff, online.

Interviewee 5 (2018) Interview with WFP staff, Dubai.

Interviewee 6 (2018) Interview with MOFAIC staff, New York.

Interviewee 7 (2018) Interview with MOFAIC staff, Abu Dhabi.

Interviewee 8 (2017) Interview with UAE-based charity, Sharjah.

Interviewee 9 (2017) Interview with UNEP staff, Abu Dhabi.

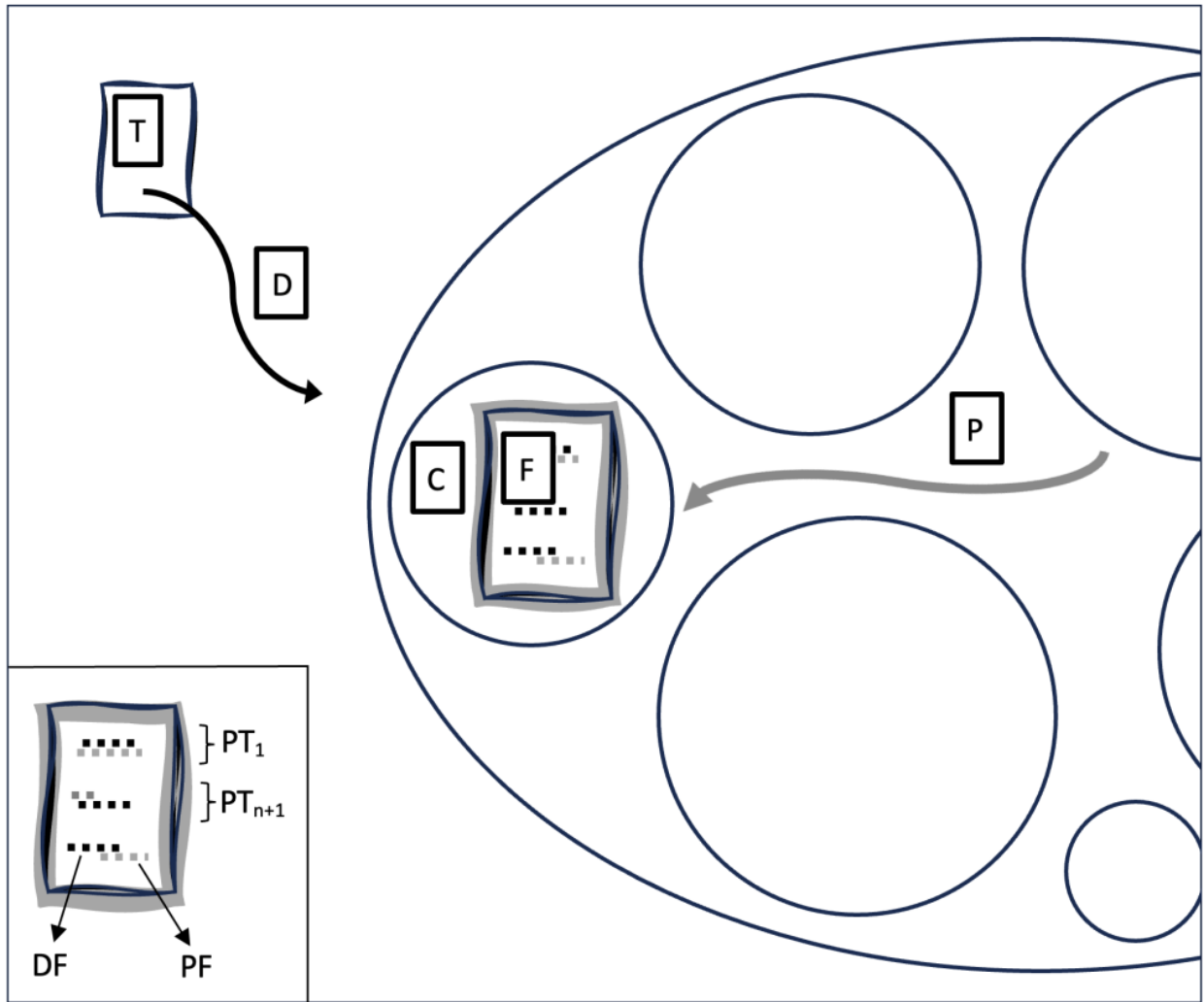Interviewee 10 (2017) Interview with WFP staff, Dubai.

Figure 1. The translation of the Template by the UAE UNRCO. As a translation, the Framework (F) embodies the disposition (D) of the Coordinator Office (C) as informed by the Template (T) and the position (P) the office occupies relative to other organizations in the field. Positions and dispositions leave dispositional fingerprints (DF) and positional fingerprints (PF) in text, from where to interpret position-takings (PT_1, PT_{n+1}).

Template provisions	CSF section	UNRCO dispositional fingerprints	UNRCO positional fingerprints	UNRCO position-takings
'Introduction (…) should (…) describ[e] the position and the potential of the UN in the country, its comparative advantages, including key normative work being done by (resident and non-resident) UN agencies in relation to national development priorities, as well as the alignment of the UNDAF process with the national planning process' (UNDG 2010b: 29)	UNDAF Introduction (UAE UNCT 2016a: 5–11)	'Several different types of Agencies are found working in or for the country (…) The United Nations System in UAE offers a global network from which international best practices can be derived, combined with a commitment to national ownership (…) offers a rights-based approach to development, as enshrined in international legal instruments, which must be underpinned in all cases by national legal reform'	'(UNCT) is looking to (…) increase United Nations visibility and credibility (…) [the UN] is uniquely positioned to play a catalytic and promotional role on behalf of UAE (…) Critically, however, the United Nations can provide a platform to not only bring the world to UAE, but it also can bring UAE to the world (…) the United Nations System thus can help to fully unleash the potential of UAE as a key player in global affairs'	UNRCO *enables* UAE national development by enhancing the country's global profile
'UNDAF Results (…) The narrative (…) should describe in narrative form (i) The results expected from UNCT cooperation, a clear rationale for the choices made, their expected contribution to national development framework & MD/MDG related priorities; (ii) Why the UNCT and partners have focused on these results; and (iii) How the expected results will be achieved, and with whom' (UNDG 2010b: 29)	UNDAF Results – Narrative (UAE UNCT 2016a: 11–26)	'[T]he CSF focuses on four broad strategic priority areas (…) Strategic Priority Area 1 (…) Strategic Priority Area 2 (…) Strategic Priority Area 3 (…) Strategic Priority Area 4' '[SPA1, SPA2, SPA3, SPA4:] Vision 2021/National Priorities' '[SPA1] Co-Leads: UNDP' '[SPA2] Co-Leads: UNDP, UNEP' '[SPA3] Co-Leads: OCHA, UNHCR' '[SPA4] Co-Leads: OCHA, UNHCR, WFP, UNDSS Logistics'	'[SPA3] National Priorities: Enhanced international standing; Upholding the Legacy of the Nation's Founding Fathers; Harnessing the Full Potential of National Human Capital' '[SPA4] National Priorities: Enhanced international standing; Harnessing the full potential of national human capital' '[SPA3 title] Broadening Strategic Partnerships and Highlighting UAE Leadership in International Cooperation' '[SPA4 title] Deepening Emergency Preparedness, Response and Coordination' '[SPA4] In terms of deepening humanitarian response and coordination, the United Nations is well placed to provide information inputs to the existing UAE task force (…) [the UN] can assist in the enhanced use of a [Ministry]/OCHA emergency response manual (…) Particular [UN] expertise is available to support gender-sensitive further alignment with the global humanitarian system'	UNRCO *prioritizes* enabling UAE national development through the humanitarian work it can do to enhance the country's global profile
'UNDAF Results Matrix with Outcome Level Only' (UNDG, 2010a: 14) 'Outcomes describe the intended changes in development conditions resulting from UNCT cooperation (…) Results, whether quantitative or qualitative, must have measurable indicators,	UNDAF Results – Matrix (UAE UNCT 2016a: 40–42)	'Strategic Priority Area 4 (…); Co-Leads Agencies: OCHA, UNHCR, WFP, UNDSS Logistics; Vision 2021 / National Priorities (…); [four] Outcome[s] (…); [twelve] Indicators (…)'	'Outcome 4.1: By 2021, national, regional and global resilience is informed by a clear crisis/disaster response policy in UAE (…) Outcome 4.2: By 2021, UAE demonstrates a global leading role in strengthening linkages in the continuum of humanitarian, recovery and development assistance (…) Outcome 4.3: By 2021, wide sharing of good practices modelled by UAE in	UNRCO *measures* progress towards UAE national development, particularly its global standing, through improvements in the conditions of people affected by crises

making it possible to assess whether they were achieved or not' (UNDG 2010b: 31)			emergency preparedness (…) provides a basis for effective innovations in countries affected by crisis (…) Outcome 4.4: By 2021, the development of new analytical tools for decision-making, gap analysis and strategic monitoring makes early warning, crisis prevention and response actions more efficient and effective' 'Indicator 4.1.5: Availability of sufficient warehouse capacity (…); Indicator 4.2.1: Percentage of assistance going through multilateral agencies; Indicator 4.2.2: Number of beneficiaries of humanitarian and development assistance programmes (…); Indicator 4.2.5: Participation in international forums related to the forcibly displaced, including support to 3RP campaigns'	

Table 1. UNRCO position-takings from dispositional and positional fingerprints in text. Three UNRCO position-takings emerge from separate sections of the Framework. Each position-taking results from a joint interpretation of two sets of fingerprints left by the office and appearing in text. Dispositional fingerprints reflect the office's disposition as informed by Template provisions. Positional fingerprints reflect the office's position in the field.

Notes

1 This version of the article has been accepted for publication, after peer review but is not the Version of Record and does not reflect post-acceptance improvements, or any corrections. The Version of Record is available online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/s41268-024-00329-2. Use of this Accepted Version is subject to the publisher's Accepted Manuscript terms of use https://www.springernature.com/fr/open-research/policies/accepted-manuscript-terms.

2 In this article, I focus on 'template translation(s)' or a written document(s) and text, which I distinguish from the *process of* template translation or the set of negotiation and drafting practices leading to the translation as a document and text.

3 See also https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/field-missions-dashboard (8 December, 2023).

4 See https://unsceb.org/hr-duty-station (8 December, 2023).

5 I use 'agencies' and 'offices' as generic terms for other UN entities, such as programmes, funds or parts of the UN Secretariat.

6 The 2017 UNDAF guidelines would present a more schematic version of the Template (UNDG 2017: 40–41).

7 See https://web.archive.org/web/20140216022655/http:/www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=1539 (8 December, 2023).

8 The CSF was initially available early in 2018 on the UNDP UAE website at http://www.ae.undp.org/content/united_arab_emirates/en/home/about-us/legal-framework.html (26 February, 2018) but by summer 2018 had been taken down.

9 See https://www.sa.undp.org/content/saudi_arabia/en/home/operations/legal_framework/jcr%3acontent/centerparsys/download_4/file.res/C%3a%5cfakepath%5cUNCCSF%20Agreement%20revised%2bFinal%2b%2b%20SIGNED.PDF (21 April, 2022).

[10] See

https://www.sa.undp.org/content/saudi_arabia/en/home/operations/legal_framework/jcr%3acontent/centerparsys/download_8/file.res/sa-rcar-2012.pdf (21 April, 2022).

[11] See https://www.vision2021.ae/en/uae-vision and https://www.vision2021.ae/en/national-agenda-2021 (23 July, 2022).

[12] See also https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm#indicator-chart (21April, 2022).

[13] This falls under the 'United in Destiny' section of Vision 2021, see

https://www.vision2021.ae/en/national-agenda-2021 (23 July, 2022). The idea of aid as a means to improve the country's reputation appears regularly in UAE official documents (see MOFAIC 2017a: 173).

[14] In comparison, Saudi CSF is rather silent on UN resource mobilization for foreign assistance. Yet, this type of UN work is significant in Saudi Arabia (Interviewee 10 2017).

[15] See https://www.unocha.org (17 March, 2022).

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