

**Possibilities and Limits of Cross-Country Administrative
Cooperation at Europe's Fringes:
A Process Perspective on EU Twinning in Moldova and Lebanon**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that no parts of the thesis have been accepted for any other degrees in any other institution. This thesis contains no material previously written and / or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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ABSTRACT

How can Twinning start or support a reform process in a given beneficiary administration? So far, Twinning projects in the European Union's neighborhood have received little systematic attention. We know little about how such projects function on the ground and how conducive their formal structure is to administrative change.

I argue that the formal outcomes of a Twinning project (mandatory results) have only limited impact on the beneficiary organization. Instead of triggering deep-rooted change, they fulfill more of an internal and external legitimizing role, signaling appropriate behavior, independent of actual practices. Twinning projects may have a more substantial impact on administrative behavior, routines, and practices through the day-to-day cooperation of the RTA (Residence Twinning Advisor) and her team with domestic project participants. I argue that member-state participants such as the RTA rather act as irritants to the beneficiary system than experts that diffuse concrete practices. This, I argue, encourages beneficiary participants to question their own practices and routines and possibly change them. As a result, the main outcome of Twinning may not be the implementation of external practices but an ongoing process of organizational learning and internal problem definition aiming toward the realization of domestic solutions.

I define Twinning projects as temporal and complex forms of organization. Based on the projects observed, I argue that the EU's assumptions fall short on the issues that: 1) the goals of a Twinning project are clear at the beginning, 2) member-state participants have a clear grasp of the demands and capacity of the beneficiary, and 3) the beneficiary has an understanding of what Twinning implies. Every Twinning project observed struggled from its beginning: individual roles were unclear and project goals often remained contested throughout implementation. In most projects, participants defined their own roles and understanding of the

project through constant deliberation and cooperation. Some projects were more successful in doing so than others. I argue that the reason some projects handled the inevitable contestation of their inherent purpose and perceived outcomes better was influenced by the complex interplay of internal and external constraints. Internal constraints relate to the formal Twinning framework, restricting flexibility in terms of timing, funding, and definition of results. External constraints are the capacity of the beneficiary, including staffing, staff motivation, or staff pay, and domestic and regional political stability or instability. Surprisingly, Twinning projects seemed to have a stronger effect on their beneficiaries in Lebanon than in Moldova. Both Lebanon and Moldova have to cope with political insecurity and the same level of stringency from the side of Twinning. The explanation apparently lies in Lebanon having stronger administrative capacity through fewer turnovers, higher seniority among Twinning participants, an established administrative model, and a better sense of purpose to Twinning. In conclusion, Twinning projects are potentially effective cooperation tools that currently suffer from a too-high level of formal stringency in the face of unclear and often politically contested problems at the beneficiary institution.

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To Artak

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
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| BC | Beneficiary country |
| CARDS | Community Assistance for Reconstruction |
| CEE | Central- and Eastern Europe |
| CFSP | Common foreign and security policy |
| CIB | Comprehensive institution building |
| CIS | Commonwealth of independent states |
| Comecon | Council for Mutual Economic Assistance |
| EaP | Eastern Partnership |
| EEC | European Economic Area |
| EMP | Euro-Mediterranean partnership |
| ENI | European neighborhood instrument |
| ENP | European neighborhood policy |
| ENPI | European neighborhood policy instrument |
| EU | European Union |
| EUD | European Union Delegation |
| GATT | General agreement to trade |
| INTERREG | Programs funded by the European Regional development fund |
| MED | European regional cooperation in the Mediterranean |
| MEDA | Euro-Mediterranean partnership |
| MS | Member state |
| NMP | New Mediterranean policy |
| NPE | Normative Power Europe |
| NPM | New public management |
| PAO | Project administration office |

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| PHARE | Poland and Hungary: Aid for Restructuring of the Economies |
| RTA | Residence Twinning advisor |
| RTA- counterpart | Residence Twinning advisor counterpart |
| TA | Technical Assistance |
| TACIS | Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States |
| TRANSFORM | 1993 Germany institution-building program toward Eastern Europe, launched 1993 |
| TTSIB | Support to the State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova |
| UfM | Union for the Mediterranean |
| USSR | Soviet Union |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Twinning projects observed

It quickly became apparent to me that all projects are problem-ridden; the only valid distinction appears to be between those that are more or less successful in overcoming their troubles and those that are not (Hirschman 1967, pp.2–3).

Albert O. Hirschman wrote this quotation in his book, *Development Projects Observed*, after having spent more than a year studying development projects in various countries. He wrote at a time when rational project planning was on the rise and “... the scientific determination of correct investment choices seemed to be within reach” (Hirschman 1967, p.Viii). Hirschman concluded that all development projects are unique; they can only be successful if participants deal creatively with the project’s inherent uncertainties (Adelman & Alacevich 2015, p.283).

A Residence Twinning Advisor¹ in Moldova says,

Twining is human adventure. If it works, you become friends forever (...) If it does not work, which may happen, it explodes (Member_State#13).

The RTA describes Twinning as a “human adventure,” it could succeed or fail. Both quotations indicate that development projects are always problematic and, to an extent, unpredictable. In his book, Hirschman aimed to make the development and the scholarly community aware of the nature of development projects and embrace the importance of human creativity in coping with the unpredictable. In a way, this dissertation follows a similar aim to Hirschman’s. It points to the unpredictability and inherent idiosyncrasies of Twinning and highlights the importance of learning and adapting during project implementation.

We do not know much about what is happening in European Union projects such as Twinning in the EU’s neighboring countries. We know their structure, maximum duration,

¹ A Residence Twinning Advisor is a civil servant from a Member State administration who works in the beneficiary country on a full-time basis for at least one year in the framework of a Twinning project to coordinate the day to day activities of the project. He/she works on a day-to-day basis with the beneficiary administration to accompany project implementation.

average amount of funding, and evaluation procedures. Yet we know little of their internal functioning on the ground. These projects can be seen as something of a ‘black box’: beyond their formal structures little is known until they are discovered and analyzed. This dissertation is an attempt to open up the black box of Twinning and conceptualize as well as explain its process based on 1) insights from the organizational literature and 2) observations from several projects in the Republic of Moldova (hereafter Moldova) and Lebanon.

1.2. Research question

The dissertation explores the question: How do the internal workings of Twinning projects impact the beneficiary organization? Twinning, as with any development project,² produces reports, manuals, or draft laws that correspond to the project plan to be used by the beneficiary organization of the Twinning project. Yet, to assume these are the only products of a project is short-sighted. These are artifacts that are produced alongside many other less tangible outputs, such as beliefs, cooperation-structures, or even trust and friendship. This dissertation argues that they are produced as a result of deliberation and cooperation between the actors in a project. These are actors who have happened to end up working together for up to two years to produce something that resembles legitimate change, signals increased efficiency, and incorporates European “best practices.”

In the problem-ridden world of project implementation, where means and ends are largely undetermined, information is dispersed in a way that one side does not fully understand what the other demands. Because of this, the outcomes or artifacts produced are determined by

² A development project in this sense corresponds to the definition provided by the EU, as a “series of activities aimed at bringing about clearly specified objectives within a defined time-period and with a defined budget (...) Development projects are a way of clearly defining and managing investments and change processes.” (European Commission 2004, p.8)

the process of the project and cannot be planned beforehand. In contrast, in the theoretical world of project cycle management and rational project planning, outcomes are assumed to be largely foreseeable, information is clear, and everybody is aware of what the other demands and knows.³ Such assumptions inform the practice of EU project planning and funding, and are the point of departure of every Twinning project.

They are also the point of departure of this dissertation. However, contrary to rational project planning, these assumptions are not taken for granted; they are scrutinized. What are the effects of a rigid and formalized project framework that assumes straightforward results and institutional changes before any project participants have shaken hands? How do participants from either side make sense of it and how is it dealt with when the inevitable problems of project cooperation occur? This further leads us to questions about how actors make sense of the project and each other. Can we assume anything such as “best practices” or the “domestic demand” to be equally understood by either side of the project and if not, how is it comprehended collectively? Once we have an idea of the basic sense-making processes on the individual level, we can look at how the project develops. How can we understand the behavior of the multitude of actors involved in the project, spending every day with each other? What do they do together that relates to the project and how does that create the artifacts we can see and experience as produced by the project?

Based on the above questions, this dissertation rejects an approach that treats project implementation as a straightforward diffusion of practices. Project implementation is approached as a process of deliberation and cooperation. Once we have established an

³ The EU's project cycle management guidelines for aid delivery aim to balance rational planned outputs with process flexibility: “The guidelines aim to promote consistency and clarity of approach, while allowing for the operational flexibility required of a dynamic and diverse external assistance programme” (European Commission 2004, p.1). In contrast, in the EU's Twinning manual, clearly planned outputs are in the forefront: “Both project partners commit themselves to work towards commonly agreed results (...) These ‘mandatory results’ (...) constitute a specific criterion in relation to administrative capacity, as long as there is a jointly agreed target. This target must be measurable and precise.” (European Commission 2012, p.14)

understanding of the implementation process, we can shed more light on the question of what goes on in Twinning projects. The answer is that deliberation and cooperation, the contestation of given formal structures and the struggle with various problems related to the project leads to a process of organizational learning. It is a process that can lead to the questioning and subsequent change of routines by actors related to the project. Most of all, it leads to the alignment of perceptions of the project, of one's own role in the project and particularly one's own role beyond the project. Project participants play both the role of participant and public administrator. They can share artifacts produced in the project within their administration. Given favorable institutional circumstances, these artifacts can be internalized by a public administration. Essentially, this dissertation establishes the effect of Twinning as an irritant to the domestic status quo, rather than straightforward institutional change. Its consequences cannot be foreseen but only developed from within.⁴

1.3. Conceptualizing Twinning: from institutional constraints to organization as process

What are Twinning projects? Despite considerable differences in terms of policy area, level of cooperation or timeframe, they have in common that they connect at least two (public) entities for an extended period of time toward the achievement of certain ends. A study on Twinning projects by the Swedish Development Agency refers to Twinning as the partnership of organizations with similar functions (Jones 2001, p.94). Their purpose is to bring organizations together for an extended period of time, which under normal conditions would not be feasible

⁴ Borrowing from Luhman, Czarniawska argues: "the attempts at communication produced by management consultants serve as an irritant to the client system. Consultants do not "know better"; they are able to observe the actors, and see them in another light than that in which the actors try to observe themselves. It is this difference in the observation points that can become "irritating, stimulating, and eventually productive"" (2013, p.14).

due to geographical, financial, human or political restrictions. The idea of creating some form of partnership and the persistent cooperation and mutual aid through for example the exchange of practices, expertise or financial resources is at the center of most Twinning approaches. However, Twinning in the European Union follows a distinct approach.

EU Twinning projects are called “institution-building” instruments. They are targeted at the EU’s neighboring and candidate countries. Their purpose is the diffusion of practices and norms compatible with the EU’s *acquis communautaire*, referred to as “best practices”. The instrument itself is designed and funded by the EU and is part of its neighborhood and enlargement policy. Implementation takes place entirely in a neighboring or candidate country’s public administration. At its core is the posting of a Residence Twinning Advisor (RTA): a public administrator from an EU member state to the neighboring country’s administration for the full duration of implementation. The RTA leads a group of administrators from one or more EU member states. They regularly travel to the neighboring country’s administration to carry out training and communication activities. The RTA works in close cooperation with the designated RTA-counterpart, a member of the neighboring country’s administration. Similarly to the RTA, the counterpart coordinates the employees within her administration that participate in Twinning activities.

Twinning is part of the ENP.⁵ Therefore, one point of departure is the literature on Europeanization and European integration. This strand of literature among the political sciences is mostly concerned with the specific development and nature of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). Most of this literature is based on new institutionalist theory,⁶ which regards the EU as a set of institutions that structure any given policy field on the

⁵ The ENP is the EU’s main policy and funding tool for interaction with its Southern and Eastern neighbours, except for Russia and the countries under the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA).

⁶ See Papadimitriou and Phinnemore for an example to understand Twinning in the context of EU enlargement as a mechanism of Europeanization and a local extension of the EU’s conditionality principle on domestic reform (2004, pp.620–621)

domestic level through the use of norms, and defining appropriate and/or non-appropriate behavior (cf. Börzel & Risse 2000; Farrell 2009; Olsen 2007). Although in a wider sense, theoretical approaches differ depending on the nature of the effect of EU norms, they share one main outlook on institutions: their ability to shape domestic behavior.⁷ Two of the pioneers of new institutionalism, DiMaggio and Powell (1991, p.147) talk about the “structuration” of organizational fields from which they subsume a homogenization of norms and practices in organizations. Translated into Europeanization research, European norms and institutions homogenize and normalize domestic institutions and practices, both within and outside the EU.

Most new institutionalist perspectives would treat EU norms and practices as benchmarks, an approach particularly pronounced in the literature on EU compliance (e.g., Falkner et al. 2005; Mastenbroek 2005; Magen 2005). The outcome of Twinning would therefore be measured by whether the outputs produced, such as draft laws or manuals, resonate with EU norms and practices. This dissertation takes a different perspective. It assumes that outcomes produced are merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Twinning projects. What is *really* produced may not be from the formal goals and their corresponding outcomes, but from the process of project implementation itself.

Such a process perspective is scarce in the Europeanization literature. This is exemplified by the discussion around the notion of “Normative Power Europe” (hereafter NPE), which had considerable impact on the perception of the ENP. The basic argument of the NPE literature is that the EU’s strong normative grasp on its member states is diffused to the wider world through informational resources, the EU’s presence in other countries, or through its specific foreign policies such as the ENP and Twinning. It is assumed to be a standard setter

⁷ a) because of change in the rational cost-benefit function of actors due to the incentives provided by the EU (rational choice Institutionalism)
 b) due to the perception of actors that following such norms is appropriate action, considering individual interests are not clearly defined (sociological/organizational institutionalism) or
 c) due to previous norms creating a path dependence which constraints the creation of new norms and the behavior of actors (historical institutionalism)

in terms of what is considered “normal in international relations” (Manners 2002, p.252). What is normal trickles down to domestic practice through states’ “general propensity to comply” (Chayes & Chayes 1995, p.3). The EU as a normative power is a strong allegory yet has come under increased criticism. Johansson-Nogués points to the incoherence of the EU’s foreign policy and its vague language (2007). Pace, on the other hand, points to the lack of coordinated political action to back up the EU’s normative stance (2007).

Most of the literature concerning the EU’s impact on its neighborhood, be it NPE or Europeanization, is mostly preoccupied with describing what the EU is. The conclusion is often that it is something different, neither an international organization nor a state. Therefore, the effect of any process related to the EU, such as the ENP, is assumed to be directly related to the one-of-a-kind nature of the EU.⁸ This represents a considerable constraint as it forces one to link the observation of what is happening, for example, in a Twinning project at the Consumer Protection Agency in Chisinau, directly to what is happening in Brussels. These approaches have an inbuilt bias that restricts research from grasping domestic mechanisms beyond the wider political and normative agenda of the EU, although further insights have been argued to be crucial (Börzel & Risse 2012). There are signs that researchers are distancing themselves from the perspective of the EU as a one-of-a-kind, particularly in the context of the ENP. After all, within the ENP the EU may not be a “normalizing” but rather a “normal” power (Johansson-nogués 2007, p.190).

Stepping down from the basic assumption that the EU is a normative power, and accepting the EU as a normal actor has considerable implications for this research project. EU norms and assumptions concerning EU integration and Europeanization are not sufficient to

⁸ This is a point made in several key publications on the EU. As an example Schmitter’s argument may serve who quotes the then outgoing President of the EU Commission, Jacques Delors, stating that the EU is *un objet politique non-identifié*, a politically non-identifiable object (Schmitter 1996, p.1).

serve as benchmarks for what happens in a Twinning project. As a result, domestic processes come to the forefront as key explanatory factors.

So what does an approach that gives us a sense of what happens in Twinning projects have to entail? It first of all has to analyze the formal structure of Twinning. Every Twinning project comes laden with a considerable normative package. It defines what changes should be achieved, how they should be achieved, and how they are supposed to relate to EU practices. In an “EU as a normal power” approach, the framework has to be able to account for the bias attached to these norms and the limits of their use considering domestic contingencies. Second, it must relate the formal structure of Twinning projects to what is happening during the process of project implementation. It has to make sense of what actors actually do in Twinning, what motivates their actions, and to what extent this is constrained by the normative/formal framework. Third, it should conceptualize the effect of Twinning. How does it compare to the results that were planned and formalized and does it include anything that was not accounted for? What is needed is therefore a framework that allows the research to explore Twinning as an unfolding process. More practically speaking, it has to explain what happens when you put two groups of actors from two different countries into a formalized environment for a certain period of time to produce reforms. Whereas the literature on Europeanization and European integration has little to offer in this regard, the organizational literature has a stronger explanatory potential.

Classical writing on organization, particularly Max Weber’s work, approaches the concept of organization as a noun. It assumes organization to be a formal structure that controls, or at least normalizes the behavior of agents. It is therefore not surprising that DiMaggio and Powell (1991) make heavy reference to Weber when introducing some of the main aspects of a new institutional theory to organization studies, which has had a considerable impact on the

study of Europeanization. More recently, particularly within sociological approaches to organization studies, the term organization has been utilized in its verbal form, focusing on organizing as the process of organization. The concept of organization has been shifted from one of “being” to one of “becoming” (cf. Tsoukas & Chia 2002). As Hernes puts it: “Organization is about attempts at some ordering, redirection or stabilization in a fluid world forever in a state of becoming, where nothing is ever accomplished in a final state” (2007, p. 128). Projects lend themselves to such an approach. They can be assumed to incorporate formal structures as “classical” organizations, but lack their permanence. Projects are more fluid and open-ended, generally starting off with little common routines. They are therefore a process of organizing and becoming rather than merely a static formal structure.

1.4. Dissertation structure

This dissertation explores the process of Twinning in Moldova and in Lebanon through:

1. a theoretical chapter,
2. a methodological chapter,
3. three empirical chapters,
4. one conclusion and policy implication chapter.

The following theoretical chapter continues on from the introduction, departing from the literature on Europeanization toward organizational scholarship. Besides sketching out the basic assumptions and claims, the theoretical chapter (chapter 2) establishes the structure and sequence of the empirical chapters. The methodological chapter (chapter 3) connects the theoretical claims with data collection in the field and the subsequent data analysis. It outlines

why the specific case studies were chosen and why certain data were collected and analyzed in a given way, corresponding to the research question and the overall outlook of the dissertation. The first empirical chapter (chapter 4) has a double function. On the one hand, it introduces Twinning projects in their historical and institutional context. On the other hand, it outlines the first phase of Twinning, the creation of a project and the establishment of its formal framework. The second empirical chapter (chapter 5) is the empirical core of the dissertation, as it outlines the implementation process of Twinning and the nature and influence of communicative and cooperative processes among Twinning participants. The final empirical chapter (chapter 6) combines the findings of the two preceding chapters to explore how learning takes place during and after Twinning projects, and which factors impede such processes. The concluding chapter (chapter 7) both summarizes the findings of the dissertation and discusses how those findings may be used to inform the design of Twinning projects.

2. THEORETICAL APPROACH: CONCEPTUALIZING TWINNING AS ORGANIZATION AND PROCESS

2.1. Formal and informal aspects of organization

To conceptualize Twinning as organization, it has to be established what organization means, particularly emphasizing the difference between organization as static structure and as process. To establish a connection to the mainstream European Integration and Europeanization literature, it is also important to clarify the link between the organizational and the institutional literature.

One of the most basic conceptions of organizations is that of rational systems (Scott 2003). It argues that organizations are collectives, oriented to pursue specific goals, exhibiting highly formalized social structures. This view is reflected in Weber's theory of bureaucracy as a formal and highly rationalized type of organization (1997). In a Weberian system, clear rules and roles structure the behavior of actors and the processes they engage in. Organization is a hierarchical, almost mechanical process in which all actors know their place and their task. Rational planning in projects, the design of clear-cut normative structures from the start to closely guide change, is a direct outcome of the conception of rational organizations.

The rational systems perspective that introduced the idea of organization as bureaucracy came under scrutiny from various sides from the 1970s on (cf. Seibel 2010, p.719), with a shift in the notion of rationality from the organizational to individual level. The application of neoclassical economic theories to organization studies started portraying administrators as individualistic and rent-seeking, not abiding by hierarchical rules (Niskanen 1973). To others, the perception of rationality either on the organizational or individual level was altogether misleading. For Herbert Simon, the rationalizing economic man was too much a simplification. Neither formal structures nor individual interests can fully account for administrative behavior

in the “buzzing, blooming confusion that constitutes the real world” (Simon 1997, p.119). Discarding formal rationality on organizational and individual levels opened up a playing field for reassessing organizational behavior, resulting in the institutional perspective on organizations (Scott, 2003, p.69). Thus, following on from Simon, Selznick (1996) argues that organizational behavior is hardly based on rationality but rather on seeking legitimacy, historical contingencies, and institutional myths.

An institutional perspective embeds the organizational model of bounded rationality into a cultural perspective where organizational practice creates norms and contingencies that guide behavior. Organizations are not regarded as purely mechanical systems that function according to a set of stable rules, but are seen as outward looking. They seek external practices and norms to legitimize their own actions to others in their organizational field. The addition of the institutional perspective made way for a conception of organizations as open systems (Scott, 2003, p.82). Open systems interact with their environment; they “encode experience into standard operating procedures, professional rules, practical rules of thumb and identities” (March & Olsen, 1989, p.54). The institutional perspective adds a sense of both informality and unpredictability to an otherwise rationally constructed and legalized organizational framework. If we conceive of organizations as open systems, we can then feasibly deconstruct organizational settings into their rational/formal and informal aspects.

Scott (2008, p.38) understands the formal dimension of organizational structures as permitting stable expectations between different members of a group. This is similar to Luhmann’s approach, who argues that the purpose of organizations is the reduction of societal complexity (Luhmann 2000, p.31). In this regard, formal norms help simplify reality and provide internal purpose to an organization’s members and external purpose to the organizational environment. As a result, a change or manipulation of formal structures is often

regarded as instrumental in changing organizational expectations. This seemingly improves an organization's output and thus its legitimacy in an organizational environment. Formal organizational structures are made up of laws and regulations that enshrine organizational hierarchies. Such structures are highly visible to outside actors, particularly manifesting in the organization's organigram or mission statement, which establishes the relationship between organizational sub-units and actors. They are reflected in the legal basis of organizations, their rules and internal contractual obligations. From a closed systems perspective, formal structures are supposed to give the impression of predictability, technicality, and rationality (Weber 1997). Yet in following an institutional approach, formal structures are misleading and may not portray an accurate picture of the organization and the norms that govern it.

The informal dimension of organizations touches upon both structural features—the rules and norms that interact and “structure” organizational behavior—and ideational features, or cognitive patterns (Djelic & Quack, 2003, p.17). Informal norms are as much part of any organizational structure as formal rules and regulations. The effect of such norms has been described as one following a logic of appropriateness (Olsen, 2007, pp.3–4). It is based on the assumption that actors in organizations are not capable of acting in a purely rational manner and are prone to follow both rules and norms of what is considered appropriate behavior. Cognitive patterns of institutions are distinct from norms of appropriateness, they describe how an organization makes sense of the environment it interacts with rather than what is regarded appropriate or rational (Scott, 2008, p.38). The logic of appropriateness draws upon the behavioral patterns and limitations of individuals and organizations in making sense of their environment. Through institutionalized routines, organizations provide cognitive scripts that influence the ways in which actions and the organizational environment are perceived.

The open systems perspective on organization shows that Twinning cannot simply be understood from the point of view of formal cooperation. Organizational processes are driven by informal norms of behavior, routines, and institutionalized myths. Formal structures do constrain actors, but the nature of their constraint can only be determined through the way actors make sense of them in the light of their own practice, their routines, and what they consider to be appropriate. Therefore, to understand Twinning as organization, it cannot be approached as a static output producing structure. It has to be approached as a process.

2.1.1. Twinning as a process of organization

2.1.1.1. From static isomorphism to a dynamic process of organization

A process view of organization moves beyond the insights of an institutional approach. The institutional perspective draws largely on DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) argument that organizational fields make organizations and the process of organizing more alike through isomorphism. Taking on formal structures that mimic the practices of an organizational field leads to what Selznick focuses on: legitimacy as the main yardstick for organizational success. The concepts of Europeanization and European integration are closely tied to the idea of isomorphism.⁹ They describe a process of harmonizing organizational and institutional structures around EU norms and practices.

If one focuses purely on formal structures, Twinning resonates with the concept of isomorphism. A look at the so-called “Twining manual” supports this claim. The manual sets

⁹ One example is “The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe” by Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005). They develop three mechanisms by which new member states in Central- and Eastern Europe had adopted EU rules by the time of enlargement: external incentives, social learning, and lesson drawing. This approach resonates with an institutional approach to organizational change whereas organizations change structures through either coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism or normative isomorphism. Each of the three approaches follow largely the same mechanism: 1) External incentives and coercive isomorphism = formal and informal pressure exerted externally 2) Social learning and mimetic isomorphism = uncertainty and social interaction leads to mimicking external structures through a logic of appropriateness 3) Lesson drawing and normative isomorphism = a more intrinsic mechanism where actors look actively outside for more favorable domestic solutions. Whereas Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier are not very explicit on the mechanism that underlies lesson drawing, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) refer to professionalization.

out how a Twinning project is to be implemented based on the agreement of institutional outputs, “mandatory results” based on specified actions to be carried out, “activities” (European Commission 2012).

The manual follows an approach called “project cycle management,” which largely reflects the structure of the so-called “policy cycle,” a common heuristic device used in policy analysis (cf. Biggs & Smith, 2003; Jann & Wegrich, 2007). Despite widespread criticism of the cycle approach, project cycle management has been diffused into a large number of development and cooperation project approaches, such as the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) capacity development or the International Labor Organization’s technical cooperation. Biggs and Smith (2003) emphasize the mechanical nature of this approach, where project cycle management substitutes the role of agency and process through cooperation with mechanistic tools such as “logical frameworks,” which aim to predict specific outcomes. Project cycle approaches commonly emphasize external practices, such as “best practices,” and therefore run the risk of being irrelevant and impractical (Biggs & Smith 2003, p.1748). The formal structure of Twinning is therefore prone to supporting isomorphic change.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) emphasize that isomorphism does not necessarily make organizations more effective, only more alike. Adopted external practices do not have to necessarily resonate with the internal situation. The result is that where institutional isomorphism is unpractical and superficial it may not translate into behavioral changes. New structures created through new rules or standards remain irrelevant and lack impact.¹⁰ Outcomes beyond formal changes cannot be accounted for, neither through isomorphism nor Europeanization. It is therefore important to conceive of an analytical perspective that can go beyond formal changes on the organizational level and explore informal interactions at the

¹⁰ Resonating with the commonalities of Europeanization and Isomorphism, Dimitrova called to a large part of the institutions created in Central and Eastern Europe through enlargement non-functioning parallel structures or “empty shells” (Dimitrova 2010).

micro, interpersonal level. This perspective focuses on the internal drivers of change such as deliberation and cooperation. From such a perspective, change is not driven by static exogenous incentives but by ongoing internal processes of interaction.

The notion of process is not alien to the new institutionalist literature. The historical approach to institutionalism emphasizes the importance of timing and sequence as inherent to processes of institutionalization, where path dependences of norms and behaviors are locked in, difficult to change both by rational interests and rival norms (Pollack 2008, p.127; cf. Pierson 2000). Process from a historical perspective is explored in retrospect to explain how and why a given institution or organization has evolved to become what it is. Process, although emphasizing unintended results, is not dynamic from this perspective as it is a means to an end, creating stability and predictability. Using the notion of ideas, Blyth (2002) shows how difficult it is to analyze change from a historical perspective as it is filtered through the often thick web of existing institutional structures, watering down the outcome. In the context of sociological or organizational institutionalism, Olsen (2007, p. 4) argues that it is a challenge “to provide better understanding of the processes [...] that translate human action into rules and institutions.” Although based on the notion of historical process, historical institutionalism is limited in analyzing process in its own right when the outcome is assumed not to be a new status quo. The question that follows is: How can we move from the notion of institutions and organizations as stable and open to their environment, to a perspective of organization as continuous process?

In his book *Understanding Organization as Process*, Thor Hernes (2007) reviews a number of key thinkers who challenged static perceptions of institutions and organizations.¹¹ He starts by arguing that “what we see as an organization is one of many possible outcomes,

¹¹ Among others: Vaughn-Whitehead, March, Luhmann, and Latour.

and that is why it is so important to study the processes by which it becomes rather than just the outcomes” (Hernes 2007, p.xviii). To study a process of organization demands shifting the analytical perspective to the inside, away from higher-level environmental factors, toward internal communicative and cooperative processes. Yet, “moving the locus of selection from the outside to the inside [...] has profound consequences for how we conceptualize an organized system. It means that we need to look at the system’s internal dynamics of learning, acting and communication.” (Hernes 2007, p.17). One consequences of such an approach is the need to push the open systems and institutional perspective on organizations further; a different understanding of how organization comes about is needed. It has to emphasize the internal interactions of organizations (a closed perspective), while acknowledging the way organization makes sense of and is influenced by what happens around it (an open perspective). A perspective that conceptualizes the process of organization as both open and closed may sound contradictory at first, but Hernes highlights two approaches that are instructive toward combining the two: Luhmann’s autopoiesis and March’s organizational learning.

2.1.1.2. An autopoietic perspective on the process of organization

Whereas an open perspective assumes that an organization adapts to its environment, an autopoietic perspective assumes an organization to be self-referential and operationally closed. It only perceives the environment as a projection of its self-identity (Kickert 1993, p.262). Originally conceived of as a counter theory to Darwinism where organisms only survive by adapting to their environment (Hernes & Bakken 2003, p.1512), autopoietic theory conveys the autonomy of living systems, able to generate and regenerate their own organization (Kickert 1993, p.261; Lourenço 2010, p.263). Organisms are thus assumed to not directly interact with their environment but to be self-referential and self-constructing (Maturana & Varela 1980, p.V). According to Morgan (2006, p.243), this approach has specific methodological

implications: the assumption that living systems are open to their environment is an attempt to understand them from an external perspective, oversimplifying their internal mechanisms.

The founders of autopoietic theory were skeptical of its use beyond biology, recommending it should not be taken too far (Varela 1981). Yet as Kickert (1993, p.263) argues, it is not important whether a useful model is an accurate translation of the original biological idea, but whether the idea has relevance for our understanding of administrative and organizational processes. It is unreasonable to argue from a social science perspective that a public organization may behave the same as an organic cell, so it is important to emphasize Morgan's (2006, pp.242–246) notion that autopoiesis is a metaphorical frame rather than a law of nature. Therefore I argue that using the metaphor of organization as autopoietic can enhance our understanding as it adds a perspective that more accurately reflects the perceived reality of Twinning than traditional metaphors such as open systems.

The first influential translation of autopoiesis into the social sciences is Luhmann's (1995) systems theory. According to Luhmann, social systems are based on communication, their primary mode of reproduction (Lourenço 2010, p.3). Organizations are therefore communicative systems, producing and reproducing their own understanding and information (Teubner 1987, p.4). Through constant communication and recommunication of their own understanding, organizations develop a blueprint of themselves, their own "DNA" from their past experience (Czarniawska 2013, p.13).

This perspective positions autopoietic systems as rather closed, yet in fact they are closed and open at the same time (Hernes & Bakken, 2003, p. 1515). Organizations are closed as they are self-referential, recreating themselves introspectively. As Hernes and Bakken (2003, p.1516) put it: "The system can only make sense of the outside world through the observation of its own experiences." How an organization changes and how an organization

behaves is not directly determined by what the environment demands of it but by its self-reflection. This does not mean that the organization is not aware of its own environment, simply that its relationship to the environment is internally determined; it is operatively closed (Kickert 1993, p.267). At the same time, organizations are open as they actively observe and interact with the environment through communication. The environment provides information through signals and resources, which the organization responds to, but only makes sense of through its own recursive reproduction. An understanding of what is appropriate and what is not is established internally. Organizations use codes for this purpose. Luhman explains this notion with an example of legal systems, which establish themselves by abiding to codes of differentiating between legal and illegal (Lourenço 2010, p.3; Baxter 1998, p.2010). When another system uses different codes, such as rational and irrational in the political sciences, it belongs to the environment, even when dealing with the same issues.

The notion that codes used in communication are important is not news to any researcher struggling with texts outside her own field. Even when the empirical subject matter is closely related, different codes and conceptualizations may prohibit the researcher from entering another discipline. The understanding a researcher has of reality is based on the codes established by the literature she uses. Although she will be aware of what is happening within her environment by gathering field data and reading beyond her own literature, she will be inclined to make sense of it based on the codes used in her field or, using Luhmann's terminology, her subsystem.

Similarly to the way various fields and schools of research develop into self-producing autopoietic systems, so do Twinning projects. What Twinning projects produce is primarily established internally through communicative action. The outside remains blurry and can only

be interpreted via self-reflection. Hence, from this perspective the idea of top-down steering and control of Twinning projects seems entirely unrealistic (Kickert 1993, p.261).

From an open systems perspective, we would assume that a neighboring country's administration makes a conscious choice when applying for Twinning and agreeing to achieve certain outcomes to signal the legitimacy and appropriateness of reform. When we assume the administration to be self-referential, this is no longer so clear. The choice of engaging in a Twinning project may be entirely arbitrary. From the outset, that organization may know little of what the EU demands from it as a "Twinning beneficiary." It may have also little understanding of whether the external best practices it signs up to implement resonates with its own history, practices, and routines. Reality, Hernes (2007, p. 81) argues, is meaning that is produced and reproduced by a system, manifested in a system's operation. External practices have therefore no meaning, per se, for an organization. They do not exert the kind of normative and isomorphic force as argued from a new institutionalist perspective. Change may only hold insofar as it can be understood by the system, interpreted through its own codes of communication (Hernes 2007, p. 85). Furthermore, as Twinning projects become established, project participants have started to organize and align, a project itself takes the form an autopoietic organization. Through cooperation and deliberation a project develops its own history, its own myths and routines, which it reinterprets in the light of Twinning's formal structure in order to make decisions on future action.

An autopoietic perspective of organization supports the approach of tracing processes and changes within the organization itself. To understand Twinning, cooperation and deliberation have to be perceived as internally sense-making and self-referential. It pushes the research to focus on the narratives that are produced and that are circulating within Twinning projects (cf. Czarniawska 2001, p.129). These narratives should serve as indication of the self-

referential interpretation of reality. In contrast to a Europeanization approach, for example, an autopoietic perspective would reject the concept of change through norm diffusion (cf. Börzel & Risse, 2012), meaning that the environment can directly impact the organization. A concept of change more in line with an autopoietic perspective is that of translation.

Czarniawska and Joerges (1996, p.32) argue that ideas or norms can be read in different ways. Furthermore, Lindberg and Czarniawska (2006) emphasize the importance of translation in organizational cooperation. Although their perspective of a cooperation project as loose connections differs from the one of autopoiesis, their remark that mutual observation and storytelling puts participants in touch with each other, helping to steer a process of translation and mutual understanding, is highly relevant.¹² It underlines the nature of organization as communicatively open, interacting with the environment, but operationally closed, making sense and translating sense-making into action internally.

The concept of autopoiesis enables the research to determine and deal with unexpected results in Twinning projects. It helps to explain difficulties up to the point of project breakdown and achievements of results beyond those that were planned independently of notions of fit, misfit, or best practices. It therefore opens up the research to focus on the process of Twinning and to demonstrate how cooperation and deliberation are constitutive of results that could not be foreseen. Finally, the concept of autopoiesis provides a particular perspective on the core concept of this research, organizational learning.

¹² Whereas a Twinning project cannot be understood as autopoietic and loose coupling at the same time, one can understand a Twinning project as autopoietic and its connection to its wider context, particularly the policy sector or the relevant ministry within which the beneficiary participant is based (referred to as “beneficiary”), as loose coupling.

2.1.1.3. Autopoiesis and organizational learning

From an autopoietic perspective, learning is a self-referential process. It constitutes the reinterpretation of previous experience in the light of a changing context, rather than the context dictating what is to be learned. Cooperative experimentation, interaction, and deliberation are the means that drive organizational learning (Pawlowsky 2001, p.18). An autopoietic perspective opens up the learning process to a variety of unexpected effects. When learning is self-referential, what is learned does not have to be translated into norms and practices that are more effective internally or more legitimate to the environment. Organizational learning has to be understood as the recursive reinterpretation of internal practices, experiences, and expectations. It must be observed as an outcome of cooperative and deliberative processes that are not based on top-down transfer but on mutual and recursive translation.

A shortcoming of such an approach is that organizational learning is regarded as a messy process which is not entirely graspable and lends itself to surprises. On the upside, it enables the research to describe the process and the subsequent effects of learning from a wider and more encompassing perspective. Particularly for Twinning projects this enables the researcher to look beyond the structural framework and focus further on the role of agency, the interpretation of external constraints, and the roots of previously unforeseen change.

2.1.2. Summary and outlook

This section moved from a classical perspective of rational to a constructivist perspective of autopoietic organization. It has furthermore connected some of the main claims and conceptions of the European Integration and Europeanization literature to the study of organizations. As institutional approaches are of limited use in grasping the complexities that arise within the informal aspects of Twinning projects, a process view of organization has been

introduced as an analytical alternative. Moving beyond conceptions of both rationality and bounded rationality, the notion of autopoiesis was introduced as an alternative approach to organizational behavior. The recursive nature of reproductive systems enables the research to have a perspective which is mainly inward-looking. Organizational learning is therefore understood as the result of recursive cooperative and communicative processes within the project.

This section (2.1.) laid out the epistemological and conceptual groundwork for the study of Twinning from a process perspective. The following three sections (2.2., 2.3. and 2.4.) built on that. The first section takes a closer look at the formal structures under which Twinning projects operate. Utilizing concepts of legitimacy, organizational myths and the ‘garbage can’ model¹³ it establishes how these structures are created in the first place and the extent to which they affect the organizational process. The second section conceptualizes the implementation phase as a process of cooperation and deliberation. The third section establishes organizational learning as the outcome of cooperation and deliberation.

2.2. Formalization of cooperation and the assumed diffusion of norms and practices

Every Twinning project consists of formal structures that precede the implementation process, with the aim of normalizing the Twinning process toward the attainment of specific outputs. Although the focus of this dissertation is the collaborative and deliberative process of Twinning, it is important to establish how its formal framework affects this process. How does

¹³ The “garbage can model” is an analytical model used in political science literature, that will be discussed further in the following sections

it constrain collaboration and deliberation and how do actors make sense of it? The aim of this section is to outline some of the theoretical tools provided by the organizational literature to answer these questions. A better understanding of the formal organizational framework provides a foundation for a more informed discussion of informal and process-related features.

2.2.1. The basic formal structure of Twinning

Enshrined in the Twinning manual is the formal framework of Twinning projects, outlining the perspective of the EU as the donor organization. The Twinning manual, as with any other manual, is an attempt to normalize and institutionalize a process. It meticulously outlines the roles each side is supposed to play, how and what kinds of outputs are to be produced at what stage, and how the whole project should come to an end. The Twinning manual normalizes and formalizes a process that is supposed to produce a standardized product. Accordingly, Tulmets (2011, p. 8) argues that the Twinning manual was specifically created in 2005 to harmonize the rules and procedures that follow Twinning and to make the process more predictable and more transparent to outside observers.

One of the key concepts featured in the Twinning manual is its “mandatory results.” The manual is elaborate on what mandatory results should be.¹⁴ The EU emphasizes that it regards them as the benchmarks of Twinning projects which should therefore be “measurable” and “precise” (European Commission 2012). From this, it follows that the process of cooperation is considered successful when a certain preset target has been reached. It is unsuccessful when a target has either not been reached, or the indicators used to measure it do not signal success.

¹⁴ Mandatory results must be „well defined, focused and achievable (...) make a specific and direct contribution to institution building (...) concrete, clearly measurable for control purposes (...)“ (European Commission 2012)

The Twinning manual is translated into every Twinning project through the so-called fiche, the contract, and the work plan. The fiche is the original project conception. The manual states: “beneficiary country identifies needs within European Commission policy orientations and draft Twinning fiches (...)” (European Commission 2012). The fiche is a preliminary project plan that includes all the foreseen steps in a future project, from the overall outcome to individual activities and a meticulous plan of resource allocation. The fiche is published by the EU. Member-state representatives, alone or in a consortium, bid to become the Twinning counterpart. Once the counterpart is chosen, the fiche is transformed into the formal project framework through the drafting of the contract and the work plan. The work plan is drafted between the project participants, reflecting a strategy to implement the “mandatory results” linked to “measurable benchmarks” (European Commission 2012, p.44). The contract is signed either by a representative of the neighboring country or the EU delegation and representatives of the participating member state(s).¹⁵ In any case, the role of the EU delegation is to ensure that Twinning contracts are in line with the respective bilateral national action programs or annual work plans.

2.2.2. Conceptualizing “mandatory results” and “best practices” through legitimacy and myths

Mandatory results are not only established to structure Twinning projects. They also play a normative role as they should represent “EU-wide best practices.” The Twinning manual states: “A Twinning project [...] strives to help introduce EU-wide best practices in connection with EU legislation.” (European Commission 2012). The manual specifies further that mandatory

¹⁵ There is a difference between the so-called “centralized” and the “de-centralized” procedure. The centralized procedure applies for all countries in the Eastern Partnership (e.g. Moldova). The contracting authority in this case is the EU delegation. That means that the delegation is mainly responsible for the distribution of funds. The de-centralized procedure applies for the countries in the Mediterranean partnership (e.g. Lebanon). The contracting authority is within the domestic administration, usually adjunct to either the ministry of foreign affairs or the prime minister’s office and called “administrative authority.” In this case, the domestic administration is responsible for the distribution of funding, in coordination with the EU delegation (European Commission 2012).

results must be rooted in EU policy orientations and the EU *acquis* (European Commission 2012). Mandatory results are the vehicles to introduce practices which are considered appropriate under EU norms and regulations. Therefore they are given a normative connotation as “best” practice. The use of the term best practices is not unique to EU Twinning and has been discussed and criticized in the organizational and development literature. Pritchett, et al. (2010, p.6) talk about “accelerated modernization via transplanted best practices,” arguing that best practices reforms for most functions of public administrations are “no reform at all.” They “may look impressive, but are often poorly fitted to the needs of those using them, requiring management capacities they do not have, institutionalizing organizational scripts and allocation modalities that [do not reflect] political and organizational realities on the ground.” (Pritchett et al. 2010, p.8). Scott (2003, p.358) argues that the notion of best practices is at odds with organizational learning as it regards organizations primarily as rational production systems that can be re-engineered, rather than natural social systems. Czarniawska and Joerges (1996, p.19) argue that making a project a replica of practices of more “advanced” countries makes it acceptable.

Czarniawska and Joerges (1996) would subsume best practices under certain ideas of administration or organization that travel from one organizational setting to another. Organizational change comes about when these ideas are “turned into action” (Czarniawska & Joerges 1996, p.19). Despite referring to concrete ideas, the outcomes of organizational change can be completely unplanned; a consequence of the notion that ideas need to be translated rather than simply diffused. As Weick and Quinn (1999, p.376) argue: “The impetus for the spread of ideas does not lie with the persuasiveness of the originator of the idea. Instead, the impetus comes from imitators and from their conception of the situation, their self-identity and others’ identity, and their analogical reasoning.”

For Twinning, this means that the translation of mandatory results has by no means come to an end by labeling them “best practices.” Even when the domestic administration is willing to make use of such practices in order to signal compliance, it would still need to go through a domestic process of translation and enactment. If that is not the case, a formally implemented best practice is unlikely to have any effect as it does not fit the domestic DNA and existing practices; the outcome is entirely unknown and cannot be controlled externally. There is a discrepancy between the demand to translate external practices and the high level of formalization of Twinning through contractually fixed mandatory results. This lies precisely in the conceptual difference between diffusion and translation. Whereas the concept of diffusion resonates with the official jargon of the European Commission, translation is assumed to be the main process taking place through cooperation and deliberation.

When mandatory results and best practices are ideas that need to be translated, how are these ideas understood in the first place and why are they apparently accepted at the beginning of a Twinning project? After all, for most tasks in a given public administration there is no such thing as a universally accepted rulebook from which one could draw the most appropriate solution to a given problem. Every problem is ambiguous, so is every solution. Two concepts in particular from the organizational literature may help shine light on this issue: legitimacy and myth.

Gaining legitimacy has been regarded as a core function of organizations as public administration. For DiMaggio and Powell, organizations have to retain a certain outward appearance to their national and international environment to be regarded as legitimate (DiMaggio & Powell 1991, p.155; Hatch 2012, p.74). This resonates with Dowling and Pfeffer’s argument who, drawing on Talcott Parsons, argue that public as well as private organizations are involved in a constant process of legitimation to establish congruence

between their own activities and what is regarded to be acceptable behavior in the larger social system (Dowling & Pfeffer 1975, p.122). Accordingly, legitimization is defined as a “process whereby an organization justifies to a peer or superordinate system its right to exist” (Dowling & Pfeffer 1975, p.123; Maurer 1971, p.361). Legitimization is thus an essential function for organizations, particularly in the public realm where output may not follow supply/demand mechanisms as in the private market. For beneficiary administrations, signing up to the implementation of best practices thus becomes an attempt to establish congruence between own practice and the demands of the environment. The domestic and international (EU) environment in the case of Twinning is interlinked through the existence of action plans and an association agreement. Yet using best practices may affect the external perception of the organization more than its actual practices. It ensures that in the case of Twinning, the EU and the national political leadership regard the administration and its practices as appropriate and in line with wider consideration of how an administration is supposed to function. Yet, formal rules surrounding an organization may be decoupled from actual practices, representing “institutionalized myths”(Meyer & Rowan 1977).

Relating to the term “best practices,” myths are the meaning actors put into such practices that makes them legitimate. Myths are the stories, symbols, and ideas that come with a certain external practice to make it appropriate. Myths have an essentially normative and formal dimension. Meyer and Rowan (1977) refer to the incorporation of institutional rules, regarded as rational and appropriate, as the ceremonial adoption of myths. Those myths function as signals to the external environment, providing an organization and its practices a sense of legitimacy. An important point made by Meyer and Rowan (1977, pp.340–358) concerns the relationship between ceremonial rules and efficiency. Externally legitimate institutional rules may not be congruent with the demands of an organization’s day-to-day practice. Thus, decoupling is taking place where the production of output follows other

(informal) norms rather than ceremonially adopted myths (formal norms). Factors such as the ambiguity of goals or continuous task delegation are outcomes of this decoupling, outcomes that deal with uncertainty while also maintaining legitimacy.

There are a number of traces within the Twinning manual that point to the “mythologization” of European norms and practices. One of those myths is the notion that “the beneficiary country retains ownership of the project, from the conception of the Twinning fiche until the closure of the Twinning Contract” (European Commission 2012). The importance of ownership is mentioned several times in the manual, yet as Chesterman (2007, p.3) argues, “the language of ‘ownership’ is commonly used in state-building operations, but it is not clear that the term has either consistency or substance.” The manual never specifies what is meant by ownership, how it is achieved, who owns what, and so on. Yet ownership is an essential part of the manual, formalized as an outcome of Twinning projects. It is therefore a rationalized myth. Whenever a neighboring country’s administration indulges in a Twinning project, it can justify its focus on EU practices by pointing to the concept of ownership. Upholding the myth of ownership portrays the administration to be in the driving seat. It helps cover up the inherent ambiguity of goals and problems the project is supposed to deal with, and therefore helps it get started in the first place.

Having established that the formal content of Twinning projects, in particular mandatory results and best practices, can be understood in terms of legitimation and myths, one still has to answer the question of how such structures are chosen and enacted. This question goes beyond the formal conception of Twinning projects and looks at how a specific project is formalized in the first place. This includes the choice of specific practices to be enshrined in the work plan, as well as the way external practices are processed into specified activities, outputs, and outcomes through the formulation of a Twinning fiche and the

subsequent Twinning contract. The so-called “garbage can model” provides some important insights, as it argues that change may not come about through problems looking for solutions but rather through solutions looking for problems (Cohen et al. 1972).

2.2.3. “Best practices” seeking problems and vice versa: the garbage can model

Originally, the garbage can model was designed for decision making in organizations under conditions of problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972, p.16). The original model focused on how organizational structures and their change influence decision making in organizations. In later conceptions, both March and Olsen argued that also processes of organizational change could resemble the garbage can model (March & Olsen, 1986, p.25; Olsen, 2001, p.195), particularly useful in examining agenda-setting processes when an organization’s priorities are set to determine further actions and some form of policy implementation (Peters 2002, p.13). If we equate the choice of specific results, as mandatory results in Twinning, with the agenda-setting process, the garbage can model can be instructive. It is an illustration of how an organizational process comes about in the first place in the context of loosely coupled organizations with unclear preferences, unclear technologies, and fluid participation (Hernes 2007, p.99).

“Loose coupling” is an important concept within the garbage can model. It assumes a rather open and uncoordinated relationship between structural units of an organizational process (Scott 2003, p.88).¹⁶ Whereas rational approaches may assume the close interrelation and connection of all units in a given organizational system, particular scholars such as March insist that most units in most organizations may in fact only be loosely connected. Still, there

¹⁶ The concept is well explained by March: “Organizations are complex combinations of activities, purposes, and meanings. (...) This impressive integration of formal organizations should not, however, obscure the many ways in which organizations are loosely coupled. Behavior is loosely coupled to intentions; actions in one part of the organization are loosely coupled to actions in another part; decisions today are loosely coupled to decisions tomorrow (...) Such loose coupling does not appear to be avoidable. Rather, limits on coordination, attention, and control are inherent restrictions on the implementation of rationality in organizational action.” (March 1981, p.574)

is one important difference to March's conception and Twinning. March's assumptions are based on a given organizational structure that has one history. This could be any public agency. In Twinning, the agenda-setting stage precedes the process of two actors from two different organizational backgrounds coming together to commence a project. In such a situation, the effect of loose coupling is amplified. From the perspective of the Twinning manual, the role played by each actor is assumed to be clear. The RTA and her associates provide best practices and convey them to the neighboring country's administration that benefits from the insight of the experts. A perspective of loose coupling would assume that those roles are not so clearly defined and that the straightforward causal relationship between external input and domestic change is dispersed and messy.

Two basic assumptions can be made here. 1) The EU member-state participants of Twinning projects are unclear about their own role and the fit of the best practices solution they are supposed to transfer to the neighboring country. 2) The neighboring country participants are unclear about the fit of the EU practices as they do not have full understanding of either their own administrative problems, or their role in the project.

When goals (relating to the real-world problems an administration should address) and means (the solutions) are unclear, any organizational choice resembles the garbage can model (Hatch 2012, p.279). Three properties of organizational choice should be highlighted. First, fluid participation refers to members in an organization varying in terms of the amount of time and effort they are willing to devote to certain organizational processes. More attention is assumed to be given to outputs rather than inputs in the change process. Second, unclear technology refers to goals of change emerging without a clear understanding of the problem, rather than being centrally imposed. Third, preferences at the decision-making level are assumed to be unclear and inconsistent. Preferences tend to be discovered through action rather

than being given at the beginning of the change process (Zahariadis 1999). All of these features add to the conception of loose coupling in the garbage can model.

Andrews (2013, p.31) talks similarly about reforms as signals in governance structures of developing countries. He asks why consistently “over-specified” and “over-simplified” best practices are used to reform public institutions in developing countries with little connection to the domestic context. He concludes that reforms are often implemented to make institutions “look” but not necessarily “work” better (Andrews 2013, p.215). The argument overlaps both with the garbage can model and myths. What is presented as a model of change is in most cases an attempt to gain legitimacy under conditions of uncertainty. The formal framework of Twinning projects stands in a line with other development projects, often combined under the label “capacity development.”¹⁷ They are more or less based on a Weberian conception of “domination through knowledge” (Weber 1978). The frequent use of the term “technical” in describing tasks and profiles of participants resonates with Weber’s mechanical conception of bureaucracy. This is in stark contrast with a conception of process-based organization that is ambiguous, when the means and ends of an organizational process are unclear. Scholars such as Kühl (2009) stress that underneath the term “capacity development” there is little substance.

March and Olsen (1989, p.82) argue: “Reorganizations tend to become collections of solutions looking for problems, ideologies looking for soapboxes, pet projects looking for supporters, and people looking for jobs, reputations, or entertainment.” The assumption of rationality and predictability at the beginning of a reform-project such as Twinning does not stand up to the challenges posed by the organizational reality. At the start, the organizational

¹⁷ The European Commission also states that: “as well as contributing towards knowledge exchange, these tools [Twinning, SIGMA and TAIEX] are key in promoting peer-to-peer learning and specialized capacity development.” (Gozzi et al. 2012)

context is not understood, roles are not clear, and goals are ambiguous. They cannot relate to the institutional context in terms of, for example, institutional capacity or vested interests.

2.2.4. Summary and outlook

This section has argued that Twinning projects are highly formalized from their inception through the use of best practices, mandatory results, and the Twinning contract. The aim of these structures is the normalization of the Twinning process so that results achieved are predictable and resonate with European Union rules and norms. Utilizing literature on organization, the argument has been presented that mandatory results and best practices actually add little predictability to the process, playing more of a legitimizing than a structuring role. From the start it cannot be established whether they will benefit an existing organizational structure. They rather serve to signal legitimacy in an environment where means and ends are unclear.

It has been established that the choice of mandatory results resembles the garbage can model. Both domestic and EU-based participants of Twinning projects cannot be clear of their own roles, the role of the other, or the actual problem. Therefore, planning a Twinning project becomes a process of solutions looking for problems rather than vice versa. As the implementation phase starts, the means and ends of the project are far from clear, contrary to the assumptions enshrined in the Twinning contract.

When the means and ends are unclear and roles lack definition, how do actors in Twinning projects make sense of themselves and others? Once the project has started, how do they deal with the inherent uncertainty of the process? How do they deal with the presence of actors they have not worked with before—whose motivation, knowledge, and routines are unknown to them? How do the domestic participants deal with the assumptions and approaches

of the EU member-state participants? How do the EU member-state participants deal with an environment that is entirely different from what they are used to, that is much more complex and messy than the information they receive from the fiche? The following section deals with these questions from a process perspective. It provides answers by conceptualizing Twinning as a process of cooperation and deliberation.

2.3. On the micro-level: understanding Twinning as process of cooperation and deliberation

Implementation is a messy process. Implementation in this context does not simply stand for the diffusion of a policy blueprint, but the whole process of activities and human interactions during the span of a Twinning project. It is important to apply some analytical rigor to the complexity observed and to trace the process of sense-making. We are essentially trying to grasp human interaction in the context of a project: what it is that participants say to each other, how they say it, and as a result what they do or don't do together. Hence, we are trying to comprehend how they deliberate and cooperate.

2.3.1. Defining deliberation and cooperation in relation to Twinning

Deliberation represents the communicative aspects of implementation. It looks at the nature and process of regular interaction of project agents during the implementation phase, and emphasizes the importance of verbal discussion among actors around the formal aspects of Twinning projects. It is a process of mutual and recursive sense-making. Through recursive deliberation, the views and understandings of both the project as a whole and its specific formal aspects converge, neither representing a purely domestic nor a purely external blueprint. It is important here to note the difference between deliberation and communication:

Communication represents a wider category that may incorporate all communicative action; deliberation is the specific communication between Twinning participants around the problems and challenges posed by the project during implementation.

Cooperation directly feeds from recursive deliberation between agents, but represents a different quality of interaction. Deliberation has no direct effect on the formal characteristics and boundaries of the Twinning process, but rather on the agent's understanding of it. Cooperation, on the other hand, is understanding put into practice. It represents the way in which the overall process of Twinning is conducted, in which activities are carried out, meetings are held, or decisions on future steps are taken. Deliberation merely establishes an understanding among each actor or group of actors of how activities should be carried out, meetings should be held, and future steps should be taken. Essentially, one is constitutive of the other.

Ongoing deliberation in a setting such as Twinning assumes a constant reinterpretation of the given formal project framework with individual understandings of how given outcomes can or should be reached. The individual understanding is a product of one's own history—in this case particularly, professional and domestic background and one's own interpretation of the current situation at hand. For neighboring country participants, both should be relatively similar as the Twinning project takes place within their own professional and domestic structures. It is different for participants from EU member states. While their professional history may bear some resemblance to the professional environment of Twinning, one can assume it deviates considerably from the domestic context.

We can therefore establish three main aspects that are assumed to have an effect on the understanding of Twinning project participants: 1) the formal structure of Twinning, 2) the professional background, and 3) the domestic background.

It is important to keep professional and domestic separate. Professional background may involve standard procedures of a given profession and own practices that one has come to accept as appropriate in carrying out work. Domestic background may involve further issues such as political, material, or organizational constraints that are not directly related to one's core professional understanding, yet still influence the perception of one's behavior.

It is therefore assumed that throughout the implementation process, the formal Twinning framework is continuously and recursively scrutinized by participants based on domestic and professional understandings. This may lead to two results:

- 1) The understanding of the content of a project changes. It particularly changes from a rationalized and abstract understanding to a specific and practical one. This may develop to a point where the final understanding does not resonate with the original formal and abstract framework anymore. Hence, also the nature of cooperation is affected.
- 2) The understanding of the project harmonizes between external and domestic participants. As deliberation and the scrutinizing of the formal aspects of Twinning is mutual and recursive, also an understanding of one's own profession and the domestic problems at hand change based on the reasoning and the input of the other side.

Mutual and practical understanding is therefore the outcome of deliberation that may not be in line with the original formal framework.

2.3.2. The process of mutual recursive deliberation

The concept of deliberation has been used within constructivist accounts of European integration and organizational studies. Yet as Checkel argues, it has often been critically underspecified, resulting in a lack of clarity and definition (Checkel & Moravcsik 2001, p.225). How do we know deliberation when we see it? How can it be explained and what effect does it have? At its most basic, deliberation may simply be understood as the process of arguing toward reaching a certain decision (cf. Brassett et al. 2011, p.3). The importance here is that arguing is an instrumental process. How can we conceptualize what that decision may be and to what effect?

Risse (2000, pp.6–7) departs from the idea that a “logic of appropriateness” is the main guiding force toward actors making decisions. He states that when the meaning of norms are unclear and contested, actors cannot follow a logic of appropriateness, but have to indulge in a “logic of arguing” to reach a consensus on how norms should be interpreted and applied. We can assume that actors in Twinning projects are likely to follow a logic of arguing. Experiences and routines are diverse and the time between the signature of the contract and the start of implementation is generally long (usually more than a year). Thus, the Twinning contract is limited in defining what is appropriate in day-to-day project implementation. Making sense of the situation at hand and creating any sort of coherent action within the project necessitates some process of argumentation in order to find common ground. In this sense, arguing is instrumental in a framework that forces actors to make decisions in a context not clearly understood by either side. Even when mandatory results are contested, they remain part of the project and have to be dealt with. This is why deliberation and arguing are important. Convergence and common ground on decision making can only be achieved through some form of deliberative interaction. It creates common understanding on how to translate abstract and rationalized criteria in the contract into immediate and practical action.

Persuasion is another concept that can help to specify deliberation. Checkel (2001, p.562) differentiates between so-called manipulative and argumentative persuasion. Manipulative persuasion is coercive and focuses on the strategical change of views of target actors. Argumentative persuasion leaves some choice to the persuadee as it is based on convincing. Persuasion differs from arguing as it delineates a linear and correlative relationship between deliberation and action. In both coercive and argumentative persuasion, the deliberative action from one side leads to the convergence of the perception of the other. Hence, the perception of one side remains stable, the other changes. This is not in line with the concept of argumentation or an approach of mutual deliberation.

Djelic and Quack (2003, p.19) argue that one must differentiate between situations where actors have privileged access to resources that allows them to promote their normative frames and develop collective understandings. In Twinning, access to resources is dispersed. Whereas domestic participants have key knowledge on domestic practices and scope conditions, external participants have knowledge on policy alternatives and external practices. Both kinds of knowledge are instrumental in making sense of and scrutinizing the formal structure in order to translate it into action. In contrast to a linear relationship, as in persuasion, deliberation follows a cyclical and recursive pattern. One may call it mutual persuasion. In Twinning, both sides enter a project with different perceptions of the nature and goals of the project, based on their domestic and professional background. It cannot be assumed that one perception will persist over another, but rather that perceptions will approximate. Deliberation in Twinning is mutual, recursive, and rather non-hierarchical. Particularly from an autopoietic perspective, mutual deliberation is crucial. A system such as a Twinning project is organized and maintained by its internal network of communication without any direct reference to the outside (Lourenço 2010, p.6). Only when communication can be upheld internally, can we speak of Twinning as a system, as something that is possibly sustainable and influential beyond

its own formal duration. Based on the above assumptions, how does deliberation link with cooperation and organizational learning?

Nearly half a century ago, Albert Hirschman (1967, pp.13–15) observed a number of World Bank projects from which he developed the concept of “the hiding hand.” Hirschman observed that even projects considered successful hardly ever went as planned. The “hiding hand” implies that as projects are planned under a veil of rationality, future difficulties and problems remain hidden. Yet as problems necessarily occur, they can only be tackled through improvisation and creativity. Picking up on Hirschman, Biggs and Smith (2003, p.1753) stress the importance of project participants to address the issues that lie beyond the technical side of project management, emphasizing cultural aspects of organizations. For them, the use of terms such as “bureaucratic,” “mechanical,” or “old school” implies the importance of culture on projects. Culture is a complex and highly contested concept, but still it brings considerable advantages to the study of deliberation and learning as it embodies “specific, visible and tangible products of social systems” (Weick & Westley 1999, p.442). Yanow (2000, p.248) argues that a cultural perspective on organization must essentially focus on situated meaning. Situated meaning is meaning that is local and site specific, therefore not universal or generalizable. This resonates with Weick’s approach of enactment, arguing that actors establish categories and labels to make sense of their environment (Hernes 2007, p.115). Hence, organizational phenomena are subjective as they are enacted. As autopoietic organizations can never fully grasp external reality, they have to enact it themselves to make sense of it.

The enactment of reality is realized through the creation of artifacts that embody shared meaning. A cultural perspective emphasizes artifacts that actors create, such as values, beliefs, feelings, or other forms of meaning (Yanow 2000, p.252), hence artifacts structure deliberation. They include group-acts such as sitting at a table and talking to each other, or the specific

language that is used (Yanow 2000, p.252). At the beginning of each Twinning project, actors can be assumed to bring in their own enacted reality. This includes their own artifacts such as practices or organizational myths. As there is no objective understanding of the formal project framework, interpretations diverge. Yet through the process of deliberation, each actor's interpretation is re-enacted through: 1) continued interaction with the formal framework based on previous experience and 2) continued interaction with the perception of the artifacts produced by the others.

As a result, the project becomes an arena of deliberation, producing its own artifacts that diverge from those original ones brought to the table by each group of actors. Hirschman put it more simply by saying: “creativity always comes as a surprise to us” (Hirschman 1967, p.13). When blueprint solutions have no value, creativity is needed to find solutions that are responsive to the context and resonate with everybody involved. To find those, it is deliberation that is necessary.

The concept of deliberation helps us understand changed perceptions project participants have of their own roles and the roles of their peers. It cannot tell us how a changed understanding translates into common action through project activities. As individual understanding and formal/rationalized meaning become common understanding and shared meaning, individual processes and activities become common and shared. Thus, cooperation becomes the main mode of action within the project.

2.3.3. The process of cooperation

The term “cooperation” is used by the European Union in defining its relations to its neighboring countries. Agreements are signed to strengthen democratic and economic relations through “more than simple cooperation” (European Union External Action Service 2014;

European Commission 2010). The Twinning manual (European Commission 2012) also states that Twinning is based on partnership cooperation between public administrations and EU member states, and that it encourages partners to work in close cooperation. Cooperation is a major theme within the ENP. Yet it is inappropriate to analytically reproduce the terminology of the EU as it has no meaning in itself and may simply represent an organizational myth. It is not specified what it entails, how it comes about and how it evolves. Yet it is appealing as it depicts a sense of equality and non-hierarchy. Its purpose is to legitimize a formal structure, contractually binding the EU with a neighboring country, the implications and outcomes of which are essentially unclear.

The treatment of cooperation as process aims to distance itself from cooperation as organizational myth. Cooperation as process entails embedding it into the process of deliberation, both of which should lead to organizational learning. Before analyzing the relationship between cooperation and deliberation, we have to first define what cooperation actually is.

The literature on epistemic communities, bridging international relations and public administration, has been very active in conceptualizing cooperative settings on the international and domestic level. According to Thomas (1997, p.225), “in a cooperative relationship individuals work together because they want to [...] they accommodate their actions in accord with the desires of their partners.” Such a definition goes back to more classical understandings of what organization entails. Chester Barnard argues that organization is “that kind of cooperation among men that is conscious, deliberate and purposeful” (1938, p.3) and that individuals work together to achieve things they cannot achieve individually (p.23). In his definition of cooperation, Thomas (1997, p.226) goes further by stating that external incentives are needed to encourage stable cooperation. Twinning lacks commonly accepted incentives of

a monetary or professional nature.¹⁸ Incentives can therefore not be considered as drivers of cooperation.

Coming back to Barnard's definition of organization as a cooperative process, communication and the development of an organizational culture come to the forefront. Although Barnard wrote from the point of view of a hierarchical organization, he emphasized communication linking all participants (Scott 2003, p.67). He claimed that material incentives are weak in organizational life compared to psychological and social motivation (Scott 2003, p.67; Barnard 1938, p.144). Barnard comes to the conclusion that the most important aspect of successful cooperation is the securing of "morale" among participants being "willing" to cooperate (Barnard 1938, p.279; Scott 2003, p.68). What Barnard described as "morale" resonates with the notion of culture as used by Yanow (2000). Hence, the artifacts created through deliberation define the course and nature of cooperation. Once a common sense of understanding of the project and its various parts is developed, cooperation comes about as a direct result. Participants do not cooperate because they are forced or because they are lured into it through incentives but because, as Thomas (1997, p.225) insists, they want to. They want to cooperate because their own understanding of the real world is influenced by common artifacts created through deliberation in Twinning. When the understanding of a solution came about through deliberation between different parties, cooperation is the natural next step toward putting understanding into practice. As their new means-ends understanding is a result of engaging with their counterpart, cooperation follows logically to put these understandings into practice. One can already establish at this stage that when deliberation falls apart, when either

¹⁸ Monetary incentives would include things such as compensation payments for extra work or a general salary raise. Professional incentives would be the prospect of a more senior position or any other kind of benefits towards a participant's career perspective in the agency. To the contrary, in interviews Twinning was frequently described as extra work.

the RTA side is unwilling to engage with the domestic particularities or the RTA-counterpart with experience of the RTA, cooperation is not possible. Hence, the project fails.

Deliberation and cooperation constitute organization as process. Shared understandings and views directly translate into action as the perceptions of means and ends are shared and project participants develop a sense of belonging. The understanding of Twinning becomes enacted through deliberation and cooperation, from a formal and abstract description in the Twinning manual to a value- and substance-laden shared idea within the specific project. Notions such as trust in the decision making of others, or respect in the competences of the counterpart take precedence over more traditionally assumed drivers of cooperation such as incentives and coercion.

The notion of shared means-ends perceptions and shared artifacts resonates with Lindberg and Czarniawska's conception of boundary objects (2006, p.298). Observing a Swedish healthcare project based on the coordination of several formally distinct health care units, they discovered that the main drivers of cooperation were mantras such as "cooperation for the sake of the patient" providing a "collective basis for the participants" (2006, p.298). Although boundary objects themselves are stable, they mean different things for each participant from a different organizational setting. Such boundary objects can also be found in Twinning projects. All projects work in a specific policy sector and on a specific theme, so these themes act as boundary objects. For example, a project in Moldova was called 'Support to the Main State Inspectorate for Market Surveillance, Metrology and Consumer Protection.' The RTA was an expert on consumer protection in Great Britain working within the consumer protection inspectorate in Moldova. Although the understanding of what consumer protection is and what it entails differs between the RTA and her Moldovan counterparts, the notion of

the necessary protection of the consumer is shared and therefore a boundary object. This becomes the starting point of deliberation.

In the healthcare project, Lindberg and Czarniawska (2006, p.296) quote one of their interviewees: “Have you forgotten what you agreed to do for us? Look at the contract!,” indicating that a contract provides stable structures within which cooperation takes place. The main difference is that Lindberg and Czarniawska’s study is based on one policy sector in a highly developed and deeply institutionalized country, Sweden. In such a context, a contract may provide more predictability and stability than in an EU-neighboring country–EU member-state relationship. The existence of a contract in Twinning is also a driver for cooperation. It defines what the project should establish. Yet it is considerably contested by project participants. The above mentioned quote “Look at the contract!” may thus be contrasted by the statement of an RTA in one of the interviews:

I think the difference about this project is that from the very start that we cannot achieve everything that is in this contract. (Member_State#32).

2.3.4. From deliberative cooperation to organizational learning

Up to this point, two stages of the Twinning process have been conceptualized. The first stage consisted of the formalization of the project based on isomorphic best practices solutions through a garbage can model-like selection process. In the second stage, deliberation and cooperation are established as sense-making processes of the formal framework, translating abstract formal demands into practical and shared solutions. The final part is concerned with how the outcome of the deliberative cooperation process is conceptualized. What does all the deliberation and cooperation over one-and-a-half to two years lead to? The argument this dissertation follows is that the outcome can be conceptualized as organizational learning.

Defining organizational learning as an outcome may sound contradictory. After all, learning is commonly understood as a process. Learning, as deliberation and cooperation, takes place during implementation. The three processes are essentially linked in time and space. Deliberation and cooperation are based on the individual micro-level and describe “what actually happens.” Organizational learning translates this process onto the organizational level to show how new behavior or routines may stick and be sustained. It therefore helps establish how Twinning may affect the institutional structure of an organization beyond the formal aspects of implementation. Organizational learning is therefore an outcome.

2.3.5. Summary and main claims

Based on the limitations of Twinning’s formal structure in guiding the implementation process, actors in Twinning must deliberate to enact their own reality of what the project is about. Through deliberation, actors translate their own understanding of the situation, the possibilities and the problems of the project into common artifacts that enhance mutual understanding and alignment. In order to put mutual understanding into action, actors need to cooperate. Activities are reinterpreted in line with new understandings and common artifacts. This alters previously taken-for-granted routines and represents a direct interaction with the short-sightedness of process as formally enshrined in the contract.

2.4. From micro to meso: Paths to organization learning through Twinning

How do we know that cooperation and deliberation has led to learning, to changed routines and a common perception of problems and solutions? How do we know that what was learned within the project is sustained within the wider administrative environment in which the Twinning project was based? This last section of the theoretical framework concludes on the outcome of Twinning as a process. Organizational learning provides a particular perspective

on the impression that is left on the participants not just during, but also after the implementation process. Based on the understanding of what is happening within Twinning it furthermore discusses the conditions that prevent lessons learned to be sustained after the project ceases.

2.4.1. Learning as an outcome

A recent European Union evaluation study comes to the conclusion that: “compared to traditional cooperation work that generally focuses on expert deliverables, the Twinning instrument provides [...] great learning resources and opportunities” (Bouscharain & Moreau, 2012, p.70). Though it does not emphasize further what it means by “learning,” the quote exemplifies the notion that Twinning projects lead to more than just the one-to-one transfer of practices.

Notions of learning have been fashionable in political and organizational studies for some time now. In the political sciences, specifically European integration literature, the term “policy learning” is commonly used to describe an instrumental means-ends approach where certain groups or coalitions advocate one policy solution over others (cf. Stone 2012, p.488; Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier 1993). In organizational studies, the term “organizational learning” is used instead of “policy learning”. In contrast to policy learning, organizational learning is generally not perceived as instrumental. It refers to a natural process within organizational structures through actors making sense of the past and the complex present by drawing implications on individual and organizational behavior (March 1981). The policy learning approach does not resonate with processes of cooperation and deliberation. When both means and ends are unclear, learning cannot be an instrumental process. Organizational learning lends itself to analysis as a collective process of sense-making that does not lead to a priorly defined end, but rather to a solution that is the outcome of interaction.

Organizational learning is directly connected to the idea of organizational knowledge. It describes the updating of both individual and organizational knowledge that enables better decision making in a complex environment. Andrews' (2013, pp.128–129) approach, “problem-driven learning,” resonates with this perspective: he argues that external reform interventions in developing countries can be successful if they are reflective of domestic problems that occur during the project. Reflection on these problems leads to a constructive search for local alternatives, and searching for and finding those alternatives constitutes problem-driven learning. Andrew's approach is in line with a deliberative, cooperative approach. Yet Andrews' conclusion indicates a genuinely positive outcome of domestic problem-based deliberation and cooperation: learning leading to improvement and as in creating better and more sustainable institutions. I argue that although this is desirable, learning does not necessarily have to be positive or lead to direct improvements.

Andrews' problem-based learning resonates with the conception of experiential learning where organizations act and observe to draw implications for future actions (March & Olsen 1989, p.59). Yet March is more cautious in defining the outcomes of an organizational learning process. Levinthal and March (1993) stress the limits of organizational learning and the possibility of false lessons learned. Whereas both pairs of authors emphasize that successful organizations are reflective of their own experience and use it to update their institutional structure, cognitive limits on the individual and the organizational level represent limits to learning. The existence of cognitive limits on the individual level aligns with an autopoietic, inward-looking perspective.

Following Hirschman's principle of the hiding hand (1967, p.13), development projects by their nature are prone to underestimate the problems they may face. Positive results are rather stumbled upon than foreseen. As he puts it: “man falls into error, but not into truth”

(Hirschman 1967, p.15). Levinthal and March (1993) argue that learning processes even in the most problem-driven organizations tend to simplify an inherently complex reality in order to draw conclusions that can be neatly fed into the existing institutional structure. Furthermore, due to the complexity of the problem, learning tends to focus on specific aspects only. Learning tends to sacrifice long-run over short-run problems, favor problems that are spatially nearer than further away, overemphasize success and underemphasize failures (Levinthal & March 1993, p.110).

Despite different conclusions, March's experiential- and Andrews' problem-driven learning both agree that it is a direct outcome of recurrent interactions between agents and organizational settings. Agents make sense of their own role, the role of others and the nature of the organization. This may still be flawed and continued learning may further or lessen the agents understanding. Yet the important aspect from an organizational level is that it is a collective process where perceptions align. The production of artifacts creates meaning that both feeds back into and stabilizes the process of deliberative cooperation.

Having established that deliberation, cooperation, and learning are mutually constitutive, we are left with the questions of how a process of organizational learning actually unfolds within a Twinning project, what its impact may be—both for and beyond the project—and where its limits are.

2.4.2. Experiential learning in Twinning: from deliberative cooperation to trial and error

Differentiating between deliberation and cooperation and a process of learning is by no means obvious or straightforward. Since both are mutually constitutive, one observes them as one consistent stream of experience in real life. In projects such as Twinning, meetings constantly

take place, presentations are held, views are exchanged, coffee-break conversations lead to new insights, contacts are shared, and so on. Further, participants constantly stumble into each other, e-mails are exchanged on a daily basis, project deliverables are discussed, produced, changed and reproduced. During these processes, people change their views, change their behavior that after a certain amount of time may lead them to conclude that they have learned. Such learning may be called individual learning. Individual learning is an important observation when studying deliberation and cooperation as it gives a sense that both processes have had an effect. Yet if it is only individual learning that we observe and describe, we are very limited in drawing conclusions of what may happen at the organizational level, being unable to point to any sustainable institutional changes.

Under individual learning, a number of individuals may have changed their views or adapted their work routines. This does not tell us much about how a group of people—an administration—may have changed, as individual learning is concerned with the change of subjective meaning. Organizational learning, on the other hand, is concerned with the change of intersubjective meaning. This is an important distinction. Weick and Westley argue that a lot of the literature is at fault by treating organizational and individual learning as synonymous (1999, p.441). The differentiation between subjective and intersubjective meaning is regarded as a conceptual “way out.” Yanow (2000, p.255) defines organizational learning as “the acquiring, sustaining or changing of intersubjective meanings through the artifactual vehicles of their expression and transmission and the collective actions of the group.” Focusing on expression and collective action, this definition further stresses the important role deliberation and cooperation play in conceptualizing organizational learning.

The concept of intersubjectivity helps to further qualify the classical definition of organizational learning, arguing that action in organizations can be seen as stemming from

experiential learning. In experiential learning: “the underlying process is one in which an organization is conditioned through trial and error to maintain rules that have been successful in the past and to abandon rules that have been unsuccessful” (March 1981).¹⁹ In March’s original definition, organizational actors engage directly with the environment: organizations are faced with a problem, a solution is tried out. If the environment sends positive feedback the solution is kept, if it sends out negative signals a new solution is sought. The environment in a private setting may constitute customers and competitors, in the public sector it may constitute the government, the donor, or the citizens concerned. In the context of Twinning, this definition falls short.²⁰

When the process of cooperation and deliberation constitutes organizational learning, learning in a Twinning project is not an outside-looking and context-minding process, but an inside-looking one. Whereas March’s definition would assume an environment that exerts direct influence on the project, an autopoietic perspective would assume that a direct interaction with the environment is not possible. The environment is therefore internalized.

We have to remind ourselves that the basis of Twinning is an administrator from an EU member state (RTA) being posted into an administration, directly collaborating with an administrator from an EU-neighboring country (RTA-counterpart) toward the achievement of certain reform goals. The RTA represents a group of administrators from one or more EU countries that come and go. The RTA-counterpart represents the wider group of administrators affected by the project. Both groups are at the beginning completely unaligned, the signals each side receives do not come directly from the environment but from the other side of the project,

¹⁹ This quotation also exemplifies the extent to which the concept of organization in organizational studies and institutions in political sciences are linked. As March and Olsen state nearly word for word the same sentence in the book “Institutions rediscovered,” considered one of the key texts in the institutional approach to political sciences, with the exception of one word: “The underlying process is one in which an institution is conditioned through trial and error to maintain rules that have been successful in the past and to abandon rules that have been unsuccessful. The model is one of trial and error learning” (March & Olsen 1989, p.59).

²⁰ In this case the donor is the European Commission.

the RTA from the RTA-counterpart and vice versa. Experiential learning in Twinning therefore means making sense of the counterpart. Trial and error means engaging with the artifacts that are related to the other side, such as concepts used, ways of framing professional issues or documents produced to legitimize ones approach. Meaning at the beginning is essentially subjective, carried by one side opposed to the other.

Learning is therefore a sense-making process closely connected to the internal processes of deliberation and cooperation. Translation processes lead to the production of common artifacts that resemble intersubjective meaning as inherent in the RTA—RTA-counterpart relationship.

2.4.3. The myopia of Twinning, the limits of learning and the persistence of the status quo

Once a Twinning project has established intersubjective meaning within its core group of participants, it has to be further translated into administrative practices that challenge existing routines. If such a translation process does not take place, lessons learned are lost, and the administration will simply return to its status quo once the project is over.

One may imagine a Twinning project within the statistical office of a given country toward the end of its implementation phase. Through the constant exchange of ideas and concepts, the RTA-counterpart has come to the understanding that certain data analysis techniques presented by the RTA can be adapted to the statistical production processes of the ministry she works in. These solutions may be perceived as adding legitimacy to the administration as they signal efficiency to the domestic government and compliance to the international donor. Yet it is also the conviction of the RTA-counterpart that these solutions are grounded and fit, as they came about through deliberative cooperation with the RTA.

“Implementing” new practices must entail the change of routines of not only the people directly involved in the management of the project, but of the whole ministry staff concerned. They may have participated in some Twinning-related activities, or not have been involved at all.

What is needed to change the organizational routines that are partially beyond the scope of the Twinning project? Once the RTA and her team have left, the people affected by the project have to engage with the wider administrative structure, including existing routines and norms. It is at this point that the theoretical model reaches its limits.²¹ Any specific change beyond the project framework depends on the interplay of the specific domestic institutional structures with the outcomes of the Twinning project. Any explanation could therefore only be given on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, instead of attempting to construct a fussy model of how lessons learned from Twinning change administrative structures, it is more appropriate to isolate and conceptualize possible obstacles in a domestic context that oppose routine changes. To establish this, it is first of all important to establish what is meant by routines in relation to organizational learning.

Routines are strongly tied to the artifacts produced by the organization. Since artifacts are the embodiment of meaning, defining what is appropriate and what is not, routines can be assumed to be built around them (Hernes 2007, p.74). Routines are the vehicles that help match organizational artifacts to specific situations, legitimizing action under uncertainty (Levitt & March 1988, p.320). Within Twinning, each side brings their own artifacts to the table; new, common artifacts are created through the recursive deliberation around them and the eventual alignment of meaning, a process that is endogenous to the project.

²¹ In his analysis of the development agenda of the World Bank, Stein (2008, p.259) argues: “One way to improve organizations in the context of the state is to focus on improving a few units within the government and then allow mimetic isomorphism to spread through the rest of it.” Essentially, Stein argues that through targeted projects such as Twinning, larger administrative bodies can be motivated to take over practices and ideas established by Twinning through isomorphic pressure, based on an organisational uncertainty and the need to portray legitimacy. This suggests that there may be a pattern of learning spreading through the organization. Nevertheless, in the context of the given dissertation, this would be difficult to establish empirically as such processes tend to happen over longer periods of time than the ones observed and are difficult to disentangle from other internal and external factors.

There are considerable limits toward translating endogenous processes beyond the sphere of Twinning. On the one hand, a Twinning project can never fully incorporate all actors within an administration that have some stake in the issue at hand. The RTA and RTA-counterpart will always be more involved than the sidelined junior or senior staff. On the other hand, public administrations are not fully closed off: as embodied in any organigram, public administrations are part of a wider institutional structure. For example, a customs agency may be part of the organizational structure of the Ministry of Economy at the same time as it is subject to the decisions made by the government. The less involved an actor or a group of actors is in a Twinning project, the less their routines will be affected by its activities. Once the Twinning project is over, the RTA no longer has influence on the production of meaning. It depends on the action of the domestic actors closely associated to the project as to whether newly created artifacts are communicated. As the wider administrative structure can be regarded as autopoietic in the same way as Twinning projects, it is entirely up to the Twinning participants to communicate lessons from Twinning projects as external inputs are highly limited.

This also means that the further communication of lessons learned can have a lasting impact on existing routines. Yet existing routines may also prevail and the artifacts created through Twinning may become meaningless. As knowledge and routines are recursively reproduced in the organization, they become sticky. Although a Twinning project can influence that process, it cannot control what is happening beyond it. One implication may therefore be that the more inclusive a Twinning project is toward the wider institutional environment it is based in, the more likely it is that it creates lasting change. Andrews (2013, p.107) in particular emphasizes the importance of inclusiveness on the impact of institutional reforms in the public sector.

So how do we know whether a Twinning project was inclusive or not? The answer lies both in structural features of the domestic administrative setting as well as in the design of the project. In terms of the domestic administrative setting we may differentiate between the type of administration, internal administrative issues, and political background. In terms of the project design, the length of the project and the amount of actors included are important.

Public administration at national executive level may take the form of either an independent agency or a ministerial unit. Although agencies are often closely linked to a ministry, at least by definition they act independently of political and external administrative influence. The actual independence may vary and one can assume that a certain level of politicization is common in most of these agencies. Yet in any case it is less directly influenced by institutional constraints than a unit in a ministry that has directly defined superiors and may depend on the interaction with other ministerial units for the securing of basic resources. As well as being less influenced by domestic institutional pressures, independent agencies are under pressure to signal legitimacy and competence, unable as they are to legitimate themselves by being part of a wider ministerial structure. Legitimacy therefore has to come from the outside, for example from a given professional environment. As there is an increasing trend of agencification, particularly in Europe, one can assume a strong presence of isomorphic pressures to model oneself after “best practices” (cf. Thatcher 2002, p.126). Therefore, independent agencies should be more inclined to actively seek external input and be more susceptible to the communication and reproduction of lessons learned and to organizational learning.

Internal administrative issues particularly concern the composition and fluctuation of staff. “When people leave, without mechanisms for transferring personal experience among decision makers, the lessons of history are lost, knowledge disappears, the institution's memory

is reduced” (Carley 1992, p.20). High levels of turnover make it difficult to sustain lessons learned. When there is little staff turnover, artifacts from Twinning projects can travel easier and stick better. The more fluctuation there is, the less the memory of a Twinning project will be preserved, the more ambiguous routines will become. Organizational learning depends strongly on an interpretation of the past and the existence of an organizational memory, the more staff fluctuation there is the less such a memory can be contained. Under conditions of high staff fluctuation, an administration loses most of its organizational features as it is simply a formal structure with changing individuals who make sense of it in an entirely ungrounded and arbitrary way. Artifacts produced by Twinning are to a large extent informal and depend on their maintenance by individuals that are able to communicate them further and enact them in their day-to-day work.

The more the mandate and the nature of the tasks performed by an administration changes and the more diverse tasks administrative staff has to handle, the less the artifacts produced by Twinning can be preserved. When tasks are changed, routines informed by Twinning artifacts become irrelevant and new ones have to be learned, mainly through trial and error (Levitt & March 1988, p.321). Overworked staff handling various tasks at the same time and mixing routines leads necessarily to a dilution of routines internalized via Twinning. This is simply a coping mechanism.

Political background does link to the previous two aspects but adds its own dimension: the politicization of an administration may create incentives to adapt working routines to what is considered politically appropriate, particularly in a very hierarchical administrative setting. Therefore, political changes after a Twinning project can have a considerable impact on administrative behavior and the relevance of Twinning-based artifacts. Politicization may also lead to staff fluctuation that creates insecurity in an administration and has an effect on the

amount of work that administrators have to carry out. Politicization is furthermore an issue that the EU member-state side of Twinning projects has to adapt to. As the projects are framed as a technical endeavor, particularly RTAs will have little knowledge of the political influence on the routines of the neighboring country's administration. Through deliberation they have to come to terms with the political reality in the project or their input remains highly limited.

The length of a Twinning project may impact its potential to facilitate organizational learning considerably. Twinning projects may last from one-and-a-half to two years with the possibility of up to a six-month extension. The creation of common artifacts is a long-term process that may go through various recursive cycles of deliberation and cooperation. The less time a project is given, the more likely it is that either no common artifacts are created, or only inconclusive ones that are quickly discarded after the project.

The above list of obstacles shows that the translation of artifacts from a Twinning project into the wider administrative environment is far from assured. Particularly in places where political stability, administrative underfunding, and a lack of resources is the rule rather than the exception, these obstacles are an issue. Most public administrations in European neighborhood countries encompass some or all of these features. This does not diminish the value of understanding the internal mechanisms and processes of Twinning. A project may eventually fail or fade into irrelevance as a result of external factors that cannot be controlled. Nevertheless, this dissertation points to the complex processes of internal deliberation and cooperation. It aims to demonstrate the potential to create lasting organizational learning rather than outline a particular mechanism under which it is assured to take place. This brings us back full circle to the quotation at the beginning of this chapter. All development projects are problem-ridden. Only those projects that creatively overcome problems are the ones that have an impact. I argue that these problems can be overcome by deliberation and cooperation. Only

once they have been overcome and solutions are created that have a lasting effect beyond the project can we begin to talk about organizational learning.

2.4.4. Summary and main claims

Organizational learning takes place within every Twinning project. As participants collaborate and cooperate with each other, they update their own understanding through the creation of common artifacts. Through organizational learning, participants make sense of the Twinning project and develop a common, intersubjective understanding of it.

In order to sustain lessons learned and common artifacts, that which is learned within the project has to be communicated to the wider administrative context. If Twinning participants do not manage to externalize the artifacts created, they cannot be sustained in the long run and will be forgotten or remain meaningless. The way these artifacts are spread highly depends on the specific domestic structure within which the project is based. Certain obstacles can be defined, such as a high level of politicization, staff movements, and short project duration. Given these obstacles, sustainable organizational learning becomes less likely, yet not entirely impossible. A conception of organizational learning therefore provides a fundament for further studies on the impact of Twinning in the long run on a case-by-case basis.

3. Research Methodology: Qualitative interpretation of Twinning data

3.1. Introduction: toward a data collection methodology to study deliberation and cooperation

What do we need in order to study sense-making through deliberation and cooperation in Twinning projects? We need an approach that: 1) brings us closest to the actors' original ideas and their communicative structures, and 2) allows us to step back and theoretically evaluate the data gathered. Only together can these two steps enable us to say something meaningful about the development and effect of the key processes observed beyond their pure reproduction. Therefore, data collection and data analysis have to be kept apart practically, but at the same time be combinable analytically. The following sections explore both: appropriate data collection and analysis methodologies, as well as their practical synthesis in the subsequent analysis.

3.1.1. Choosing case studies

Before going further into the collection of specific types of data, it has to be established where it is collected. EU Twinning projects are currently carried out in approximately twenty countries that have an association, cooperation, or pre-accession agreement with the European Union. Twelve of those are ENP (European Neighborhood Policy) countries. Covering in any sort of consistent manner most projects in most of these countries would substantially stretch the scope of a PhD dissertation. Despite the relatively grounded approach of this research, certain case selection criteria had to be used in order to decide which Twinning projects should be studied. According to Saldaña (2011), cases may be chosen within a qualitative approach either deliberately, strategically, or based on convenience. The first two criteria tend to be commonly accepted whereas the third is often overlooked or not mentioned. A deliberate case

may therefore be: 1) one that is chosen because of its unique character, 2) a strategic one—deemed to represent a typical kind among other cases or 3) a convenient one—as the researcher knows he or she can gain access to it. The case selection for this dissertation combines elements of all three.

To gather a good overview of Twinning projects in a given domestic context, small countries are more suitable than large ones. Countries like Ukraine have seen a high number of Twinning projects in a large number of sectors. An in-depth study of Twinning in such a country could certainly have its benefits, particularly when examining the wider sphere of EU–third country relations. Nevertheless, it would be very difficult to cover Twinning in such a country in its entirety. In a smaller country like Moldova on the other hand, only approximately thirteen Twinning projects have taken place since the mid-2000s. The countries chosen should also be in different geographical areas in order to account for a wider variety of narratives and domestic particularities. Furthermore, the countries should differ in terms of their relation to the European Union. Whereas one country should be more inclined toward EU integration, the other should have little to no membership perspective. This should provide a broad enough perspective on the diversity of countries within the ENP. As a result of the above criteria, Moldova and Lebanon were chosen as research sites for empirical data collection. Both countries are comparable inasmuch as they are relatively small, having implemented a manageable number of just over ten Twinning projects at the time of inquiry; and both are relatively unstable politically, although for different reasons that are explored in the following chapters.

3.1.2. Data collection

Sampling what data to seek may, as Miles and Huberman (2014, p.31) argue, look easy but actually involves careful decision making on where to seek one's data and from whom. There

is a wide array of people involved in Twinning projects who fulfill different functions. Plunging into the field aiming to gather all data that seems somehow relevant is not a viable approach as it makes data collection messy and arbitrary. The theoretical framework serves as the main focal point for defining viable data sources. My theoretical framework differentiates between formally given structures at the beginning of Twinning projects and informal deliberation and cooperation during Twinning. This directs the research to three key data sources which can be divided into two main categories.

The first category pertains to documentation. Documentation refers to all kinds of formal agreements, planning, and information produced before, during, and after a given Twinning project. For an understanding of the formal structures under which a Twinning project is created, documentation is key. What is particularly important are Twinning fiches. They outline the aims, activities, duration, and funding of the project and act as bases for the selection of member-state counterparts. Fiches are the basis of the contract signed at the start of every Twinning project. The outputs they outline act as benchmarks throughout implementation toward whether a project is on track or not. Concerning deliberation and cooperation, the quarterly reports produced by Twinning participants are key as they are supposed to document the progress of the project in relation to the Twinning contract every six months. The only problem pertaining to these reports is that they are handled differently in different countries. In Moldova access was easier as most reports were not classified. In Lebanon, access was practically impossible as they were deemed classified information. Quarterly reporting thus informs the analysis is not considered main data as comparable sources from Lebanon are lacking.

The second category is interview data. For the formal framework of Twinning projects, this kind of data is secondary, mainly used to inform and clarify the content of fiches and

contracts. Yet for the second part, deliberation and cooperation, interviews are the main source of information. Interviews were conducted with as many people as possible involved in the implementation process of Twinning. Still, focus was given specifically to the RTA and the RTA-counterpart. They are established in the theoretical chapter as the main actors during implementation. Despite the focus on RTAs and RTA-counterparts, for some projects either the RTA or the RTA-counterpart could not be traced or was not available for an interview. These projects were covered by interviewing the so-called project leaders from each side. Project leaders are the superiors of the respective RTA and RTA-counterpart. Projects leaders are not directly involved in the day-to-day implementation of the project but are supposed to be in regular contact with the respective RTA and RTA-counterpart. This makes them relevant as key sources to grasp deliberative and cooperative action within a project. To gain further information on the context in which Twinning projects act, interviews were held with representatives of EU delegations in each country and the domestic project administration office, an agency which is dedicated by each national government to domestically coordinate Twinning projects.

| | Documentation | | Interviews | | | |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| Kind of data | Twinning fiche / contract | Quarterly reporting | RTA / RTA-counterparts | Project leaders | EU delegation | Domestic project administration office |
| Relation to the theoretical framework | Basis of analyzing formal aspects of Twinning | Informing process of deliberation and cooperation during Twinning | Basis of analyzing deliberation and cooperation process and organizational learning | Informing analysis on deliberation and cooperation processes and organizational learning | Informing analysis on deliberation and cooperation processes and organizational learning | Informing analysis on deliberation and cooperation processes and organizational learning |
| Relevant dissertation chapters | 1 st empirical chapter | 1 st and 2 nd empirical chapters | 2 nd and 3 rd empirical chapters | 2 nd and 3 rd empirical chapter | 2 nd and 3 rd empirical chapter | 2 nd and 3 rd empirical chapter |

Figure 1: Overview of data used

3.1.2.1. Document collection

Access to and selection of project fiches is straightforward as they are publicly available. Once the name or unique project code of the relevant project is known, the fiche is easily traced. Lists of projects implemented and ongoing were provided by the Project administration office in the case of Moldova and the EU delegation in the case of Lebanon.

Most Twinning fiches follow a relatively rigid framework. At the beginning they state the purpose of the project. This is followed by a justification of the project in light of the EU's formal agreements with the country. This is followed by an outline of the formal status quo of the domestic administration that sets the background for an elaborate description of results to be achieved and corresponding activities to be carried out toward attaining results. Furthermore, the fiche outlines the profile of the aspired RTA and her future team and lists contacts in the domestic administration that will be involved in the Twinning project as well as contacts of the EU delegation and the domestic project administration office.

The most relevant data Twinning fiches provide for this dissertation is the detailed listing of perceived project results and activities. This information presents the initial frame of the project and provides the empirical basis of the third chapter. Contact data in Twinning fiches is also useful. For the research it represented a first set of contacts for every Twinning project. On that basis further contacts for interviews were sourced. Also information on the profile of the expected RTA was useful as it provided hints as to what kind of personality was expected.

Information from the Twinning fiches proved useful in preparation for interviews. It helped in creating targeted probes and giving the interviewee a sense of comfort as he or she could use familiar terminology and conceptions.

3.1.2.2. Ordinary language interviewing

Using interviews as a source of data aims “to elicit meaning” through studying the “language in use” of respondent (Schaffer 2006, p.159). The aim is not to distill any objective meaning in the sense of expert advice but to collect subjective impressions and understandings pertaining to the respondents’ own perspective. Different types of interviews may lead to different kinds of data. We may differentiate between at least three kinds of interviews: standardized (or structured), semi-standardized (or semi-structured) or un-standardized (unstructured) (cf. Berg & Lune 2004, p.68). Each interview method suits a very different style of research. Miles and Huberman (2014, pp.37–38) connect the use of different interview approaches to their level of instrumentation. This is the level to which the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research predetermines the structure under which an interview is carried out. Unstructured interviews would involve little instrumentation. They would not be planned beforehand, questions would not be pre-prepared and the interviewee would receive a maximum amount of freedom to express his or her thoughts related to the topic of the interview. A structured interview on the other hand would include a high level of instrumentation. Both approaches represent either extreme of qualitative research. Unstructured interviews are generally based on grounded theory. Structured interviews are based on a more Popperian positivist approach where theory is the starting point of a research. Yet choosing between either extreme would be too rigid.

A fully grounded approach would always run the risk of getting lost in the details, ending up with mere description and little analysis. A purely Popperian approach would be prone to underestimate the complexity of the field and overestimate the explanatory power of theory. This is why a compromise between both needs to be forged. Theory-building before fieldwork is indispensable to establish whom to ask and where to go. Yet once in the field,

many insights gained would come as a surprise, not accounted for by the initial theory, demanding considerable theoretical amendment.

The interview guide that was used in the data collection process neither fully reflected a grounded nor a positivist approach. The initial research idea was already to explore how Twinning participants scrutinize the formal project framework. The interview guide had to reflect how interviewees engage with formal aspects of the project and how they started to understand their own role and the roles of others. Interviews had to be structured in a way that they were comfortable for the interviewee. Thus, presumably less sensitive issues for the interviewee were asked at the beginning and more sensitive and abstract questions toward the end, assuming the interviewee would be more comfortable by then. Each interview was started with questions concerning the interviewees' own role in the project and how they perceived their peers. What soon became clear was that people found it easier to talk about themselves than about more distant events or past processes related to the wider project. The second part of the interview generally focused on the development of the project. Starting off by asking questions relating to the start of the project, it then went on to perceptions of project development, the main changes perceived, and any unforeseen problems that had arisen and been overcome.

Every interview guide followed the pattern described above but was also adjusted according to information available about the project and the interviewee. Besides the Twinning fiche and reporting data it included relevant personal data, for example from a public resume or other kinds of professional experience relevant to the project.

Despite the use of an interview guide, the actual interview was structured very little. The interviewee was free to speak without interruption as much as possible. In many cases, certain points that were to be covered later in the interview were raised by respondents early

on. Even in such a situation the interview guide remained an indispensable tool to ask specific probes relating to information that had not yet been covered and to realize a critical amount of data comparability.

All interviews were fully transcribed. Also notes made during the interview, pauses made by the commentator or stylistic observations such as an interviewee raising his or her voice were noted. The aim was to transport as much information as possible from the raw interview data into the more refined and structured interview transcript.

3.1.3. Data analysis

According to Miles and Huberman qualitative data analysis is a combination of three activities: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (2014, p.12). Data analysis as defined in this chapter primarily refers to the first aspect: data condensation. Data display and conclusion drawing correspond to the following three analytical chapters. Data condensation refers to selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting or transforming the full body of data to make it workable and analyzable (Miles et al. 2014, p.12). Data collected in the field is at first raw data. Interviews contain the individual perspective of the interviewee. Documents contain the interests and ideas of their authors. Some data is potentially informative toward the theoretical framework, some carries little analytical value. No ordering mechanism at all would make it nearly impossible to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant data.

To establish categories of data that are useful and structured, it is important to follow a clear and defined strategy. This dissertation is primarily based on thoughts and experiences of actors based on the texts they produce. The analytical approach must be able to extract specific categories of information from a variety of data sources as well as retain and reproduce individual perceptions. Data needs to be refined in a way that it can preserve individual

narratives and diverging points of view. Yet it must also enable the researcher to make individual accounts comparable. This represents a considerable balancing act. To attain this balance, this research combines two qualitative methodological approaches: content and narrative analysis.

3.1.3.1. Qualitative content and narrative analysis

Content analysis is a technique used in both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The aim of content analysis is to allow the researcher to make sense of larger quantities of text, which would otherwise be analytically unmanageable. Systematic classification of data through coding and identifying common themes and patterns in texts are at the heart of most content analytical approaches (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, p.1278). Themes developed through content analysis are the building blocks of the dissertation's narrative. They represent both aspects under which the theoretical framework is evaluated and under which data is ordered and structured.

Content analysis does not prescribe how codes and themes come about, per se. Hsieh and Shannon differentiate between three basic kinds of content analysis: conventional, directed and summative content analysis (2005, p.1286). The main difference is whether themes and codes are developed inductively or deductively. In conventional content analysis, codes are developed inductively, defined during analysis and directly out of the data with minimal theoretical preconception. In directed content analysis, codes are defined before through insight from the theoretical framework and are further updated throughout the analysis. Summative content analysis is a specific type of content analysis that does not derive codes from the data but looks for certain key words and their usage in a given text. It is less relevant in this case, as it is closer to the quantitative approaches.

One of the main questions is thus whether one takes a more stringent/inductive or a more loose/deductive approach to research design. Miles and Huberman argue that a loose research design with little to no theoretical preconception may be a waste of time (2014, p.19). At the end all data may seem important in one way or another. Thus they recommend considerable theoretical preparation and expectation management before the data collection and analysis. Following those recommendations, the initial choice of codes was broadly guided by early theoretical assumptions. Yet throughout the first round of coding, particularly in the Moldova material, the code list was updated with themes recurrent in the interviews. An example may be the effects of staff fluctuations in Twinning projects on organizational learning. This theme was not accounted for in the initial theory but was consistently mentioned in interviews. Thus it was fed into the following versions of the theory and the wider dissertation structure. Such feedback loops are important for the revision, reduction, and organization of analytical codes (Mayring 2004). A cyclic approach is imperative for keeping insights from sources comparable and maintaining compatibility between theory and data.

Narrative analysis both complements and differs from content analysis (Smith 2000, p.326). Content analysis allows for approaching the data as a whole and to structure a larger body of data into specific categories. Narrative analysis helps in investigating individual accounts. Both interview and project documents follow a narrative structure. Disordered experience and unclear intention are communicated through stories and plots to give them unity and validity (Riessman 1993, p.4). A narrative analysis approach is based on the point of view that information communicated is never objective but a representation of individual sense-making processes (Czarniawska 1998, p.4). Individuals impose order to the flow of experience and information they receive to make sense of their own experience and to be able to communicate it to others, such as the interviewer who asked to reflect on his or her experience (Riessman 1993, p.4). The information the researcher receives through interviews and

documentation is not an ideal representation of reality but reality as understood by the author or interviewee. This has implications on how one can treat such data and how it can be used in a comparative manner.

Narrative analysis resonates with the intention in this thesis to explore how participants of Twinning make sense of their role, the role of others, and the project. Not only are the information communicated and different categories of experience coded through content analysis relevant, but also the way they are communicated. It is important to explore not only what interviewees stress as important but how they stress it. The sequence of dissemination of information is important and the way this sequence forms a plot that adds specific meaning to the information provided (Riessman 1993, p.27).

Narrative analysis starts during the interview. The use of relatively semi-structured interviews was purposive in order to allow respondents to frame their experience in their own way. Open questions were used, such as: “What is your role in the project?” or “What happened at the start?” to allow the respondents to speak freely. Furthermore, through probes such as “What do you mean by (...)?” respondents were encouraged to go beyond the official and formal framing of the project and to explain situations and concepts from their own point of view (Riessman 1993, p.32).

Drawing on Smith, narrative and content analysis are used in a complementary fashion in the dissertation (Smith 2000, p.326). Their complementary use is similar to another common qualitative approach, the hermeneutic cycle. Data is not only approached from the perspective of general codes or the perspective of an individual’s perception, but from both. As in the hermeneutic circle, understanding comes about by relating specific passages and specific bits of meaning back to the general sense-making structure and vice versa (cf. Lee 1991, p.349).

Every interview is treated both as an individual account as well as a source of information feeding into the comparative model. The following section explores this process by outlining the general coding and documentation strategy of the dissertation.

3.1.3.2. Qualitative coding of documentation and interview

The choice of both qualitative content as well as narrative analysis is reflected in the way empirical data was coded for the dissertation. In a first cycle, coding approach insights from content analysis are used to create general coding categories that connect empirical findings with the theoretical approach (Miles et al. 2014, p.71). Insights from narrative analysis built on the categories created in the first cycle and help to condense codes into categories and themes that add a narrative structure to the field data. This represents a second cycle or coding (Miles et al. 2014, p.86).

Codes are labels created by the researcher to assign symbolic meaning to descriptive information compiled during fieldwork (Miles et al. 2014, p.71). It is not simply a mechanical task of bringing order into large amounts of qualitative data gathered in the field. It is also an essential part of the analysis. Deriving codes demands a constant interaction of the theoretical framework with data gathered. The theoretical framework is a sense-making structure, but has no meaning in itself as data gathered in interviews and documents follow other logics of arguing and sense-making, depending on the frame of reference of the author or the interviewee. Coding is the part of the research through which theory and data are made compatible. This is why the codes derived for the data do not purely follow either the theoretical framework or impressions from the data. That is why coding is a cyclical process that starts with categories derived from the initial theory. These categories are adjusted while coding the first set of data. The insights from coding the data flows back into the theoretical framework.

The more data is coded, the further the cycle is continued. Once fieldwork has come to an end and all data has been coded once, the first-cycle coding is complete.

Miles and Huberman outline some basic techniques of first-cycle coding: descriptive coding, in vivo coding and process coding (2014, pp.74–81). Descriptive coding assigns labels to data to summarize their basic content. Such codes were particularly used when ordering the respondents arguments concerning the goal of a Twinning project and the roles played by themselves and others. The code list includes for example a code for every kind of participant interviewed (RTA, RTA-counterpart, EU representative, and so on). These codes provide a relevant overview of how Twinning participants perceive and interact with their environment.

Although not to a large extent, in vivo coding can at least help to shape a number of the final codes. It refers to using direct quotes from interviews as data codes. Concepts such as “domestic demand,” “visibility,” or “flexibility” were used by respondents and in documents several times and found their way into the coding list. These terms were only included when related to the analytical framework. “Domestic demand” was used to explore the perceived status quo of the beneficiary organization. “Flexibility” was an important indicator as to how participants scrutinize the project framework. Using terms that are recurrently used by participants in different contexts is also an important foundation for later second-cycle coding for narrative analysis, as they are directly related to the “participant’s voice” (Miles et al. 2014, p.74).

Process coding was used to explore the dynamics of action and change during the implementation process. This includes codes such as “starting the project” or “changing project outputs.” Such codes helped identify and compare specific actions taken during each phase of the project and to draw connections between them. Delineating such processes is further important for second-cycle narrative coding as they represent the pillars of the narrative

understanding of project participants and help to place responses into the different project phases as identified in the theoretical framework.

After first-cycle coding is completed, second-cycle coding is used to weave the loose first-cycle codes into patterns that can be arranged into a narrative supported by the field data (Miles et al. 2014, p.91). Those patterns or themes are the main building blocks of both the narrative of the argument and each sub-narrative. They represent analytically condensed arguments and stories brought forward by interview respondents and the authors of documents.

For the dissertation, second-cycle coding was both used to create chronological as well as thematic narratives. Chronology is one major aspect of second-cycle coding. It was for example used to combine first-cycle codes, pertaining to the early parts of the project such as “domestic demand,” “choice of counterpart” or “project preparation” under a main header of “project beginning.” Yet thematic organization is just as important. There are aspects that remain relevant throughout the various parts of the project process, yet may change over time. This includes issues as “staff choice and fluctuation” or “participant motivation,” put into a category called “domestic obstacles to Twinning.” Other main thematic issues include the “perception of European integration,” or “role of language.” Thematic codes help to explain and contextualize change over time through different phases of the Twinning project.

3.2. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to connect the data gathered and the theory used to the underlying research questions. The two research sites, Moldova and Lebanon were chosen based on deliberative, strategic, and convenience-based considerations. They represent two extremes of the EU’s neighborhood relations, yet are comparable as they roughly had the same amount of

Twinning projects and are relatively small. Data analysis is focused on two main sources, project documents and interviews of key participants. They provide the most suitable data for the micro/meso level approach chosen for the research and the analytical framework. Based on the micro/meso level approach, content and narrative analyses were chosen as complementary research methods to connect the data gathered with theoretical assumptions made.

The following three chapters build on the theoretical and methodological chapters to explore Twinning projects from an empirical perspective. The data gathered is presented and analyzed in accordance with the major themes outlined in the theoretical chapter which themselves were shaped and amended through the coding process.

4. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND FORMAL ESTABLISHMENT OF TWINNING PROJECTS

4.1. Introduction

This empirical chapter, the first of the three, serves two purposes: 1) It grounds the approach and conception of Twinning projects in its historical and institutional context, and 2) it engages with the formal structure of Twinning projects and looks at how that affects their conception and implementation. Both the wider historical context and the specific design are important in order to understand the motivations the European Union has behind Twinning in its neighboring countries. Historical institutionalism advocates the idea that we can only understand an organizational status quo if we trace its establishment back in time and observe contingencies created through earlier events (Pierson 2000). Furthermore, insights from rational-choice institutionalism point to the purposive creation of a formal institution to produce predictable outcomes (Pollack 2006, p.33f). Although this dissertation neither follows a historical- nor rational-choice approach, both insights are useful in approximating how and why the institutional design and formal rules surrounding Twinning projects are the way they are.

Twining is not a self-standing instrument of the EU. Established in 1998 as part of the EU's PHARE program to support institutional reform in East European countries that were joining the EU, in 2004 Twinning was extended to ENP countries in the Western Balkans, former Soviet states, and the Mediterranean region. The EU's use and perception of Twinning developed within the context of EU enlargement. At the same time, its relationship to the different countries and regions in its neighborhood has taken diverse paths. An understanding of the various historic developments and the contingencies that both guide and trouble Twinning projects in the ENP today is thus imperative. The following comparison and analysis of historic developments shows that the EU has a highly distinct and often problematic

relationship with each region and country involved in the ENP. Yet all countries have one thing in common: their situation is highly different from those that joined the EU in 2004. On one hand, neither country has an enlargement perspective in the short- or mid-term. On the other hand, nearly all ENP countries struggle with problems concerning democratic statehood, the protection of human rights, or upholding basic public administrative services and state functions; all of which are at the core of what the EU aims to stand for.²²

The heterogeneous situation of EU-neighboring countries and their different historical relations with the EU is in contrast to the development of Twinning, which has remained relatively unchanged since its introduction in 1998. The idea of Twinning as an administrative cooperation mechanism that must yield mandatory results has largely remained intact with only minor technical adjustments (European Commission 2006; European Commission 2012a). It is important to flesh out the implications of copying an instrument that was argued to have been effective during the enlargement process (Cini & Borragán 2013, p.235), to a different policy area, the ENP, as it reflects some key features of the garbage can model.

Tulmets argues that using Twinning in the ENP is like “reshuffling old wines into new bottles” (2011), which has resulted in a number of constraints in the institutional design and approach of the Twinning instrument. These constraints will be further analyzed using the Twinning manual and a sample of Twinning fiches and other formal documentation from projects implemented in the Republic of Moldova (hereafter Moldova) and Lebanon. Using the concepts of legitimacy and myths as established in the theoretical framework, the following chapter explores a tendency within Twinning where those domestic problems not fully understood by each side are matched with fairly concrete external practices in the form of

²² Compare Art.2 TEU: “The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.”

mandatory results. It shows how the formalization of project cooperation in the Twinning manual, through linking predefined activities with outcomes, is a result of previous enlargement objectives rather than the particular design of the ENP. Beyond the unitary effects of Twinning on the neighborhood, this chapter introduces the comparison of both, developments in the EU's Eastern and Mediterranean neighbors as well as different trajectories of Twinning in Lebanon and Moldova. The chapter develops the argument that Twinning projects seem to develop better in Lebanon—a country with no enlargement aspirations—than in Moldova. It demonstrates that the effective establishment of a Twinning project is less connected to the integration aspiration of a country but rather to the readiness and willingness of the domestic administration to engage with it.

4.2. The Instrument of Twinning: Historical Background and Institutional Design

4.2.1. Historical developments in the EU's institutional building approach toward its Eastern and Mediterranean neighbors

This section outlines the EU's historically developed relationships with its Eastern and Mediterranean neighbors, paying specific attention to the development and use of institution-building tools. Although both geographical areas have developed distinctly, it is in the Eastern region that we have seen the most profound changes. This is due not least to the 2004 and 2007 enlargements, which saw the EU's borders significantly reshaped. Yet one should not forget that Greece, Spain, and Portugal only joined in 1981 and 1986 respectively, profoundly impacting the Mediterranean region as well. Furthermore, various conflicts have shattered the region and influenced the EU's policy toward the Mediterranean at least as much as the colonial

influences of Britain and France. Nowadays it is nearly taken for granted that the EU combines both regions under a single policy framework, the ENP, although both regions have experienced highly divergent paths in their historical and political development. It is also questionable whether either of the two can actually be considered a region. The following section explores the ambiguous relationship between the EU and each geographical area, and then relates it to its institution-building approach—from technical assistance to Twinning.

4.2.1.1. The EU's two paths toward institutional building in the East: between PHARE and TACIS.

Up until the early 1980s, there was no coherent relationship between the EU and its Eastern neighbors (Gower 1993, p.283; Pinder 1991, p.8). The East European non-member states were organized in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), or what was then referred to as the Eastern bloc of Europe. Comecon could be compared to the European Economic Area (EEA) at the time, which would later become the EU. Yet Comecon lacked the level of integration of the EEA and remained entirely intergovernmental, not affecting the sovereign status of its member states formally. In practice, Comecon functioned on a bilateral basis. Member states coordinated their actions directly with the Soviet Union, which due to its political and economic power dominated Comecon (Library of the Congress n.d.).

Most external trade of Comecon countries took place within the Comecon area, with the exception of East Germany, which held special trade relations with West Germany (Gower 1993, p.284). Since trade with Comecon was insignificant at the time, the EEC did not establish any meaningful relationship well until the Gorbachev era. Vice versa, within Comecon there was no legal recognition of the EEA (Pinder 1991, p.8). Hence, Comecon states were economically insignificant at the time, and politically the EEA did not yet have any meaningful

foreign policy; its common foreign and security policy (CFSP) was only introduced by the treaty of Maastricht in 1993.

By June 1988, Comecon and what was then called the European Economic Community (EEC) started to establish formal relations through signing a joint agreement (Council of the European Union 1996a). The agreement came about in the wake of Perestroika and Glasnost, which were meant as a slow and gradual distribution of power within the Soviet Union toward its regional entities. At that point it could not be foreseen that only two years later the Soviet Union would collapse with several of its regions declaring independence, one of those being Moldova. As events and changes gained momentum, the EEC tried to keep pace. It signed its first bilateral agreements with Hungary in Autumn 1988 and with Poland some months later in 1989, establishing formal trade relations with them. Agreements were signed with all Central and Eastern European countries by 1992 (van der Klugt 1993), and similar agreements were signed with former Soviet countries between 1994 and 1996. Moldova signed its “partnership and cooperation agreement” in 1994.

In July 1989 the EC (European Communities) started its first large-scale multilateral association program through the establishment of PHARE.²³ Starting as a pilot program in October 1989 to enhance trade relations as well as structural, political, and administrative reforms in Hungary and Poland, it was quickly applied to the other Central and Eastern European countries in the following years (van der Klugt 1993). PHARE introduced the heavy use of “technical assistance” to steer institutional and administrative reforms (European Commission 1997, pp.9–10). Technical assistance entailed the contracting of mainly short-term consultants who had little to no public sector background or experience in public sector reform (compare: European Commission 1991, p.11).

²³ PHARE stands for: “Poland and Hungary: Aid for Restructuring of the Economies”

Already in December 1989, the EC decided to strengthen bilateral relations with Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries by considering association agreements with Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, which were perceived as front runners in their reform processes toward democratic and market-oriented economies (van der Klugt 1993). The former Soviet states, except for the Baltic countries, were excluded from this process, and their formal bilateral relationship has to this date not considerably surpassed that of partnership and cooperation agreements.

Whereas CEE countries were soon fully covered under PHARE, former Soviet states were combined under a different program, TACIS.²⁴ TACIS followed similar assumptions as PHARE, namely that: “economic transition might be facilitated if Soviet reformers could make use of the experience of West European economies” (Sodupe & Benito 1998, p.52). The decision to create separate programs for the Soviet Union and CEE countries was deliberate at the time. Although enlargement was not yet on the agenda, both regions were already considered to demand different treatments. Furthermore, TACIS was originally designed in December 1990 to aid the ailing USSR, but shortly after its start in 1991 the USSR collapsed, creating entirely new states with which the EU had no formal relations (Sodupe & Benito 1998, p.52). TACIS followed wide objectives of creating a market economy and the installation of democracy. Against the backdrop of the chaotic collapse of the Soviet Union, those objectives were incorporated into an approach of providing piecemeal projects one at a time rather than following any overarching strategy (Frenz 2007). This was further reflected in the partnership and cooperation agreements, some of which included an evolutionary clause for an eventual free trade area whereas others did not (Moroff 2006, p.97).²⁵

²⁴ TACIS stands for: “Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States”

²⁵ E.g., Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, and Belarus

Inspired by the EC's approach in PHARE, TACIS also employed certain forms of conditionality, albeit not as stringently (Sodupe & Benito 1998, p.53). On the one hand, technical/economic conditionality was applied through requiring structural features to be in place at the start of a TACIS funded project, such as a long-term commitment by governments to the proposed reforms as well as first reform efforts. On the other hand, although modest, political conditionality was already existent. In the 1996 regulation on the assistance to economic reform in the new independent states and Mongolia, the EC Council stated:

When an essential element for the continuation on cooperation through assistance is missing, in particular in cases of violation of democratic principles and human rights, the Council may, [...] decide upon appropriate measures concerning assistance to a partner State. (Council of the European Union 1996b)

On the organizational level, PHARE and TACIS were relatively similar in the early 1990s with their focus on gradual economic integration and aid through technical cooperation and investment, coupled with moderate levels of conditionality. Still, from early on both programs followed different levels of intensity, which is particularly obvious when comparing their levels of funding (Matthews 1994). Whereas until 1997 the EU had allocated an equivalent of around 7.8 Billion Euro to PHARE, it had allocated only around 3.3 Billion Euro to TACIS, at least a third of which was spent on Russia, for example to finance the retreat of Russian troops from East Germany (European Commission 1999a). Already during its early phases in the late 1990s, TACIS received criticism both from its beneficiaries and the EU itself, particularly the relatively small amount of real investment combined with the focus on pure technical assistance (Sodupe & Benito 1998, p.63). As in many other development aid programs, there was no shortage of good advice, technical publications, and best practices; yet there were few resources to sustainably implement technical assistance outputs. Furthermore, the EU used a decentralized procedure of programming and funding that channeled most projects and their funds through Brussels. This was partly due to a lack of EU field presence.

Delegations still had to be established and made workable. It led to a perceived slowdown of the procedures of TACIS, the allocation of funds, as well as a lack of transparency as to what was funded when and how; as a result, many TACIS governments lost interest in the EC (Sodupe & Benito 1998, p.64). After a certain period of bilateral funding and piecemeal projects in the 1990s, the EC pushed TACIS toward a more focused institution-building approach, focusing only on a number of targeted sectors (Council of the European Union 1999).

While the TACIS program lacked political ambition and coherence until it became part of the ENP in 2004, PHARE developed in a different direction. At the beginning PHARE was similar to TACIS, conceived of as an ad hoc demand-driven tool for transition-related restructuring. Later, toward the mid-1990s, it was re-conceived as an accession-driven instrument (O'Brennan 2006, p.18). This re-conception was based on two developments in the relationship between the EU and CEE countries in the early 1990s: the signing of Europe agreements and the Copenhagen summit.

Whereas from 1989 onwards nearly all former Communist countries from CEE and the CIS received partnership and cooperation agreements, the EU soon realized that a deeper form of association agreement was necessary. Therefore, a second generation of agreements were developed, specifically targeted to CEE countries, symbolizing a further stage of integration. They were called "Europe agreements" (O'Brennan 2006, p.19). The first agreements with Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia were signed in late 1991. These agreements were more specific, focused on concrete areas of cooperation and stated as their goal the creation of a free trade area. Still, they were criticized for being protectionist. They introduced barriers on key sectors such as agriculture and they did yet not include a clear EU membership perspective (O'Brennan 2006, p.20).

The EU's Copenhagen summit in 1993 can be seen as a reaction to the discontent of CEE countries toward Europe agreements. Perceiving a high demand for reform in those countries and their specific direction toward the EU, the summit formulated for the first time specific requirements PHARE countries would need to fulfill to become member states (European Council 1993, p.13). Not only did this present a new perspective for CEE countries, but also a specific promise from the side of the EU that upon fulfillment of conditionality those countries would be able to join.

Through the establishment of so-called accession partnerships between the EU and CEE countries, PHARE would become the main institution-building instrument to reach specific goals agreed toward EU enlargement (Dimitrova 2002, p.179). The main purpose of institution building became the creation of the ability to implement the EU's *acquis* (Dimitrova 2002, p.179). Although in the end the membership perspective allowed the EU an "unprecedented influence in restructuring domestic institutions and the entire range of public policies in the CEE countries," questions remain to date how deeply rooted these changes were (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier 2005b, p.1). In its 2003 report, for example, the EU's court of auditors questions the effects of PHARE and the instrument of Twinning in particular, arguing that the aims of creating fully functioning administrative structures was "too optimistic" and that the "continuing inadequacy of candidate countries' public administration culture, systems and funding" was not taken into consideration when designing and implementing the respective projects and programs (EU Court of Auditors 2003, pp.8–9). Also within the academic literature, doubts were being raised on whether institutions built and taken for granted at the time remained empty shells, not actually changing existing routines and procedures (Dimitrova 2010).

The roots of Twinning in PHARE go back to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany. Between 1989 and 1991 around 4,000 West German administrative officials were sent to East Germany for either a short or extended stay to steer and coordinate the administrative reform processes as agreed in the reunification treaty (“Einigungsvertrag”) (Kluth 2010). Cooperation between specific regions (“Länder”) was forged to better steer the reform process. Until the end of administrative reforms in 1999, an unprecedented amount of around 35,000 administrators had been temporarily posted to East Germany. The scale of the activity was deemed necessary as the East German Länder had to become part of the political and administrative federal structure of Germany. They were suddenly faced with having to manage several new tasks such as privatization or new forms of procurement and tax administration. It is important to note that due to Germany’s federal structure, the tasks of the partnerships was always to create independently functioning institutional structures and not necessarily the replacement or integration of one model over another. In this sense, reunification seemed to provide a comparable model to administrative reform to the EU’s approach in enlargement. In the German literature on institution-building after reunification, there is a notion that best practices fell short due to the specificity of each regional entity and the impossibility of predicting whether a given reform template would be effective (Reulen 2004, p.53).

By 1993, several German scholars had already started to point to the various problems faced during the administrative reform of East Germany. Seibel warned that as East German administration took a very different path to its West German counterpart, one should not just focus on formal reforms, as this would run the risk of only seeing window dressing (Seibel 1993, p.29). A lawyer directly involved in judicial reform in East Germany warned that a judge or administrator who followed all of his career the principle of the political will cannot simply be retrained in a short timeframe to operate under the new principles of the rule of law (Schulz

1993, p.142). Furthermore, Grunow and Wohlfart argue that through the introduction of new norms to the East German administrative system, the actual problems only started and were not resolved as assumed (1993, p.164). Strategies that proved useful in the West proved useless in the East. Furthermore, Grunow and Wohlfahrt argue that particularly at the start of transition, East German states focused primarily on applying for consultancy from West Germany instead of searching for their own solutions (Grunow & Wohlfahrt 1993, p.170). West German consultants initially overestimated their own expertise, although they knew little about the situation in the East. East German administrators on the other hand were overwhelmed by the changes and underestimated the importance of their own knowledge of the status quo. These insights show that what may have looked from a macro perspective as an overriding success of institutional transfer was in fact quite problem-ridden when perceived from a more micro perspective.

In 1993 Germany launched its own institution-building program toward Eastern Europe called “TRANSFORM.” It was mainly targeted toward the transition of state-led to market economies. The program made explicit reference to the lessons learned from reunification. It employed a similar system of sending consultants, “Langzeitberater,” to an East European country (including the former Soviet Union) to steer and aid reform processes (Bundesregierung 1999). The idea was to exchange know-how and practices in order to reform existing administrative practices and procedures, aiding the creation of a free market economy. The term “Langzeitberater” was recycled in Germany to be the name of what was to become the RTA²⁶ in Twinning. The reform of the East German public administration was regarded as a general success with administrative structures functioning to different extents by the mid-1990s, able to implement federal and regional political directives. Therefore, the concept of posting

²⁶ The name „Langzeitberater“ is still used as the German translation of “Residence Twinning Advisor“

administrators to a neighboring country was taken on board by the EU to complement its enlargement strategy. This was the birth of EU Twinning.

4.2.1.2. The EU between regionalism and bilateralism in its Mediterranean neighborhood: From GMP²⁷ to NMP²⁸ to EMP²⁹

Whereas formal relations between the EU and its Eastern neighbors took shape in 1989, the EU's relations with the Mediterranean region go back considerably further in time. Before exploring the history of the relationship between the EU and the Mediterranean region, it is important to establish what constitutes the Mediterranean. In contrast to the EU's Eastern neighbors, who were all part of the Eastern Bloc and members of Comecon, the Mediterranean does not have a coherent shared history of political and economic relations. Müller (2014, pp.12–13) emphasizes that although the Mediterranean area is meaning-laden through a history of dominant empires and important trade relations, it is highly contested in terms of its composition and constitution. Accordingly, Lister argues that the Mediterranean should be viewed as an overlapping set of cultures rather than an actual region (1997).

For a considerable part of its modern history, the Mediterranean has been an area of contested and unstable statehood. Many of the Mediterranean countries were under colonial rule by France or Britain for considerable parts of their history. This often ended in political struggle toward independence as in the case of Lebanon, or even military conflict as in the case of Algeria (Müller 2014; Lister 1997). During the cold war, the external influence of colonial powers was replaced by the political interests and struggles of the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the USA. The Suez crisis of 1956 marked the decline of French and British colonial power and introduced the Soviet Union as a close ally of Egypt and other countries, and the

²⁷ Global Mediterranean Policy

²⁸ New Mediterranean Policy

²⁹ European Mediterranean Policy

USA as a close ally of Israel. During the cold war, conflicts between Israel, Palestine, Egypt, and Lebanon provided a major playing field for both superpowers, further diminishing Europe's influence in return. The EU acknowledged that view, as a Commission memorandum on its development policy observes that the majority of the countries bordering the Mediterranean sea to the East and the south are "ruled by powerful outsiders" (European Commission 1982, p.22).

It was particularly France and its interests in its former colonial territory of the Maghreb that pushed toward EEC involvement in the Mediterranean.³⁰ Early after its creation, the EEC sought association agreements as a first step of economic integration based on GATT, leaving full membership open for states that fulfilled political and economic criteria and could be considered "European" (Jones 2011, p.43). The first association agreement was signed by Greece in 1962. Further agreements were signed by Tunisia and Morocco in 1969, called cooperation agreements. Lebanon signed its first cooperation agreement slightly later in 1977 (Jones 2011, p.44). One problem that the EEC faced early on was the variety of treaties signed. Association agreements with Greece and Turkey were highly political and included an explicit membership perspective. Other preferential trade agreements with Spain, Portugal, and Israel and treaties being negotiated at the time with Egypt and Lebanon were of a more technical and economic nature. Therefore, the European Commission created a proposal toward a "more global system" in 1972 that would find arrangements "for all countries wanting to improve their relations with the Community (...)" (European Commission 1972, pp.2–3). What came to be the "Global Mediterranean Policy" (GMP), formally started in 1972, acted as a platform toward the gradual reduction of tariffs and the creation of a duty-free area between the EEC and the Mediterranean region. Also, technical cooperation was proposed by the Commission as a substantial part of the new policy, yet mainly in the area of trade regulation and employment to

³⁰ Maghreb refers to the Western Part of the Mediterranean Arab countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, Libya and Algeria. Its counterpart is the Mashriq which includes Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and Syria.

restrict competition based on lower labor standards with the Mediterranean countries in the EU (European Commission 1972, p.7). A more comprehensive approach to institution building in public administration was not yet foreseen.

What was planned as a unified approach never fully manifested as a real global policy. The effects of modest trade liberalization deteriorated when Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Portugal, and Greece joined the EU. Although mainly relieved from quantitative restrictions and duties, the Mediterranean non-EU countries suffered under the EU's common agricultural policy as the EU with its new member states became practically self-sufficient for Mediterranean agricultural products (Pomfret 1992, p.79). As a reaction, in 1991 the EU renewed the GMP and created what it called the New Mediterranean policy (NMP). The policy offered a substantial raise in development aid, offering an equivalent of 4.4 Billion Euros in grants and loans. Yet beyond the additional allocation of aid money to the Mediterranean countries, NMP resembled its predecessor with its explicit support of economic reform and deepening trade, yet had little to offer on political reform (Lister 1997, pp.87–88).

In 1994, based on an observation of rising tensions in the EU through the instability in the region, rising migration and the continued dissatisfaction of many Mediterranean countries with the NMP, the EU started the so-called Barcelona process. The Barcelona process was based on a declaration signed by fifteen EU member states and twelve Mediterranean countries to strengthen bilateral partnerships and the creation of a multilateral platform, the EMP (Euro-Mediterranean partnership). The EMP represented a first step of the EU toward region-building by creating multilateral fora for high-level ministerial meetings and political coordination (Bicchi 2011, p.6). In connection with political coordination, the EMP emphasized the importance of technical cooperation in areas such as trade, agriculture, migration, international crime, and human rights protection (European Commission 1995).

To finance and implement technical assistance projects under EMP, the EU chose a mechanism called MEDA (Euro-Mediterranean Partnership). Despite both MEDA's and TACIS's focus on technical assistance, both were slightly different in their approach. TACIS mainly focused on state-building through offering assistance for political and judicial institutions to establish basic democratic and free market structures. MEDA, on the other hand, went a step further and talked of strengthening the existing administrative and economic structures as well as the involvement of civil society and bolstering democracy and human rights protection. Furthermore, whereas TACIS was from its creation mainly a bilateral instrument, MEDA included a multilateral element through explicitly encouraging the building of cross-border cooperation (European Commission 2007b). Based on the multilateral dimension of MEDA, the EU started to fund both domestically specific projects based on domestic priorities as well as regional programs, agreed through ministerial meetings within the EMP (European Commission 1999b, p.5). In contrast to TACIS, MEDA included the option of funding projects outside the state apparatus, NGOs for example (European Commission 1999b, p.6). Similarly to TACIS, MEDA started working under a very centralized procedure where all funds were channeled, approved, and monitored in Brussels and not in the field (European Commission 1999b, p.6). It can be assumed that this made MEDA projects prone to the same shortcomings of a lack of transparency and flexibility. A 2005 evaluation of MEDA technical assistance projects by the European court of auditors supports this. It observes that during the first five years, MEDA projects experienced considerable delay as a result of long tendering and centralized management (EU Court of Auditors 2006a, p.7). This was not resolved until 2005, with tenders lasting an average of eight months from their conception to their completion. Twinning projects still suffer from similar shortcomings.

The audit report indicates that MEDA projects from 2000 onwards were increasingly based on a decentralized approach, where tendering and contracting takes place in the country.

Based on this, the court concluded that overall, MEDA technical assistance projects had a valuable impact on administrative change in the Mediterranean countries. Several Lebanese Twinning project respondents were strongly in favor of technical assistance, whereas in Moldova respondents were in general reserved about such approaches. Interestingly, in a parallel program to MEDA, called MED—trying to forge cooperation between civil society organizations—the court of auditors found considerable indications of mismanagement through the centralized procedure and the practice of employing external private companies for the conception and management of projects (European Commission 1996).

Overall, evaluations of the effect of the EMP remained negative. Sarto and Schumacher argue that the EMP's overall contribution to economic and social stability in the region was only modest (2005, p.17). Similar to previous EU approaches, political turmoil and internal changes in the EU had a negative effect on the comprehensiveness and sustainability of measures under the EMP and MEDA. Shortly after the creation of the EMP the Palestine–Israel conflict broke out again, and this combined with the accession of Cyprus and Malta and Turkey being pushed further away from its membership created incoherence and turmoil (Sarto & Schumacher 2005, p.18). With the general perception of mixed results of the EMP and the major Eastern enlargement considerably redrawing the EU's borders, a new approach was created combining previously disparate approaches to the East and the West, the ENP.

4.2.1.3. Toward a common neighborhood policy and from technical assistance to Twinning

Until 2004, the Mediterranean region and Eastern Europe were approached entirely separately. Eastern enlargement changed this. The use of conditionality and the perceivably rapid and deep change of political and administrative structures in accession countries boosted the EU's confidence in its normative power (European Commission 2003c, p.6). Its perceived success

encouraged the EU to redraw its policies toward its neighboring countries based on the enlargement process. The new ENP was thus conceptualized by the Commissions Directorates-General (DG) enlargement and only later transferred to the external relations DG which was the administration in charge of the EU's foreign relations (Kelley 2006, p.31).

The creation of the ENP had different implications for both regions. The Mediterranean countries experienced a sudden shift toward a more bilateral approach by the EU in its attempt at region-building (Sarto & Schumacher 2005, p.22). Association agreements again gained a stronger role in the implementation of projects and policies (Bicchi 2011, p.15), which meant an end to the multilateral approach of MEDA toward individual country projects. For Eastern European countries, the focus of the EU was individual state-building all along. In contrast to MEDA, TACIS lacked a political and regional umbrella policy as the EMP, and so, for Eastern countries the ENP seemed a lot more like a comprehensive approach compared to previous ones. Still, the creation of the ENP was not necessarily received with cheers and open arms. As Smith (2005, pp.767–768) argues, EU Eastern enlargement created insiders and outsiders. Large-scale investments and developments in CEE countries before enlargement created a legitimization problem for the EU as to who is in and who is not. Due to the criteria of geographical proximity and “Europeanness,” aspirations toward joining the EU were naturally higher in Eastern Europe than in the Mediterranean, particularly after Morocco's application was rejected in 1987. The ENP was designed to offer no EU membership perspective. It rather used quirky and vague messages such as “a ring of friends” or “everything but the institutions” (Prodi 2002). The ENP was mostly a disappointment to Eastern European countries. For Mediterranean countries on the other hand, the ENP presented a welcome step forward. As the Mediterranean was perceived as a regional construct made in Brussels rather than accepted and fostered in the regions, most countries preferred to move back toward bilateral relations (Sarto & Schumacher 2005, p.34). Still, the ENP's enlargement narrative (without actually offering

enlargement) was perceived critically—seeming to represent a relatively self-referential solution to the specific problems perceived within the Euro-Mediterranean Policy EMP, without actually addressing them.

At the start of the ENP; TACIS and MEDA remained the main institution-building tools of the EU. Both were in the middle of their 2000–2006 budget periods when the ENP was kicked off in 2003 and eventually started in 2004. From the start it was the EU’s idea to harmonize the existing funding and assistance frameworks: TACIS, MEDA, PHARE, INTERREG and CARDS into one coherent instrument (European Commission 2003b, p.3). Nevertheless, already at the start of the ENP in 2004, the EU announced the streamlining of fund implementation and distribution and the addition of new mechanisms and initiatives (European Commission 2003b, p.8). One of those mechanisms was Twinning, officially launched for MEDA countries and a selected number of TACIS countries in 2004 (European Commission 2005, p.8; European Commission 2004b, p.25).

Twining had been regarded as one of the major innovations of the enlargement program. Although certain “Twining arrangements,” for example in the banking sector or nuclear energy, were created between EU member states and PHARE countries early on, Twining as a coherent institution-building tool was only introduced in 1998. In 1997, as PHARE manifested itself more and more as a pre-accession program, the EU stated “institution building” to be among its main aims (European Commission 1998). To reach the same level of compliance with the EU *acquis* as member states, scattered technical assistance run by private consultants did not seem to be an effective tool. What was needed was the actual secondment of an administrator from an EU member-state administration to a corresponding ministry in an accession state (European Commission 1999c). From its start, the RTA was at the core of

Twinning.³¹ The introduction of Twinning explicitly aimed both to move away from the top-down approach of technical assistance toward a cooperative framework as well as making projects more output oriented. The establishment of mandatory results as the main aims of projects was supposed to make institution-building toward EU accession more tangible (EU Court of Auditors 2003, p.24). More than one thousand Twinning projects were implemented between 1998 and 2004, and were praised by the EU for playing a crucial role in the transition of new member states (European Commission 2005, pp.8–9). Despite that, by the end of 2003 the effect of Twinning was already being questioned. From within the EU, the court of auditors scrutinized Twinning:

The objectives stated in the Twinning covenants (the so-called “guaranteed” results) were often unrealistic, and could often be achieved only partially within the project period. In practice it proved overly optimistic to expect that a fully functioning, efficient and sustainable candidate country organization would exist in a given field after one Twinning project (EU Court of Auditors 2003, p.2).

Despite doubts raised concerning the efficiency of Twinning already within the frame of considerable incentives of the enlargement program, the EU was keen on making the ENP seem innovative and new to add to its appeal and to help create a new enthusiasm in its neighboring countries for reform (Tulmets 2011). Therefore, in 2004 it decided to introduce Twinning projects to the whole ENP.

In 2006 the new European Neighborhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) was introduced. It combined TACIS and MEDA into one financing and institution-building framework. Although the ENPI combines a number of characteristics of its predecessors, such as an explicit focus on cross-border cooperation (MEDA), and strengthening domestic legal and political institutions (TACIS), it leans heavily on the experiences of and mechanisms used in PHARE (European

³¹ Back then the RTA was called “Pre-accession advisor.”

Commission 2004c, Art.15; ANNEX p.42). As the first, and assumedly most important measure, the ENPI states that:

To finance targeted administrative cooperation measures involving public-sector experts dispatched from Member States according to specifically designed rules

This noticeably refers to Twinning projects (European Commission 2004c, Art.15 (2) (a)). Twinning was placed high on the agenda due to the EU's perceived shortcomings of technical assistance under TACIS. In one of the first ENPI presentations, the EU Commission was keen to emphasize that it meant a "transition from technical assistance to an extensive cooperation" and a "more result-focused" approach, while keeping the stance of offering no membership perspective (European Commission 2007a). Furthermore, in 2006 the court of auditors issued two reports dealing with the EU's implementation of the TACIS program and technical assistance as part of its development policies. In both reports, the court noted considerable shortcomings. In its comments on technical assistance provisions, the court openly questioned why the Commission did not further provide the option for Twinning projects in the light of a lack of guidance and expertise from the side of private consultants used in technical assistance projects (EU Court of Auditors 2007, pp.6, 10). For the performance of TACIS it also noted a lack of diffusion of results achieved, little sustainability and a lack of evaluation of follow up data (EU Court of Auditors 2006b, p.10). Twinning was therefore chosen as a solution to both the lack of grounding and ownership of technical assistance projects as well as the lack of approximation those projects could provide toward EU norms and standards. This was only more strongly emphasized once the ENP came into being.

After seven years, the ENPI was replaced by the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI) in 2014. At first sight, the differences are not groundbreaking, yet the ENI is more explicit in formulating its enlargement principles of "more for more" and "mutual accountability"

(Schnellbach 2014, pp.2–3). It emphasizes that neighboring countries may choose the level on which they want to cooperate with the EU, those that choose a closer relationship, being eligible for more funding (an incentive-based approach) (European Commission 2011). This is not very new but is remarkable in the light of the criticism the ENP had previously received concerning its ineffectiveness in trying to offer incentives without an enlargement perspective (e.g. for the case of Moldova: Parkes & Viilup 2012, p.2). Interestingly, the ENI introduced a considerable spending increase from 12 Billion Euros for ENPI between 2007 and 2013 to 15.4 Billion Euros from 2014 to 2015. The effects of the ENI on Twinning are yet to be seen. All of the Twinning projects covered in this dissertation were financed under the previous instrument, the ENPI.

The ENP was introduced as a more or less coherent policy umbrella for the EU's Eastern and Mediterranean neighbors. Yet soon after its introduction, two geographical sub-programs were introduced. The first, created in July 2008, was the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), which was portrayed as a personal project of Nicolas Sarkozy (DPA 2008). The idea behind the UfM was to reinforce the Barcelona process toward a stronger multilateral approach between the EU and the Mediterranean, which after the introduction of the ENP had come to a halt. Yet as Bicchi (2011) observes, due to the introduction of new actors and the continued reluctance of certain states in the region to cooperate, the UfM in fact ended up reinforcing bilateralism.

Partly as a reaction to the creation of the UfM, Poland and Sweden started pushing for an Eastern Partnership (EaP) in 2009 (Voswinkel 2009). Even more than the UfM, the EaP did not offer any substantial changes to the ENP. Its budget was set at a meager 600 Million Euros for 2010 to 2013, which was already allocated within the ENPI previously. The EaP introduced the concept of "Comprehensive Institution Building" (CIB), which was supposed to streamline partner country's reforms with Twinning at the center and add a cross-border dimension to it (European Commission 2009). CIB never took off and had no particular impact on Twinning

or technical assistance activities on the ground. So far neither the UfM nor the EaP has had any considerable impact on institution building in the ENP.

4.2.2. Assessment: The EU's struggle to find an adequate approach to an ever-changing neighborhood

The EU's relation to its neighboring countries in the South and East has been one of coping and muddling through. Except for the Eastern enlargement process, it has lacked focus and structure and has nearly always sent its neighboring countries mixed messages. The EU has hardly worked under something that could be called a coherent neighborhood policy. This includes attempts to build a region in the Mediterranean based on little funds and some institutions that could hardly be called shared. It includes the aim of forging selected partnerships with neighboring countries without an enlargement perspective, as well as trying to uphold regional interests of peace, security, and good governance.

For a long time, institution- and state-building in the region was as incoherent as the EU's political and economic policies toward it. Technical assistance was used in an often unreflective manner through providing ad hoc funding for private consultants whenever the demand was raised by a TACIS or MEDA country. Only with time, key sectors were started to be agreed upon and assistance projects were slowly streamlined. Yet as the reports of the court of auditors indicate, in most cases the outcomes and impacts of those projects were difficult to ascertain.

When it comes to the perception and legacy of the introduction of Twinning, two different narratives stand side-by-side. One is the EU-centric perspective. It argues that Twinning was a creation of the enlargement process through the specific demand of quick and targeted institutional reform. This perceived success then led the EU to copy mechanisms such

as Twinning into the ENP to give its neighborhood relations a new start and compensate for the lack of incentives that prevailed after enlargement.

The other line of reasoning, which is not covered widely in the literature, is the legacy of the EU's institution-building attempts to different states in its neighborhood, seen from their perspective. For the Mediterranean region, Eastern enlargement did not present a large rupture—its membership aspirations had been meager anyway. Despite the EU's explicit region-building attempts throughout the years, forging bilateral relations to get fair access to EU markets and institution-building was high on the agenda. The introduction of Twinning was yet another tool the EU had to offer, but not necessarily better or more advanced than technical assistance or any other. This came through in a number of interviews where the provision of Twinning in general was criticized and technical assistance was portrayed as a more viable alternative, for example:

If you ask me what type of tools we prefer, we prefer technical assistance projects and not Twinning projects at all. (Beneficiary#24)

Another respondent argued that Twinning may be good for some things but not for others:

We are not having another Twinning, we are having a contract service but we will try this other tool and in the future we will decide which one is more efficient. I will have tried both and then I can decide. I heard that technical assistance contracts are more flexible. I will see. (Beneficiary#30)

For Eastern European countries, the perspective was different. Having been part of the Eastern Bloc and Comecon, the comparison between individual countries was naturally stronger. As countries like Hungary and Poland were portrayed as forerunners of transition and were rewarded with quick market accession and an EU membership perspective, former Soviet countries like Moldova and Ukraine could not follow that path. This was partly because those countries were (and are) still in the process of defining their postcommunist legacy, but also because the EU did not seem to be willing to step up its efforts in TACIS as it did in PHARE.

The EU created insiders and outsiders and through its impressive distribution of resources and projects in PHARE and the pre-accession process it naturally created demands in TACIS countries to receive the same treatment. After enlargement, the EU decided to transfer the packaging of PHARE to TACIS through the introduction of the ENP, the modest stepping up of funding and the introduction of new tools such as Twinning. Yet it did not transfer the content. The explicit lack of an EU membership perspective seriously hampered the effect of the ENP and remains its main problem.

Although the ENP does not offer a membership perspective, interviewees in Moldova generally did not seem to follow the pragmatic perspective of their Twinning peers in Lebanon. Twinning was generally hailed as a specific approach that may bring Moldova, at least in parts, closer to the EU. Therefore, Twinning in a way seemed to carry on some of the appeal of enlargement as it was often hailed as more advanced and deeper than the conventional technical assistance approach of TACIS or other donor organizations.

The following quote may underline this point as a previous RTA-counterpart outlines the way he/she perceives the differences between Twinning and technical assistance:

When we are talking about experience with technical assistance, we talk about a company that is hiring consultant, so no public service. We are a public institution. We had good expertise but it was not at the same level as we were. They were not dealing with the same issues as we did. It was not an institution besides the experts that has the same responsibility or the same mandate as we do. The Twinning project was a bit of having the access to something that is dealing with the same issues, so it's a kind of, no it is really, a first practical experience. (Beneficiary#9)

In the Eastern European countries, the introduction of Twinning still managed to portray the EU as something special and the instrument itself as an advancement to the status quo of pre-ENP relations. In the Mediterranean, the EU has generally failed to make an impact besides

being a major trading partner. Twinning is therefore looked upon from a more pragmatic perspective.

The incentive of applying for a Twinning project simply for the reason of being appealing to the EU instead of actually knowing the domestic demand and problem at hand is higher in Eastern European than in the Mediterranean. In a Mediterranean country such as Lebanon, the decision to apply for a Twinning project can be assumed to be more strategic, as overriding objectives toward closer political EU ties are generally lacking.

4.3. Twinning's formal framework: The Twinning manual and beyond

In the previous section I traced the institutional development of Twinning from a historical perspective. Inspired by large-scale transfer of know-how and personnel during Germany's reunification, Twinning became an enlargement tool and was later recycled in the EU's neighborhood. If Twinning was a tool toward more comprehensive administrative change in a given sector and country toward political and administrative transformation, as in EU enlargement, what are its aims in the EU's neighborhood? As comprehensive changes and a larger political purpose of the magnitude of enlargement is missing, what is Twinning trying to accomplish in the EU's neighborhood?

To get a better grasp of what Twinning is today in the ENP, it is essential to grasp the way it is designed and calibrated. It is important to establish how a Twinning project comes about, what the role of each actor is at each part of the project design stage. In light of the conceptual framework it is crucial to establish just how the EU defines the creation and design of mandatory results and the role each actor plays in that process. It is important for the analysis

and understanding of the process of Twinning implementation, which is at the core of this dissertation.

The added value of the following section is twofold: 1) It represents the empirical basis for analyzing the establishment and effects of mandatory results under the garbage can model, as established in the theoretical chapter. 2) It functions as the empirical scene setter for the following two chapters, outlining the formal structure and understanding from which Twinning projects depart and the main basis of deliberation, cooperation, and eventual contestation.

4.3.1. What is Twinning (supposed to be)?

The EU does not provide a clear definition on what Twinning is or what it is not. A recent evaluation of Twinning in the ENP stated that official documents available did not provide a clear definition of the “essence” of Twinning (Bouscharain & Moreau 2012, p.6). Since Twinning has been utilized in different environments such as enlargement, the former Yugoslav countries (IPA), and the ENP, it may in fact be in the interest of the EU to abstain from a clear definition. What needs to be examined is how the lack of an overall definition is compatible with the extensive amount of rules and formal constraints that come with a Twinning project.

There are three concepts which can be found in most documents produced by the EU on Twinning: “institution building,” “capacity development,” and “administrative cooperation.” At the introduction of Twinning in 1998, the EU defined its focus as: “institution building, that is the strengthening of the administrative capacity of the candidate to implement and apply the *acquis communautaire* with the same guarantee of effectiveness as in the current member states” (European Commission 1998, p.3). The EU usually puts the three concepts in a hierarchical order. As noted in the current Twinning manual, the first point made is that Twinning is an instrument of institution building. As sub-points to that heading, Twinning is argued to strengthen administrative capacity and be based on cooperation.

4.3.1.1. Institution building

The EU provides no clear definition for institution building, although Twinning is established as its most important “institution-building tool” within ENP (Bouscharain & Moreau 2012, p.6). Dimitrova (2002, p.171) provides some clues toward a more substantial definition. Thus, during Eastern enlargement institution building was regarded as developing administrative structures necessary for the adoption and implementation of the EU’s acquis. This view correlates with the definition provided by the EU during PHARE. It argues that institution building goes beyond simple legal approximation but deals with the ways legislation is enforced on the ground and in public administration (European Commission 1998, p.14). From that point of view, institution building is an enforcement tool. It is supposed to ensure that domestic practices function in line with EU norms and do not deviate in a way that would compromise their implementation. Institution building from that point of view is a supply-based approach, not based primarily on the domestic interest or context but on an external demand for streamlining domestic administrative practices.

An enlargement perspective does not exist for ENP countries. Linking institution building to the direct enforcement of the EU acquis is thus not feasible. In a number of non-EU Twinning documents, this difference is recognized. The Twinning guide of the German Ministry for the Economy, for example, differentiates between Twinning in candidate countries that have to implement the EU acquis, and Twinning in neighboring countries. Twinning in ENP countries should aim at a direct exchange of knowledge and experience and strengthening economic and political relations (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie 2012). An explanatory report on the application of the Twinning manual in Moldova states: “Twinning [is] one of the most important institution-building tools in Moldova. It will promote achieving significant and progressive changes at the beneficiary administrations that, by being ‘twinned,’

are prepared to apply the best European practices and standards in the respective sectors.” (TTSIB project 2013). This report was drafted by an external consultancy, so is therefore keen on emphasizing that the definition may not represent the EU’s opinion. This definition shifts the perspective of institution building from the EU’s *acquis* to “European practices and standards,” leaving its precise meaning unclear. The problem with this formulation is that when it comes to specific administrative settings, defined European practices and standards are non-existent. A thing such as a European administrative area or model does not exist, with administrative practices and standards only existing at the domestic level.

One solution to the problem of non-existent European administrative standards may be that institution building in the ENP refers to national practices and standards as exchanged between the beneficiary and the EU partner country in a Twinning project. The definition of the German ministry of economy would suggest so. Yet, the EU refutes such a definition as it states in capital letters: “A Twinning project does NOT aim at replicating a particular member-state (MS) administrative system but rather strive to help introduce EU-wide best practices in connection with EU legislation.” (European Commission 2012a). This definition already existed in the first Twinning manual of 2005, and was likely taken over directly from the enlargement framework.

This brings us back full circle to the beginning of this section, which saw how the EU had a definition of institution building in its enlargement framework but has not adapted it to the specificities of the ENP. The discrepancy between the EU’s enlargement definition to the ones provided by the German Ministry of Economy and the TTSIB project in Moldova show that there *is* deliberation on what institution building means for Twinning in the ENP, yet the EU does not seem to participate in the deliberation process. A clearer definition would be important as it is far from self-explanatory. This is particularly apparent when we compare the

EU's definition during enlargement to the one provided by S.N. Eisenstadt. Drawing on Max Weber, he argues that

institutions are built through the interaction between people and groups who undertake processes of exchange to implement their goals. He goes on by stating that to be effective, such a process cannot be based on external force but on the basic orientation of people toward organization and order. Anything externally forced may only constitute formal amendments, effecting neither behavior nor common norms and views. From such a perspective, the use of mandatory results and the fixation on external EU norms would be regarded as counterproductive (1968, pp.xxxviii–xli).

In lacking a clear definition, institution building is merely a myth, an artifact copied and pasted from the EU's enlargement framework.

4.3.1.2. Capacity development

In the Twinning manual's introduction, the EU Commission emphasizes the eminence of the enlargement framework by stating that Twinning was conceived "[...] to assist the pro tempore candidate countries to strengthen their administrative and judicial capacity to implement EU legislation as future Member States of the European Union." (European Commission 2012a). Thus similar to the conception of institution building, the EU provides a relatively clear idea of what capacity development meant in during Eastern enlargement, yet does not provide an adapted definition for the ENP. In an earlier version of the Twinning manual, The EU Commission excludes its enlargement-based definition of capacity development from application to the ENP:

Twining projects are built around jointly agreed EU policy objectives, such as the preparation of EU enlargement (PHARE), further strengthening of the administrative capacity of the new MS (Transition Facility) or enhanced cooperation, as foreseen in the respective CARDS, MEDA and TACIS agreements.(European Commission 2005, p.10).

For the 2012 manual this sentence was cut out. Instead, the assumed relationship between mandatory results and administrative capacity is emphasized, calling mandatory results an

“intermediate benchmark” constituting a “specific criterion” toward the development of administrative capacity.

The attempt to connect normative and standardized benchmarks to the concept of administrative capacity, going beyond a Twinning project’s and the EU’s sphere of influence, is a good example of rationalized formal structures such as myths (Meyer & Rowan 1977). Framing mandatory results as “specific” and as “benchmark” gives them an aura of importance and causality toward strengthening administrative capacity. This adds a sense of legitimacy as it reinforces the Twinning manual’s message to provide orderly and rational solutions to specific problems. An external evaluation of Twinning in the ENP lists four points on which it argues ENP Twinning to be built (Bouscharain & Moreau 2012, p.163). The first three points relate to normative considerations: 1) EU values, 2) EU founding principles and 3) the harmonization of legislation. As a fourth and separate point, it states “institutional capacity building,” by which it understands

support to national structural and public administration reform, support to administration modernization, staff capacity, also a major focus for Twinning activities and often a prerequisite for further interventions.

This point appears detached from those normative ones. It specifically highlights the national level and makes no explicit reference to the EU. Furthermore, the authors explicitly recommend the EU to divert from the EU acquis as the main reference of Twinning to other sources for cooperation. Up until now, the EU has not made any reference to the report in any of its official Twinning publications.

Both “institution building” and “capacity development” lack a clear definition from the side of the EU. Particularly when reflecting on the concept of capacity development, the report by Bouscharain and Moreau indicates that practices and perceptions on the ground may differentiate from the EU-based definitions. The following section explores whether the same

holds true for the concept of cooperation, being the one concept utilized by Twinning that resonates best with the EU's overall conception of the ENP.

4.3.1.3. Cooperation, as seen by the EU

The concept of cooperation in Twinning works in two ways. On one hand, Twinning is coined an “instrument of administrative cooperation” (European Commission 2012a). On the other hand, on the political level Twinning projects are said to be based on cooperation. The word cooperation features prominently in the EU's major documents on the nature of the ENP, for example calling it a: “‘ring of friends’ – with whom the EU enjoys close, peaceful and cooperative relations” (European Commission 2003a, p.4). Furthermore, partnership and cooperation agreements were signed between the ENP East countries and the EU. In the Mediterranean, those are “association agreements.” Yet they are not qualitatively different.

The word cooperation is used intentionally by the EU Commission both at administrative and political levels in order to differentiate Twinning and the ENP from other instruments. On the administrative level, the term cooperation is used explicitly to emphasize the difference between Twinning and technical assistance. The Twinning manual states:

A Twinning project is NOT designed to provide only advice or other types of classical technical assistance. It is a project of administrative cooperation (...) (European Commission 2012a).

Technical assistance is portrayed as a top-down transfer of practices through private sector consultants. The Twinning manual refers to it as a “traditional” approach used only where a beneficiary is “lacking any point of reference for the development of a specific sector” (European Commission 2012a). Through portraying Twinning as the more sophisticated and modern approach, the EU adds legitimacy. Technical assistance is supposed to be provided to administrations that do not have sufficient initial capacity, Twinning to the ones who do. Being eligible for Twinning is already framed as an achievement, as possessing a certain capacity

base. Yet how it is determined what constitutes an administration that is eligible for Twinning and can “handle cooperation” remains unclear in the manual.

Cooperation is seemingly the concept that binds the political agenda of the ENP with the administrative reform efforts of Twinning. Cooperation has a positive connotation. It implies equality and a certain level of partnership. Yet it is distinctly different from the terms integration or accession that were the main themes of the EU’s Eastern enlargement agenda. In the context of progressive and targeted aims such as EU accession, the use of paternalistic tools such as mandatory results can be justified by the deepening of integration of a country into a regional political structure, the EU. Basing both Twinning and the ENP on the term cooperation makes this much less feasible. It also stands in stark contrast to the concepts of institution building and capacity development as defined within the enlargement agenda.

4.3.1.4. The myth of institution building, capacity development, and cooperation

Looking at the three major principles of Twinning: institution building, capacity development, and cooperation, it is difficult to gain a coherent picture of what Twinning actually is, and what role it plays in the ENP and a given administrative reform process in a neighboring country. The ENP’s outlook shifted considerably compared to Eastern enlargement: from accession to cooperation. Yet Twinning was largely unchanged, inducing contradiction into the EU’s Twinning approach. When “capacity development” is supposed to be a direct function of introducing EU best practices without an integration perspective, it is an institutional myth. Cooperation fulfills a legitimizing rather than a substantive function when it is supposed to be the guiding principle of Twinning, yet the EU narrows down the content and process of Twinning.

The above observations suggest that the introduction of Twinning projects into the ENP was not the solution to the problem of neighboring countries' demands for increased administrative capacity. It was rather a solution that seemed to work within the given framework of Eastern enlargement and was therefore copied and pasted into the ENP. Inconsistencies were hidden through employing legitimizing myths as institution building, capacity development, and cooperation to add legitimacy to the instrument. Yet that gives it the fate of most other garbage can model solutions: their actual purpose may be fully unclear and detached from the problem.

4.3.2. Starting a Twinning project: solutions seeking problems

How is a Twinning project started? Every process of Twinning starts with the creation of the so-called project fiche. A document that is supposed to stem from the neighboring country, a fiche meticulously outlines the stages of a proposed Twinning project including a fully-fledged work plan, listing all mandatory results and corresponding activities. The Twinning manual is very precise on what is to be included in a Twinning fiche. Yet it is relatively silent on how a fiche comes about. It merely mentions that a “beneficiary country identifies needs within European Commission policy orientations and drafts Twinning fiches with the assistance of the European Commission or the assistance of a framework contract” (European Commission 2012a).

What is interesting to note is that a fiche may come about with assistance from the EU Commission through a framework contract. The EU Commission may play a consultative role in developing a fiche, providing recommendations. Several interview respondents pointed out that they had been in contact with the relevant DG of the EU Commission, or were even still in contact during the implementation of the project. A framework contract refers to the hiring of one or more consultants from the private sector to support the fiche drafting process. The hiring

of such consultants has been common practice, particularly in the Eastern neighborhood, in the preparation phase of a Twinning fiche (TTSIB project 2013). None of the projects observed in Moldova were started without the use of external consultants. In Lebanon on the other hand, Twinning projects were designed nearly exclusively by the beneficiary administration. When asked whether consultants were used in the preparatory process, one of the main government administrators for Twinning projects argued:

In Lebanon never [...] when it came to Twinning it was always drafted by the beneficiary administration directly. (Twinning#28).

The observation that in Moldova fiches were influenced by external consultants from the private sector is important. It raises the question as to what extent this happened and how it influenced the content of the fiche. Following the explanation of an EU delegation official, it has a major impact on the fiche. It is justified within the argument that officials in public administrations lack capacity to draw up a project:

Initially we agree with the beneficiary that they will prepare the draft Twinning fiche, not the TORs, but the Twinning fiches. (...) So they said ok, in 2 weeks-time we have the Twinning fiches. After 3 days I started to receive calls, messages, E-mails: 'We have no experience in preparing such fiches according to the manual. Do you think there is the possibility to hire experts?' Well, OK, at least we tried (...) Maybe after a dozen of Twinning the government will be ready for that. Yet at this stage they are still in need of external experts to prepare those fiches (EUD#2).

This quotation exemplifies the fact that beneficiaries have little understanding of the formal requirements of the EU and prefer to outsource project preparation to external consultants. The extent of this is exemplified by the answer an employee of the Twinning support project in Moldova provided concerning the role of external consultants in the fiche preparation phase:

You have to have a working group at your institution that is designated to work with those experts because they all have questions, they cannot know all the details of your system and your sector. You have to tell them which is the best solution for you (...) Slowly that started moving but there is much more definitely to be done, even to build the capacity of the institutions themselves to

be able to be more independent or know-how to prepare not only Twinning fiches but even many other proposals that they have to prepare (Twinning#17).

One main feature that determines whether a Twinning fiche is drafted by external consultants or the administration is whether Twinning projects in a given country are run under a so-called “centralized” or “decentralized” procedure. Moldova and most East European countries are run under the centralized procedure. Lebanon, as most Mediterranean countries, is run under the decentralized procedure (Bouscharain & Moreau 2012). The concepts of a centralized and decentralized procedure spring from the EU’s general regulation on how to disseminate its own budget (EU Council Regulation, No.1605/2002). The centralized procedure implies that the EU keeps full control of the dissemination of its own funds, either through its delegation or through the EU Commission (Art.53a). Under the decentralized procedure the EU delegates the dissemination and management of its funds to the neighboring country (Art.54c). The EU insists that decentralized management is only used when evidence of the proper grant award procedures, internal administrative control, accounting, independent audit and public access to information exist (Art.56). The use of a decentralized implementation system had been recommended for both the Mediterranean and East European countries by the EU Council and the EU Court of Auditors (Council of the European Union 1999; European Commission 1996). In 2005, the EU manual emphasized that Twinning programs would remain centralized for the time being yet would be gradually decentralized (European Commission 2005). In Moldova, this has not taken place. Accordingly, an EUD official from Moldova stated:

You know these guys in the PAO are constantly lacking the capacity (...) they have to deal not only with the delegation but with the entire donors community. The staff turnover is high. In the PAO there are only 3 to 4 people still there, the others already left.” (EUD#2)

In Lebanon, on the other hand, the main EU official related to Twinning stated:

They are doing a great job. [Two PAO administrators] are excellent. (Beneficiary#25).

The work of the Project Administration Office (PAO) seemed to play no role in projects in Moldova. As an RTA close toward the end of his/her Twinning project stated laconically:

They are welcome if they like to visit us and monitor more closely. They are also part of the steering committee. Maybe they perceive it is enough to just have this quarterly contact through reports and meetings. (Member_State#7).

Respondents in Lebanon were much more concrete and outspoken about the role of the PAO in their project. As one RTA-counterpart argued:

The relation with them was excellent, they were really instrumental. They understood our needs, they properly organized things, they wrote documents. (Beneficiary#35).

The use of centralized management in Eastern Europe and decentralized management in the Mediterranean region points to fundamental discrepancies between the different countries and regions. Whereas in Lebanon it was emphasized that people are “[...] fond of getting a job as a civil servant, it is not easy to get it. Once you get it, you are not going to let it go” (Twinning#38),

in Moldova public administration employment seems much less desirable, as public administrators “[...] after 3 years of experience [...] start to work as freelancers, start to work on different projects of development assistance.” (EUD#2).

If administrative capacity is one of the overriding principles for closer association with the EU, then it is puzzling as to why Moldova is often portrayed as a more or less successful case of the ENP whereas all Mediterranean countries lack a closer association perspective. By keeping Moldova under a centralized management system, the EU seems to recognize that the country cannot live up to one of the most fundamental tasks of closer association, the effective and transparent dissemination of funds. Yet by using the decentralized procedure in Lebanon, it acknowledges its capacity to properly distribute and manage EU money. It reduces the role of the PAO in Moldova to a consultative one. Instead, it monopolizes the management and

dissemination of funds to the EUD. It is questionable whether this is in line with the idea of the state ownership of Twinning projects, as advertised by the EU. It is further questionable whether it is indeed appropriate to monopolize project management in a project framework that is based on cooperation and neither supplies a membership perspective to Moldova nor Lebanon.

As demonstrated in this section, the establishment of Twinning projects differs considerably between Lebanon and Moldova, in a rather counterintuitive way. In Lebanon, fiches are generally drafted by the beneficiary administration, in Moldova by external consultants. In Moldova, the EU retains full control over its funds even during implementation through the centralized procedure; Lebanon has more leeway in allocating funds through the decentralized procedure. Interestingly, in the late 1990s the decentralization of EU funds for Twinning was regarded as a major step toward integration for candidate countries (Tulmets 2003, pp.8–9). For Twinning projects in the ENP, the choice between a centralized versus a decentralized approach is merely one that shows whether a domestic administration is able to formulate its own demands or not. This observation stands at odds with the EU's conception of Twinning as a domestically steered and owned institution building project. It seems that from the outset, Twinning in the ENP follows less an overriding rational of closer EU association than more a garbage can approach where a variety of solutions from previous approaches, such the use of decentralized management or the use of external consultants in fiche preparation, is copied into Twinning to somehow make it work.

4.3.3. Different actors, different roles: RTA's, their counterparts, and their supporting cast

Creating a Twinning project does not only mean developing mandatory results and designing activities over a one- to two-year timeframe. It also means choosing project participants and assigning specific roles to them. To a certain extent the role of each participant is predefined in

the Twinning manual, with roles further specified in the fiche. Different actors play different roles in Twinning projects based on their origin and the nature of their involvement. There are actors from the beneficiary country, from one or more EU member state(s) and from the EU. Actors may either be involved directly in the day-to-day implementation of the project or fill an external role through a consultative or managerial function. The basic role of each Twinning actor is summarized in Figure 2:

| | | Origin of actor | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|---|--|
| | | National [Beneficiary country] | National [EU member state] | International [EU] |
| Nature of involvement | Internal [involved in day-to-day implementation] | RTA-counterpart direct and closest contact of the RTA in the beneficiary administration | RTA works on a day-to-day basis with the beneficiary administration to accompany project implementation | |
| | | Participants employees of the beneficiary administrating being involved in some way in one or more project activities | | |
| | External [contracting partner or consultative role] | Beneficiary project leader counterpart to the project leader, cooperates in steering and coordination the project Project administration office (PAO) In Lebanon = contracting authority, government body within the beneficiary country, assisting the EU delegation in the overall management of the project | MS project leader oversees and directs the implementation of the project | EU delegation In Moldova = contracting authority, representing the EU Commission, responsible for financial dissemination and contract changes |

Figure 2: Twinning project roles

This dissertation is most concerned with the role of what can be referred to as the core of a Twinning project, the RTA and the RTA-counterpart.³² Yet no project is complete and can be understood without the supporting cast, playing different roles at different times. The main purpose of this section is to analyze how the formal Twinning framework defines each actor and their relationships. This helps to uncover the extent to which the formal framework constrains each actor, and how each specific role is instrumental toward the implementation of mandatory results.

4.3.3.1. The EU member-state side: RTA and the MS Project Leader

The Twinning manual calls the RTA the “backbone” of the Twinning project (European Commission 2012a). Officially, the RTA stands below the so-called MS project leader in the hierarchy of Twinning. Whereas the MS project leader is supposed to steer and organize Twinning activities from the administration of his or her home country, the RTA is posted into the neighboring country. The RTA is formally bound by his/her own project leader. One

³² The role of each was continuously highlighted during the interviews. For example, a Twinning support office within an EU-funded project argued: “the role of [the RTA and the RTA-counterpart] is definitely very important and crucial really for the smooth implementation of the project.” (Twinning#17).

assumption to justify such an arrangement would be that it is difficult to post relatively senior staff in the prime of their career to another country, as the loss of two years in one's home administration would outweigh the gain of having participated in a Twinning project. One can assume that for a public administrator with around ten to fifteen years of work experience, leaving one's tenured track for a considerable amount of time is not especially desirable if there is no explicit incentive from the side of one's home administration. Furthermore, most senior public administrators can be assumed to have families and children. That does not make it easy to move to a country such as Moldova or Lebanon for an extended period of time.

To test the above assumption, the minimum experience requirements between RTAs and MS project leaders were compared as listed in the project fiches of fourteen projects in Lebanon and Moldova (Annex 5). On average, the experience required is twelve years for an MS project leader and nine years for an RTA. Nevertheless, individual projects' requirements vary significantly. Three projects in Moldova required a minimum experience of ten years from the MS project leader and only three years from the RTA. In three other cases—two projects in Moldova and one in Lebanon—the experience required was exactly the same between the two, either fifteen or ten years. This is also reflected in the wording of the fiches, where some require more seniority from MS project leaders but others require the same. Furthermore, although age was never asked during interviews, none of the RTAs were junior staff. Most of them had considerably more working experience than required. Some of them seemed close to or already in their retirement. Both the MS project leader and the RTA can be retired from their domestic post before joining a Twinning project. Yet particularly for the project leader the EU is not very fond of such an arrangement (European Commission 2012b, p.72).

Another assumption for the creation of a differentiated post would be that appointing a project leader in the EU member state would add political legitimacy as it provides a sense of

high-level steering between the member state and the neighboring country. This assumption stands in contrast to the EU's express promotion of focusing on "European best practices," rather than domestic ones. Yet, following the Twinning manual, this seems to be the main rationale as it refers to the MS project leader as

a high-ranking civil servant or equivalent staff commensurate with the requirement for an operational dialog and backing at political level. (European Commission 2012a).

The MS project leader should thus be in dialog with a high-ranking administrator from the beneficiary (project leader counterpart) to ensure the smooth implementation of a project. Whether the MS project leader is generally a higher ranking official in Twinning projects is questionable. Some of the RTAs interviewed indicated that they were project leaders in former projects and vice versa. The designation of roles in terms of who would fill an RTA position and who would be an MS project leader is thus a lot more arbitrary than the hierarchy portrayed in the Twinning manual. The RTA, although being the "backbone" of the project, is directly dependent on the MS project leader, as he or she formally represents the member-state side and is signatory to the contract. In cases where the RTA deviates from the contract, the MS project leader could formally overrule him or her, or even replace the RTA. During the interviews, no indication of such an MS project leader intervention was brought forward.

4.3.3.2. The beneficiary side: RTA-counterpart, Beneficiary project leader, and PAO

Whereas the RTA is the backbone of a project and his or her roles are described in detail in the Twinning manual as well as all Twinning fiches, the RTA-counterpart is featured less prominently. Neither the Twinning manual nor most Twinning fiches say much about the role of the counterpart beyond the need to appoint one and that he or she should cooperate with the RTA. It is a similar case for the beneficiary project leader, who acts as the counterpart to the MS project leader. The manual mentions that this person should be a high-ranking official with

sufficient authority to ensure political commitment (European Commission 2012a). It is puzzling as to why the EU puts such a large emphasis on the specific role of member-state participants of Twinning yet offers little in terms of the role of beneficiary participants.

Various interview responses suggest that the profile of the RTA-counterpart and beneficiary project leader are enormously important. In Moldova, for example, relatively young and less experienced RTA-counterparts were often seen as not very beneficial to the project:

My counterpart was younger, very young. My de facto counterpart was [a more senior administrator]. She was always involved in the activities, always willing to learn more. (Member_State#3);

She is inexperienced in terms of [the policy area] but she understands the process a lot better now. [...] I had a much more experienced contact in the ministry who unfortunately left, which is sort of a real shame (Member_State#5).

Not all RTA-counterparts in Moldova were inexperienced. Yet in most projects this was the case. There are two explanations for this, likely interlinked in each project. First, more senior staff generally have lower English proficiency compared to junior staff in Moldova. Particularly when Romania is not the main member state involved, a younger counterpart may be preferred for communication purposes. Second, Being an RTA-counterpart is a demanding job that has to be worked in parallel to one's own position without any extra financial incentives. Neither becoming a counterpart nor delegating a high-ranking administrator to become one is particularly incentivized. What the quotes above also exemplify is that when working with a junior counterpart, the RTA tends to actively search for a de facto counterpart who is closer to their own level of training.

The roles of the RTA-counterpart and the project leader were considerably different in Lebanon. A respondent from the Lebanese PAO argued:

[The RTA-counterpart] is essential because at the end of the day this is where assimilation of the project takes place and this is where if the relation is not good, the RTA-counterpart can simply block things. So of course you need to have an

RTA-counterpart who is aware, who is involved and who knows. (Twinning#28).

Furthermore, an RTA stated his/her counterpart is highly

(...) involved in the planning. Every email is end out related to the project is copied to her and vice versa. So there is this open-endedness in the way we work. If something goes wrong, we protect each other. (Member_State#32).

In general, counterparts in Lebanon were more senior than in Moldova and seemed to have a more in-depth involvement in the project. In contrast to Moldova, in Lebanon nearly everyone, no matter which level of seniority, was fluent in English and French. This makes the selection of a counterpart easier. On the other hand, the initiative for Twinning projects in Lebanon often came directly from the future RTA-counterpart, bringing on board the future beneficiary project leader. In Moldova, although the original initiative for most projects came from the beneficiary administration, it was usually not the future counterparts who were among the main initiators.

4.3.3.3. Between member state and beneficiary: Why certain roles are clearer than others.

As demonstrated above, there is a considerable difference between the EU's definitions of participants from EU member states in contrast to beneficiaries. Whereas RTAs and project leaders receive an elaborate profile, the counterpart's role remains vague. Yet the role and qualification of beneficiary participants matters just as much from the point of view of project implementation as the one of member-state participants. Why is that?

The answer lies in the legitimization function of Twinning projects. Whereas mandatory results should portray the image of "best practices" superior to existing ones, RTAs and MS project leaders must portray the role of "experts" who have authority over beneficiary practices that are in demand of deep-rooted reform. To legitimize the expertise of MS participants, their own level of work experience and seniority is used as a proxy for their utility to the beneficiary. The role of an expert in this case is a myth of superior practical knowledge from which

beneficiaries can directly profit. The idea of public sector experts disseminating expertise has been fashionable in parts of the ENP. This was particularly eminent with the centrality of “Comprehensive Institution Building,” an EU approach aimed at coordinating institution-building efforts in the ENP (European Commission 2011). Despite considerable funding from the ENP budget, the approach never took off.

The formalization of participant profiles is prone to overstating institutionalized myths of expertise over the complex reality. Although the RTA’s seniority is stressed, in reality it is not a huge problem. On the contrary, RTAs may often have too much seniority where they are close to or past retirement age. This may create friction, but in most cases studied in Moldova and Lebanon it apparently seemed to work. Also stressing the higher level of experience and seniority of the MS project leader is questionable, in many cases RTAs had been project leaders and vice versa. The reasons for choosing who becomes an RTA and who a project leader are often of a practical nature and do not necessarily correlate fully with each one’s level of experience and rank. Interview responses further indicate that the role of the RTA-counterpart and the beneficiary project leader matters at least as much as that of member-state participants.

4.3.4. Staging Twinning: mandatory results and contracting

The centrality of mandatory results in Twinning projects is underlined by the EU Commission in practically any document issued on Twinning. The Twinning manual states: “The concept of ‘mandatory results’ is a key feature of Twinning.” A presentation given by the TTSIB Twinning support project in Moldova argues: “The sole reason and justification for the Twinning is the achievement of the mandatory results.” (TTSIB project 2013) and in one recent presentation on the state of Twinning, the Commission administrator Christophe Ingels argued that Twinning is: “based on a commitment between both partners to work toward commonly agreed mandatory results” (Ingels 2014). As established in previous sections, mandatory results act as a proxy for

the prominent but underdefined concepts of institution building and capacity development. This section follows on from the general conceptualization of mandatory results to their establishment on the ground.

The Twinning manual defines mandatory results as:

[They] must make a specific and direct contribution to Institution Building in the BC [Beneficiary country]; (...) [they] must be concrete, clearly measurable (...) [and] must remain at the disposal of the BC administration as a sustainable asset. (European Commission 2012a).

Despite the apparent sturdiness of mandatory results in the Twinning manual, the EU has recently softened its rhetoric on their rigidity during the contracting phase. Thus, EU Commission official Ingels argues that although mandatory results should be well defined during the preparation of the fiche, “(...)the fiche itself should leave the opportunity to the MS to propose its own methodology and solutions” (Ingels 2014). Despite that level of flexibility granted, the EU Commission is keen on preserving the core mandatory results developed in the fiche as “any significant deviation of mandatory results from the project fiche requires a change of the project fiche in line with the adequate procedures before the Twinning contract can be concluded.”(European Commission 2012a).

To what extent do mandatory results deviate in practice from the ones in the fiche? This is not easy to establish. Usually Twinning contracts are treated as confidential and remain within the beneficiary administration. Only in Moldova could Twinning contracts be reviewed under the condition that no specific information would be disseminated (Annex 4).³³ A comparison of mandatory results in Twinning fiches and contracts in Moldova indicated the following: In five projects the results were absolutely identical, word for word. In two cases the wording was changed. The changes did not amend any results but rather specified them. In both

³³ A comparative table was prepared that can only be published in a reduced format within this dissertation (Annex 2) but that can be displayed if specifically requested by interested researchers.

cases, the wording of the original results was still present, yet information was added to specify perceived outcomes. These two projects are interesting in the sense that the beneficiary and the member-state representatives voluntarily choose to apply more specific benchmarks toward the performance of their project. Interestingly, both projects were relatively successful compared to the other Twinning projects in Moldova. In the interviews with the RTAs and RTA-counterparts from either project, each side spoke highly of the other and was able to provide a nuanced description of the project and its implementation. The RTA-counterpart interviewed from one of the projects stated for example:

If you are not very detailed as to the actions but more focusing on the results, then you have the flexibility to adjust your activities as to achieve your results. It is the results that you are mainly focusing on in the contract and not on the actions. (Beneficiary#9)

It can be assumed that if changes are made during the contracting phase of Twinning, it is due to the engagement of the beneficiary, specifying their own demands as it was not able to in a fiche, drafted by external consultants. Through that, it can put itself at the steering wheel and demand specific activities from the member-state participants. The above quotation may be contrasted with another quote from an RTA well into a project where mandatory results were not changed:

In my opinion, the design of this project was not good. Because, whoever drafted the project fiche, they did not take into account the dimensions of this institution. (Member_State#6).

Here, the domestic administration was unable to voice its own demands and problems at the fiche and contract preparation phase. Specific domestic problems were realized during implementation and had to be dealt with.

In Lebanon, the notion that a beneficiary needs to be flexible in designing mandatory results in the fiche and the contract was more pronounced. An MS project leader for example argued:

You have to know what your needs are and how to express them. These details are not always expressed in the fiche and they should not be expressed in the fiche. First, you are limiting yourself as a beneficiary if they are expressed, second there is (...) always a time difference between the first launching of the Twinning process and the implementation. (Beneficiary#29).

The RTA-counterpart of another project made a similar comment:

When you design a fiche, you use the info you have at the time. But 3 years ahead, things change. Then you have to adopt. (Beneficiary#37).

These examples from Moldova and Lebanon point out that the use of mandatory results to lock in EU norms and best practices at the start of a project does not correspond well with the reality of Twinning projects. When the beneficiary administration is unprepared, it takes on board the results suggested by an external consultant in the fiche. Those results are not changed in the contract either. During contract preparation, the future RTA and MS project leaders cannot get a sufficient grasp of the actual state of the administration in the short timeframe given. More prepared administrations seem to follow one of two ways. As in some cases in Moldova where the fiche was prepared through external consultants, mandatory results were specified further in the contract to ensure member-state participants are best utilized in the interest of the administration. In Lebanon, respondents were generally skeptical of specifying mandatory results at all, as they were aware that the domestic situation may change much quicker than a Twinning project can adapt.

Mandatory results in relation to EU best practices play the role of institutionalized myths. Following EU practices and “getting closer to Europe” may serve a legitimizing function for Twinning participants. When it comes to formulating what is to be done, an administration either knows what it demands and what it needs or it does not. If it has an idea of what it wants it either chooses to make the member-state participants accountable, by specifying it further in the contract, or chooses to keep outcomes as brought and flexible as possible to be responsive during the project. Only in the case of the administration not being clear what it wants and what

is needed will it focus on the supply side of EU practices and engage in “isomorphic mimicry” (Pritchett et al. 2010, p.20)

4.4. Conclusions and outlook

This chapter demonstrates that although EU Twinning projects have been around for more than seventeen years, their meaning and essence remains unclear. Their formal framework has changed little. Yet the ENP is entirely different compared to Eastern enlargement. The meaning of core terms such as “institution building,” “capacity development,” or “cooperation” was not adapted. During enlargement, meaning was provided by a process of European integration. Administrative changes were not self-standing, but served the purpose of integrating a national into a supranational political entity. As a result, Twinning and its core concepts ended up being self-referential. Terms such as “institution building” and “capacity development” have become myths in the light of the success of Eastern enlargement. Twinning was largely copied from Eastern enlargement and pasted into the ENP in a garbage-can-like process.

The myths surrounding Twinning portray a sense of legitimacy. This is fueled by the rationalistic approach of mandatory results and a formal contracting procedure that portrays a sense of predictability and causality yet in reality often overburdens beneficiary administrations.

Twinning projects during the Eastern enlargement process were also partially copied from administrative reform during German reunification. Similarly to the ENP and Eastern enlargement, German reunification bore little resemblance to Eastern enlargement, yet just enough to take over the idea of posting long-term advisors from one administrative setting to another. Contrary to the ENP, the EU still developed Twinning as a new tool for enlargement whose approach was adapted to the goal of EU accession.

As much as Twinning is not a coherent concept, the ENP is not a coherent region. What binds the EU's approach to the Mediterranean and Eastern neighborhood has been a sense of coping and muddling through the unpredictability of events unfolding. Whereas the Mediterranean had been a region of strategic interest for France, the EU remains one actor among many. In Eastern Europe the EU had been an attractive force after the collapse of the Soviet Union, yet hand-picking enlargement candidates and countries with no membership perspective has created insiders and outsiders, shown in the differences between TACIS and PHARE. The creation of the ENP was an attempt to create a sense of coherence in the EU's neighborhood relations. Making this policy look similar to Eastern enlargement was supposed to have a normalizing effect on the region, utilizing what was then regarded as the "normative power" of the EU. Yet as within Twinning, the content did not match the package. There is still no clear idea how the ENP can have an impact without offering any form of credible membership perspective.

It is important to observe that a high amount of formalization that on the ENP level refers to the creation of cooperation agreements, actions plans, etc., cannot make up for a lack of tangible content, such as a membership perspective. Within Twinning this leads to peculiar claims such as that best practices and mandatory results may represent a nearly causal effect toward sustained administrative capacity development. This is but one of the myths Twinning projects are based on, giving them an aura of importance and legitimacy from the outside but affecting little of what is happening within.

This chapter peeled off the shell of formal structures surrounding Twinning and its historic development and context. It lays the groundwork for studying Twinning projects from the insight, implementation. The striking differences presented between Lebanese and Moldovan interviewees considering their understanding of Twinning projects, their perception of their own role, and their reasons to engage in such a project in the first place provide a point

of departure. When meaning provided by the EU is based on legitimizing myths that fade when a project starts, actors involved are forced to search for their actual role and to find out what a project can accomplish. The question then is: What does Twinning become? The following chapter answers this question by arguing that Twinning projects become organizational structures in their own right, dealing with the particularities and constraints posed by their environment through close deliberation and cooperation.

5. INSIDE IMPLEMENTATION: MAKING SENSE OF TWINNING THROUGH DELIBERATION AND COOPERATION

5.1. Introduction

This is what Twinning is about, isn't it. It is about sharing experiences. I had an email from one of my experts recently who said he really enjoyed being over and he just really enjoyed working with the people that were so enthusiastic. I think he was sort of disappointed to go back to work. But he has taken on the experience of working here with him. We are taking up really good relationships here. We are even talking if we can offer some more support in some areas (...). We are building up really good contacts between people. (Member_State#5)

They did not come with a value added in a way that they came in and said: Ah, you do it this way, we may help you there. You know, you have interest in switching directions and putting your way in that direction. That did not happen, we still tried to understand and then they left. (Beneficiary#35)

These quotations represent two extreme ways in which Twinning projects can develop during implementation. The first comes from the member state and the second from the beneficiary side. Two main impressions from these quotes should be highlighted. First, the implementation process of Twinning projects can take various directions: from very close cooperation to project failure. Second, perceptions of implementation may differ. The quotations further introduce a sense of caution toward drawing too simplistic conclusions on the nature and the “dos and don'ts” of Twinning. The previous chapter argued that Twinning projects in Lebanon should have been more effective than in the Republic of Moldova (hereafter Moldova) due to the perceived beneficiaries' better understanding of own demands and capacities. With this in mind, one would assume that the first quotation comes from an RTA in Lebanon, and the second from a project leader in Moldova. Yet in fact it is the other way around.

Although we can see an impact of the wider domestic political conditions and the countries' specific relationship with the EU, every Twinning project is different and may develop in its own way. Thus, this chapter shifts the perspective to the inside, to observe and analyze what happens during implementation. To study the process of implementation and more

specifically the role of interpersonal relations, the chapter utilizes two main concepts established in the theoretical framework: deliberation and cooperation. The question this chapter aims to answer follows logically from the findings of the previous one. As the formal Twinning framework is essentially unclear, it explores how meaning is produced within projects through sense-making. Sense-making is based on deliberation through which actors exchange individual ideas and approaches to create shared meaning. Shared meaning is put into action through cooperation within the project and beyond it.³⁴

To approach sense-making processes of Twinning participants, interviews were conducted in an open way, allowing respondents as much leeway as possible to reflect on their own position and their relationship to each other.³⁵ This chapter relies considerably on representative interview quotations to explore individual perception. This is informed by the conception of Twinning projects as autopoietic systems of organization, driven by the internal construction of meaning rather than external inputs. The analysis covers fourteen projects in Moldova and Lebanon that were either in their implementation phase or finished between 2013 and 2014. The variety of projects illustrates different manifestations of deliberation and cooperation as sense-making in Twinning.³⁶

The following sections use the theoretical framework of chapter 2 and the formal and historical background established in chapter 4 as their analytical foundation. It proceeds as follows: The first section explores how participants come to terms with the demands and the nature of a Twinning project. It deals with the extent to which the domestic demand and the specific administrative context is scrutinized at the beginning. This is contrasted by the underlying conception of mandatory results as fundamental and nearly unchangeable. The

³⁴ Compare: Chapter 2, section 5: On the micro-level: understanding Twinning as process of cooperation and deliberation. Sense-making is defined as the primary process on which Twinning projects are based and influence their beneficiary. The underlying mechanisms of sense-making are communicative: deliberation and practical: cooperation.

³⁵ For a more in-depth discussion of the methodological approach, consult chapter 3: Research Methodology.

³⁶ For further information on the project affiliation and background of the interviewees, consult Annexes 1, 2 & 5

second section explores how deliberation affects Twinning implementation. It explores how participants communicate different views of the purpose and the nature of the project and the way in which common understandings are forged. It further explores the obstacles toward deliberation, including perceived cultural differences and language barriers. The third section explores cooperative action as the other side of sense-making. It explores the different roles participants ascribe to themselves and their counterparts and the extent to which they are compatible. Thereafter it explores the way participants understand the role of cooperation from their own perspective and the value they ascribe to it in the context of the project.

5.2. Toward deliberation and cooperation: sense-making at the beginning of a Twinning project

At the beginning of a Twinning project, its mode of operation is established and routines are developed; Twinning projects become organizational structures. A formal framework is already in existence through the agreement of the Twinning contract and the establishment of a work plan. As participants come together, activities are started and a common language and approach must be developed toward the implementation and eventual completion of the project. In order to come to that understanding, three steps early in the project must be considered: 1) The way the “domestic demand” comes to be defined and understood, 2) The way such a demand is compatible with the practices advocated through the project, and 3) How as a result the project frame is scrutinized and understood.

These steps translate Twinning from a static approach of institutional isomorphism through the one-to-one substitution of domestic with external practices to an open and interactive organizational process (Hernes 2007).

5.2.1. Identifying the domestic demand

In order for the expert to be able to help, you spend a lot of time to explain him how you work, what is the context, what is available, what are the rules. Once he understands that he can be able to help you. But he cannot just come the first day and tell you: You do it this way and I want you to have it that way in Lebanon, it does not work like this. There is a time to understand the context of the country where you are going to give expertise. (Beneficiary#30)

Gaining an understanding of the domestic context and the specificities of domestic administrative practice is core at the start of a Twinning project. Domestic respondents such as the RTA-counterpart above frequently emphasize the importance of explaining external participants as the RTA the specificities of the domestic context. The respondent stated to have long-term experience in the sector. The aim of the project was to establish a system of national accounts in Lebanon that would produce internationally comparable statistics. The project, which started in 2012, was not the first of its kind. As the respondent argued, the process had already been started in 2002, a decision made by the prime minister. It gained momentum in 2006 when a special team was equipped with the task to establish a system of national accounts in Lebanon, and the RTA-counterpart was one of the founding members of that team.

The process of establishing a system of national accounts that the project was supposed to aid was already in existence for roughly ten years. As the project fiche notes, the production of national accounts had widely been in line with international standards but suffered from the non-availability of data and a lack of resources.³⁷ This constrained the production of national accounts. The fiche did not state what exactly constrained data collection, why certain data was only available as index and not raw data or just how conducting regular surveys was problematic at the time. The fiche argued that there is a problem, but even within its extensive format of covering around twenty pages, it could not establish where that problem was rooted and what it would take to solve it.

³⁷ The project fiche is the basic project framework and outline, circulated among EU member states for the application and eventual identification of project counterparts. In general, the later contract mirrors the fiche and if at all only makes minor changes to it.

The domestic demand was not clear from the fiche. One example mentioned was a survey, on which the project was supposed to rely that was not available at the beginning of the project and did not materialize during the project (Member_State#39). Another example was the idea of creating a specific register for the same purpose. The creation of that register was impossible as the ministry responsible in possession of the demanded data refused to make it available (Member_State#39). In some countries, data sharing between ministerial units and governmental agencies is taken for granted, but this was not the case in Lebanon.

The example demonstrates the inherent mismatch between the domestic demand as portrayed in the project fiche and contract and the situation on the ground faced by project participants. Although the fiche was drafted by the administration itself, it failed to incorporate the actual demand and domestic obstacles to achieve it.

I did not know about that [internal administrative change] when I first came. Only after being here for some time I got to know that these changes were taking place. (Member_State#10)

We do not have the proper planning capacity to see what we will need in two or three years in order to start preparing the Twinning fiches. Another issue is that (...) we are starting to draft the project fiches to request the Twinning projects and are forgetting that the Twinning will come in one year or two years when the issue is already solved (Twinning#19).

The two above quotations from an RTA in Moldova, and an official of the Moldovan PAO further exemplify the mismatch that often exists between the demand established during the planning phase and the demand perceived at the start of a Twinning project. The mismatch between the perceived and the actual timeframe, between application and implementation, is exemplary for various Twinning projects in Moldova and Lebanon. It neither represents the most extreme case observed in terms of delay nor the most ideal. The fiche of the project was launched in mid-2010, aiming to start activities in mid-2011. Yet the inception phase dragged

on much longer than originally planned. As a result, the project only started activities in mid-2012, more than one-and-a-half years after the fiche was drafted.

The major problem at the start was that the main beneficiary organization ceased to exist and was replaced by another agency with different competences and structures. Beneficiary#11 further emphasized that the new agency was created practically from scratch in a relatively rushed and unforeseen manner. As emphasized by various other interviews and discussed further in the following chapter, such forms of rushed and uncoordinated policy-making are the rule rather than the exception in Moldova.

A rushed and uncoordinated domestic policy-making approach stands in stark contrast to the time between the conception of a Twinning fiche and the start of implementation of a project of more than one year. When domestic administrative conditions are in constant flux, the domestic demand cannot be established more than one year before a project. In such a situation, Twinning becomes per definition a garbage-can-like approach as the only thing that is understood is the solution. When problems are not understood, externalities are created as described in the development literature. These include blind isomorphism and the overbearing and overloading of domestic administrations through externally conceived practices (Pritchett et al. 2010).

Twinning#19's quote indicates that a lack of long-term planning capacity is not a problem that is inherent to only a handful of projects, but represents the general state of public administration in Moldova. The process of priority-setting, institutionalization, and prioritization does not follow a predictable path. It is a rather instable process open to political shocks and abrupt changes, results of vested interests and internal power struggles. Formalizing domestic demand by writing it into the Twinning fiche, making it the basis of mandatory results and the Twinning contract is not a solution to such shortcomings. To the contrary, it diverts attention from key forces at play in a given domestic situation. It creates a myth of a stable and

controllable environment. This myth can be upheld until a project is under way. In the one to two years between the creation of a fiche and the beginning of a project, the beneficiary administration has no incentive to engage with the validity of the fiche, which in the case of Moldova is even externally drafted. External participants, in particular the RTA, have no indication of the situation on the ground beyond the fiche. Before the signature of a contract the beneficiaries, the RTA and the external project leader have approximately two weeks to modify the fiche and the work plan. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, in the projects covered for this dissertation no relevant difference was discovered between the content of contracts and fiches.

From the side of the EU, there is neither the interest in nor the capacity to monitor domestic processes and the change of the administrative context in which a Twinning project would operate. From a normative point of view, the EU's main control is legitimizing the fiche and upholding mandatory results that were sanctioned by the EU delegation and the relevant Commission directorate in Brussels. Adding flexibility to this process and allowing for the continuous updating of demands could jeopardize the straightforward linkage between mandatory results and EU-sanctioned practices and standards. It would allow for the introduction of irrationality and the murkiness of day-to-day politics as present in public administrative systems in Moldova and Lebanon, in contrast to an otherwise rationalized and mechanized process of planning, implementation, and output creation. It is necessary to uphold the myth of a controllable environment and the absence of domestic change between project conception and implementation. This justifies the use of mandatory results in an environment where the external incentive and normalizing force of EU membership is lacking.

Beyond the EU's normative necessity to uphold mandatory results, EU delegations in Moldova and Lebanon commonly lack the capacity to monitor and adapt domestic demands before a Twinning project starts. The main source of information a delegation has in the case

of Moldova is the consultant who drafts the fiche. Beyond that, the EU re-engages with the project framework at the first quarterly meeting during implementation. In Moldova, interviewees indicated that the delegation remained rather quiet and unengaged during meetings. At the time of interviewing, there were two people who managed and monitored Twinning projects as part of their extensive portfolio. There was also one full-time Twinning official who had just been hired and was not yet fully integrated into the delegation's workflow. In the case of Lebanon, the main source of information was the PAO, whose main task was the communication between the EU delegation and the Lebanese government.³⁸ In Lebanon, just one EU official handled the various tasks surrounding Twinning projects, mainly occupied by the demands of ongoing rather than prospective projects.

5.2.2. Adapting to domestic demand at the beginning of the project

An administrator working in the Lebanese PAO on Twinning pointed to a project that was regarded as problematic at the time:

Of course it is difficult and that would be very stupid and silly to think that you can take an off the shelf model and just come and implement it. It never works. I am telling you now, the best answer you can have on this can come from [my colleague], he/she is facing considerable problems now with his Twinning [project]. [...] [The RTA] has problems (...) pertaining to the Lebanese customs that are not being as reactive as they should be. (Twinning#28)

Another PAO official further explained the nature of the problem. The official stated that a main goal of the project was to develop solutions on each single process of product clearance in Lebanese customs to speed up the process. Yet due to political stalemate at the time, Lebanon had no higher council of customs at the start of the project and it was not clear when the council would be active again. Without that body, none of the recommendations made could be ratified and implemented (Twinning#38).

³⁸ Project Administration Office: the domestic agency coordinating between the EU delegation, Twinning projects, and the government.

The RTA of the project was torn between the demands of the project fiche and the political reality on the ground to which he/she had to adapt:

They have an idea concerning statistics but they don't have a cycle, they don't plan in advance, they don't have objectives, they work in this way. (...) It is the amendment of the legislation which is very important. The only problem we are facing is that we have no high council right now. This is a very big obstacle for us. (Member_State#31).

The RTA had to get used to a very different world of clearance processes. He/she argued that whereas for common goods the clearance process is around twenty minutes in his/her country, it takes several days in Lebanon. An affiliate of the RTA's argued that getting a car out of the port can take more than a month.

Despite the political and administrative obstacles that were not foreseen at the beginning, the Twinning project did not opt for major changes through an addendum. The RTA argued that such changes would have led to huge delays but time was scarce from the beginning. He/she emphasized that the project would profit from additional time for implementation but was unlikely to get it under Twinning. In the end, it seemed as if the project would continue indulging in continuous and in-depth training and analyzing activities, producing recommendations of which no one knew whether they would ever be ratified by the higher council of customs and formally put into practice.

This example is telling in terms of how an RTA and member-state participants have to come to terms with the specific situation on the ground. The RTA neither expected the magnitude of difference in terms of customs clearance procedures between his/her EU country and Lebanon, nor the significant influence of political stalemate on the project. The contract was not changed as both the RTA and the beneficiary thought this could jeopardize the project and too much time would be lost. Instead, the project switched into as-if mode. Trainings were

undertaken and recommendations provided as if the council was in existence. Whether these efforts would be fruitful could not be foreseen at this stage.

What is notable from the example is how an RTA and other member-state participants lose their myth-like profile of an “expert” who carries along “technical” knowledge that can be implemented and raise the efficiency of the administration like a machine. Although the project was already well in the middle of its implementation phase, the RTA was still busy grasping the magnitude of day-to-day practices in Lebanon. There was still a sense of surprise when he/she explained how long clearance takes in Lebanon, not understanding how the process could be so delayed.

As discussed, the formal Twinning framework does not accommodate the changes and surprises that are a given at the beginning of all projects. The domestic demand combined with the situation on the ground cannot be explained in a twenty-page fiche. The sense of controllability and technical change based on that assumption is a myth, and yet it seems that many RTAs buy into the myth. As projects start, they grapple with the implications of the mismatch of what is assumed and what they find on the ground. In the worst case scenario, they try to uphold the myth and push through their initially assumed approach through an orthodox interpretation of the contract. As mentioned previously, an RTA in Moldova was fired for just this, not being able to find acceptance with the beneficiary. More experienced RTAs on the other hand seem to be more relaxed about those assumptions and were more flexible in their approach. As a senior RTA in Moldova argued:

We are not here to sell our systems. (...) We come with our knowledge and we try as much as we can to adjust it to the local situation. (Member_State#7).

5.2.3. Scrutinizing the timeframe and project approach.

When participants see that the project does not correspond to their interest and their understanding of domestic capacity, they start to contest the project. The original Twinning approach loses its legitimacy when it is not in line with what project participants are confronted with on the ground. The interview data points to two issues in particular. On the one hand, the stringent project frame is contested for its inflexibility to allow for change. On the other hand, the time frame is criticized for leaving no room to extend or to reschedule a project deemed domestically appropriate.

5.2.3.1. Contesting the project framework

A Lebanese Twinning project leader explained how the member-state side coped with a project that was supposed to last only six months but due to political struggle and war was spread over two years:

You evaluate the offers and then there are interviews and based on this, you take your decision. If you have a member state that is rather rigid and not flexible, you do not take it. (Beneficiary#29).

The beneficiary expected a certain level of flexibility from the EU member state. This is no surprise. The beneficiary project leader was aware of the considerable internal changes that took place in his/her administration and the political environment of Lebanon in general. He/she knew that certain parts that were agreed two years before lacked relevance at the start of implementation. Importantly, he/she was a long-term employee of the Lebanese Ministry of Finance at the time of interview. His/her profile was similar to most RTA-counterparts and beneficiary project leaders interviewed in Lebanon. All had been employed in their administrations for a longer period of time and could be considered senior staff. The situation was different in Moldova. RTA-counterparts were often junior staff with little experience in the administration and very little input on the direction and development of the organization.

The demand for flexibility at the beginning of a Twinning project was not raised by Moldovan beneficiaries. In certain cases, RTA-counterparts had to be replaced as they had left the administration after signing the contract, but before implementation. These officials had even less insight into the problems at hand and the purpose of the project. As a result, a number of RTAs in Moldova choose to work closer with higher-level officials not formally involved in the project. Those officials became quasi-counterparts. Nevertheless, there were exceptions: one RTA-counterpart interviewed was in a higher-level position at the start of the Twinning project and had been actively involved in the application phase. Although the fiche was drafted by an external consultant, his/her role resembled the one of counterparts interviewed in Lebanon. In the same vein, the RTA-counterpart stressed similar issues at the beginning of the process. When asked what makes a good Twinning project, he/she said:

Probably the most important period, the most difficult one, is the period when you are negotiating the contract. (Beneficiary#9)

As the RTA-counterpart finished that sentence, he/she put a thick pile of paper on the desk, demonstrating all the material that went into the contract, and the thick contract itself. Despite the complex and in-depth contract prepared, the RTA-counterpart acknowledged that considerable adjustments were necessary after two years had passed between contract formulation and implementation.

Sometimes you start a project after only 2 years or more. So some of the objectives, some of the activities, some of the results are already there. Or maybe something changed in the political infrastructure, (...) and you are not anymore responsible, you have a limited mandate. (Beneficiary#9)

Acknowledging the importance of flexibility at the start of implementation, the RTA-counterpart explained exactly what he/she thought needed to be made more flexible:

If you are not very detailed as to the actions but more focusing on the results, then you have the flexibility to adjust your activities to achieve your results. (Beneficiary#9)

Beneficiary#9's focus of contestation was on the level of activities, which should be kept as general as possible to achieve certain specific results. What is striking is that this argument stands in contrast to the previous observation that at the beginning of a project objectives and conditions may have changed. Here the RTA-counterpart argues that the objectives of the project should be specific and remain untouched. Yet the means, by which they are to be achieved, should remain flexible.

In Lebanon, beneficiaries raised the demand to change the contract at the beginning of the project more than in Moldova. This was never directly brought forward but rather in the context of other arguments to avoid making the administration look unorganized or lacking control:

No major [changes were needed]. But of course if the time laps between the fiche preparation and the start of the project would be shorter, that would be better. In fact, we had to modify the first component of the project given that we had an internal ministerial decision (...). (Beneficiary#37)

Although Beneficiary#37 argued that no major changes were needed, he/she stated that from the beginning a given component had to be considerably amended. Beneficiary#24 who was involved in several previous Twinning put it more frankly:

You don't have much of a choice, (...) it is inflexible. Those who are on the contract [stay on the contract]. (...). From our part as the beneficiary country, for example we have several sub-beneficiaries (...). More flexibility would lead to much better results and much better utilization of resources. (Beneficiary#24)

Why is it, then, that some interviewees scrutinize the demand for changing activities, some the demand for changing mandatory results, and others for changing the whole Twinning framework? In the case of Moldova, specifically the intellectual property agency, the solution seems to be based on the demand for legitimacy, related to institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). In the case of intellectual property rights in Moldova, the high level of regulation that the EU embodies in that area seemed to be a justification for the

existence, independence, and integrity of the intellectual property rights agency and its continued funding. For most independent agencies in Moldova this is problematic. Agreeing specific goals with the EU and upholding them in the project may act as a protection against negative political influences. The domestic situation had changed after the delayed start of the project, but the interviewee still upheld the mandatory results as a matter of legitimacy toward the political goal of European integration in Moldova.

Moldova explicitly aims for EU integration. In Lebanon, the EU is just another international donor. There is more incentive to scrutinize mandatory results as well as agreed activities since the lack of an enlargement perspective provides Twinning projects with less political momentum. As key participants from the beneficiary side in Lebanon are more involved in the preparation of the project than in Moldova, they can better assess the demand for change. Participants in Moldova only grasp the nature of the project at later stages. Thus, the demand for change is considerably pronounced at the beginning.

5.2.3.2. Contesting the timeframe of the project

The timeframe for Twinning is usually 18–24 months. (...) [It is] a little bit frustrating to have that time limit (...) Depending on the way you start from and depending on the area, there is only so much you can do in 2 years (...) Twinning is supposed to deal with systemic issues and not sort out immediate problems. It takes time to change or establish systems. That can be very frustrating specifically when you discuss with EU officials when they refer to it this is just our regulations, full stop. (Member_State#7).

The above statement by Member_State#7 in Moldova reflects a general observation raised by several RTAs as well as beneficiaries, arguing that the timeframe for Twinning projects is perceived as too rigid as projects get underway. Participants repeatedly raised the concern that the project was overloaded from the beginning and little time was given from the start for adjustments concerning the differences between the fiche and the situation at the start of implementation. Particularly more experienced RTAs were keen on raising this point.

Member_State#7 was previously involved in various Twinning. More experienced RTAs in Lebanon made similar statements, for example:

We certainly developed a proposal before we were accepted. But there were certain things that had to be done, I forgot what they were called. (...) Yes, mandatory results. Those could not be changed, although there were some that were not actually feasible. (...) One problem was that the project was very time limited to do what we were asked to in 18 months was in my opinion from the start too short a period. (...) A lot of this stuff seems kind of short when what is needed is something a bit longer term actually if you want to achieve the results you want. (Member_State#39).

Not only RTAs raised such concerns, but participants from the beneficiary side also contested the stringent time frame of Twinning projects, for example:

If we had more time we would have accomplished much more. We will ask for a 2 months extension, not much. But we will still not be able to conclude everything because the duration is short. This is a problem with Twinning projects. (Beneficiary#24)

The critique touches upon two aspects of the time frame: the flexibility to move around activities and results in time, and the lack of possibility to extend the project beyond its originally foreseen timeframe. The flexibility to move around results and activities relates to concerns raised earlier, based on a project framework that is regarded as outdated and not speaking to problems faced at the beginning of implementation. Based on those concerns, the project framework is scrutinized. The question of the extension of a Twinning project can be interpreted differently. One could argue that it is in the interest of all participants to extend the project, to uphold steady funding and to reap the benefits it brings as long as possible. This is not easy in Twinning as benefits are often unclear. Projects create additional work for beneficiaries, yet provide no direct monetary contribution to the beneficiary administration's budget. The criticism is therefore more targeted toward the requirement of Twinning projects to last no less than eighteen months but also not more than two years. Interestingly, that

requirement does not explicitly exist in a formal manner. The only official requirement is that Twinning is at least twelve months in duration:

If you put too broad mandatory results it is very difficult to measure them, it is very difficult to achieve them. If already in 2 years many things can happen that can jeopardize the implementation of those mandatory results, imagine in 4 years. So you are doubling the risks. This is one reason not to go so far in terms of budget, in terms of duration. (EUD#15).

EUD#15 points to one of the major conflicts inherent in Twinning projects: between 1) controllability and measurability demanded by the EU, and 2) flexibility and adaptability demanded by participants. To measure the performance of Twinning, the EU prefers every project to follow a standard approach including measurable results and a timeframe of around two years. This allows for straightforward post-project evaluation and comparison. Yet it is a constraint on the participants; administrative reform processes more often than not do not follow a two year time frame. All observed Twinning projects were affected by political decisions and the adjustment of basic assumptions, often already at the beginning of implementation.

5.2.4. Preliminary conclusions

Contestation surrounding a changed domestic demand, the formal approach and the time frame of Twinning projects set the stage on which member-state participants and beneficiaries come together to run and implement a project. It defines the main issues on which cooperative and communicative processes are based and shapes the trajectory of Twinning. The observation of these discrepancies and mismatches at the beginning necessarily leads to the reinterpretation of a project and the goals it can achieve. The nature and development of those deliberative and cooperative processes is discussed in the following two sections.

5.3. The role of deliberation during Twinning implementation

The previous chapter dissected the formal framework of Twinning in terms of the demands Twinning projects pose toward their participants and the way those demands are locked in and contractualized. In the previous section a first level of contestation was explored. Contestation at the beginning of each Twinning project is concerned with two issues: First, the formal framework of Twinning and its relevance to the project, and second, the perception of domestic demand, domestic capacity and problems compared to the goals and activities agreed in the Twinning contract.

It was established that contestation is not exclusively distributed to one side of the Twinning project, but to both beneficiary and member-state participants. The main question to be discussed in the following sections of this chapter is what participants make of contestation once they start to interact on a daily basis through Twinning? How do they voice their concerns and their (mis-)understandings with each other? How does individual contestation translate into both collective sense-making and understanding, and collective action and adaptation of the project as a response to perceived shortcomings?

The following section explores communicative action and collective sense-making through the lens of mutually recursive deliberation, as outlined in the theoretical chapter. Its main purpose is to establish how individual sense-making and meaning become shared meaning and understanding. For this, the creation of shared artifacts through the exchange of meaning and understanding is crucial. The following sections explore this process through: 1) looking at the exchange of understanding and meaning on the situation of domestic demand and domestic capacity and 2) looking at the exchange of understanding on the Twinning project and its formal framework. Furthermore, it explores the process of communication as understood by project

participants and the extent to which language barriers and perceived cultural differences have an effect on deliberation and sense-making.

5.3.1. Matching external with domestic perceptions of the situation on the ground

Maybe it is easier for another public servant to take the advice of another public servant. Somehow they have the same problems, the same challenges. (...) in Twinning the relation can continue because it is similar administrations. (Twinning#28)

According to the Lebanese PAO representative (Twinning#28), the advantage of Twinning is the similarity of working environments of the RTA and the RTA-counterpart. Both are civil servants working in public administrations. Respondents frequently contrasted the role of a civil servant to the execution of service contracts and technical assistance projects. Respondents stressed the importance of a public–private divide. Whereas technical assistance such as EU TAIEX is based on short-term private consultant contracting with little to no public sector experience, Twinning works exclusively with public sector professionals. Why should a public administrator be more responsive to the domestic context than a private consultant? Another PAO representative from Lebanon argued:

If you need to learn how to do it, you do a Twinning, if you just need the service, you get a technical assistance. (...) But if you want sustainability, a Twinning is a lot more beneficial, if and only if we get the right member-state administration. (Twinning#38)

Twinning is described as a learning process in contrast to a service provision. A Twinning support officer in Moldova put it bluntly:

In a TA project (...) civil servants get spoiled (...) by local consultants. They would sit and wait until experts will bring them draft laws, draft regulations, draft whatever. They do their entire job for them. (...) [It is] not capacity building but capacity substitution. In Twinning you will not get anything if you don't work with the foreign experts. (Twinning#16)

There is a sense of the dichotomy between technical assistance and Twinning. Technical assistance is portrayed as consultants presenting readymade solutions that do not demand

interaction. Twinning is presented as a process where a solution is formed through interaction. Although the formal structure of Twinning incorporates certain aspects of the readymade approach of technical assistance, the stress on interaction in Twinning is a defining feature. The formal Twinning framework pushes for the incorporation and transfer of external practices. The centrality of personal interaction in the implementation process is argued to depend on the public administration background of participants.

The domestic background is different and, more often than not, the specific day-to-day tasks of either the RTA in his or her home country or the experts that participate in the project are different at home. Still, the background of being a public servant creates a sense of familiarity for the beneficiary that eases the start of an interactive process. An external consultant on the other hand represents an abstract idea. Public administrators are in general not familiar with the work and procedures of a private consulting firm. The lack of familiarity gives consultants less of a perceived identity than public administrators. They are regarded as straightforward providers of services and products rather than agents one can productively interact with. This sense of familiarity or normality of the member-state participants was summarized by a Moldovan RTA-counterpart:

Normally, people that are coming are just normal people that are working in their home institution, doing their job. So, if their institutions are doing better than we do, then people that are working there are probably doing a good job. (Beneficiary#9)

Being a public administrator and interacting among public administrators are important artifacts at the start of Twinning projects that open up the possibility to deliberate.³⁹ This adds meaning and a sense of comfort to both participating sides. It suggests that despite major differences in practice, cultural perception, behavior, and norms, one broadly belongs to the same professional

³⁹ Compare Chapter 2: 5.2. The process of mutual recursive deliberation: outlining the importance of common artefacts for communication and deliberation among actors.

group, one has broadly the same task in implementing public policies, and one may broadly be familiar with some of the key problems faced.

The role of a public administrator as a starter and facilitator of communication can still be problematic. Several responses point to cases of frustration with difficulties faced in communicating different perceptions of the domestic situation between participants. A particularly telling case was the first Twinning project implemented in Lebanon with a Spanish counterpart, within the Lebanese insurance supervisory agency. The project started in mid-2005 and intersected with the second Israel–Lebanon war in July 2006. It started off on the wrong foot as various experts who came from Spain to conduct training did not speak proper English. A beneficiary representative was not aware of this and thought:

When you come in and see they do not speak English you think, OK, what did you get into?“ (Beneficiary#35)

Tensions increased toward the middle of the project. The beneficiary was dissatisfied with the RTA as they assumed the RTA was:

(...) close to decision making but much later we discovered [the RTA] is a third level guy. (Beneficiary#35)

The member-state side was also irritated. At that time the regulation of private insurers was precarious. According to the beneficiary the existing framework was “not the best law.” (Beneficiary#35).

The law was described as an eighty-page legal maze, incoherent and not very useful to understand policy practice. At the time Twinning started, an alternative law was proposed by a Canadian development project. Yet the beneficiary was convinced the law had no chance to pass as:

[the insurance sector was] in sabotage mode (...) When they saw the law, they rewrote the first three chapters. (Beneficiary#35)

To get the project started and speed up the process of targeted training and communication, the beneficiary prepared a thirty-page summary of the existing law to communicate the most important clauses and practices. The member-state side felt offended by this practice. According to the beneficiary, they thought that vital information was held back and that they were not taken seriously. They refused to accept the legal summary as a basis for discussion and demanded to have full access to the whole legislative framework. According to the beneficiary, this would have taken too much time and slowed down the project.

The project came to a complete halt at the start of the war. The member-state side pulled out, yet the beneficiary did not believe the official reasoning that security was the main issue:

Then there was that summer war between Hezbollah and Israel. Everything froze and right after they said we are pulling out because of security. (...) Clearly it was not sincere. (...) they realized that they did not want it at a time when they were stuck. Then the summer war came in and gave the, how should I say, the “carte blanche.” Now we can disengage with an excuse. So I would rule out the security excuse. (...) During that two-month war, or one month and a half, I came every day to work. Most of my team came. (Beneficiary#35)

According to media coverage of the war, the security of Lebanese and foreigners was portrayed as deteriorating. EU countries chartered ships to bring their citizens from Lebanon to Cyprus by the thousands. The BBC interviewed a woman on the shores of Cyprus after leaving Lebanon describing the previous days as “the most disgusting and the most frightening of my life” (BBC News 2006). From a Lebanese perspective it was yet another armed conflict. Israel was dropping leaflets before every strike and although in the end more than a thousand were killed in just over one-and-a-half months, the beneficiary felt safe as he/she knew no Hezbollah headquarters were close to work or home. For the beneficiary it was not understandable how the member-state side could not share this evaluation. From his/her perspective, it was the only reasonable one. At the same time the beneficiary did not understand why the member-state side did not trust him/her that the legal summary prepared would be a sufficient basis for the start of the project. For the beneficiary it was reasonable to use his/her insight and knowledge to

speed up the process.

For the member-state side, withholding the full legal framework was a betrayal of trust, they felt that they were not taken seriously. Considering media coverage of the war in Spain was similar to the UK, it seems quite likely that the RTA and his/her team were frightened for their personal safety. Based on different evaluations of the domestic situation from a security as well as a political/administrative perspective, real communication was never established. Personal security and the legal framework were the main artifacts that were at no point internalized by the project, but remained individualized and distinct. When basic conflicts and misunderstandings remain unresolved from the beginning, deliberation in a collegial and trustworthy manner cannot happen. After the war, the project was never resumed and both sides lost contact.

The war in Lebanon is an extreme example, but it does illustrate how communication can fail when there is no common understanding of the beneficiary's situation and environment. The project just described was the only one studied for this dissertation that failed, but it was not the only one where the RTA had to leave prematurely. The same happened in a project in Moldova. Whereas the old RTA had to leave, the new RTA seemingly managed to gain trust of the beneficiary and quickly became integrated in the beneficiary ministry. The RTA's counterpart emphasized some of the subtle problems he/she had in coming to a common understanding about the situation at hand with both the RTA and the team of external experts.

They [the member-state participants] are more optimistic, more confident that they will succeed, we are a little bit more reserved about that. But [the RTA] can do the things that make us become optimistic too. For them it is of course difficult to understand how things are working here. Sometimes they may interfere in our activities and disturb them but we try to manage things in order not to have some delays in activities. (...) They were not so aware of our legislative framework. In five days we had about two days to explain to them, what is the institutional, the legal framework and which is the process here. (...) It was very difficult also for us, every week to repeat this thing again and again. We expected them to be prepared. There were some experts that had no idea how many regions are in Moldova, what is the structure, some things that are

essential. Now, we do not have this problem, because all the experts are already known. We are working with them. We passed it over in this sense.
(Beneficiary#1)

What Beneficiary#1 refers to is a sort of nativity with which member-state participants approached the project. Everyone was cheerful and optimistic, seemingly underestimating the situation at hand and often having little primary knowledge. Optimism was not shared as external participants lacked a common basis on which to deliberate a proper understanding of the context. Yet compared to the previous example, the member-state participants were receptive to the concerns and knowledge of the beneficiary staff. Although the beneficiary was skeptical at first, it opened up to the “optimistic” approach of the member-state participants who internalized at least parts of the taken-for-granted perceptions of the beneficiary.

Sharing perceptions and creating common artifacts were aspects developed and actively pushed by the RTA. He/she was an experienced civil servant who had participated in various previous Twinings. The RTA made an effort to attain a rudimentary level of Romanian and insisted on meeting the project leader regularly, who only spoke a little English. Despite the language barrier he/she regarded these meetings as fruitful and insisted that with every meeting the confidence of the project leader to communicate in English grew. The project leader was a relatively senior person with good political connections. This helped establish the project as well grounded in the administration. The project also tried to be inclusive: whereas other quarterly meetings of Twinning projects consisted of a small crowd of RTA, counterpart, project leaders, and one or two EU representatives, meetings of this project filled a mid-sized conference room with various stakeholders invited, with a considerable amount turning up. Only a minority were actively involved in the project. Yet the sight of a full conference room for a quarterly meeting added a sense of legitimacy and importance to the endeavor. Whereas other projects make an effort to keep quarterly reports as low key as possible, this project printed and disseminated its reports during all meetings to an as large crowd as possible. Although only

a limited amount of actors were involved in actual implementation, this helped to establish recognition of the project in the wider beneficiary. Being aware of the relatively unapproachable format of such reports for the common reader, the RTA insisted on including pictures from meetings and participants to create a sense of community and shared artifacts.

One has to keep in mind that just a couple of months before the interview, the project was close to collapse as the first RTA had left.⁴⁰ At the time of the interview the mood had improved, with the consensus widely expecting the Twinning to be successful. If not completely, the insistence on internalizing the domestic perspective by the member-state participants and the creation of shared artifacts through regular meetings despite the considerable language barrier and the constant dissemination of informational and picture material had a considerable impact on the shared perception that the project was back on track and deemed to be successful.

5.3.2. Making sense of the project

Twinning projects take a considerable amount of time between fiche preparation and implementation. As one project leader complained:

It took three years before signature. This in itself is unacceptable. You say you have money; six months should be fine enough to start something. But three years before you take off and then it fails and we lost our time. (Beneficiary#35)

Three years is long, even for a Twinning project. Yet a delay of one-and-a-half to two years is not uncommon. As demonstrated in the previous section, perceptions as to what the domestic situation is differ at the beginning of a project and often divert from the fiche, mainly due to the delay of projects. With a change in perception of the situation, the perception of what a Twinning project is and what it can accomplish also changes.

⁴⁰ The new RTA noted: “[The RTA] was weak (...). That is why [the project] exploded. (...) It more or less imploded and it was smoothly changed.” (Member_State#13)

Most interviewees were not aware at the start that Twinning would come with a considerable delay. Beneficiary#35 in the above quotation expected a maximum of six months to be sufficient for application and selection to get the project going. He/she had to wait three years. This has an impact on the perception of participants on Twinning as a whole, as a Twinning support officer in Moldova argued:

The preparation of a project lasts two years. You know within two years we get a new government, new heads of institutions, you get even new institutions and of course that initial Twinning fiche is no longer relevant (...) When the rules are so rigid and the addendums do not go through for months, of course the institution would say this project is no longer relevant for us and only see additional burdens in that. (Twinning#16)

A particularly telling example in changing perceptions on a Twinning project comes from a project in Lebanon. Both RTA and RTA-counterpart were questioned on how they saw the project developing and how they regarded the implementation of mandatory results.

RTA-counterpart:

You have to follow the steps, you cannot change as you like. (...) Twinning is rigid (...) It turned out to be very successful. Now we are having an extension, we will ask for one, not because we were too slow, the mandatory results have been met, but in order to embed the implementation of mandatory results and to have sustainability. (Beneficiary#33)

RTA:

One of the other problems with a Twinning project is that we are tied as I said to a fixed contract. (...) The danger here is that sometimes things are written in the contract and therefore fixed as a mandated result or a benchmark result and the times have moved on. (...) we have lost some of the mandated results that we cannot deliver. We identified that early on. I think this is also the point that needs to be made. If you cannot deliver them you have to be clear from the beginning. (Member_State#32)

There seems to be a consensus between the two that Twinning is inflexible and very strict in its focus on achieving mandatory results which may not benefit the project. Yet the framing of the problems differs. The RTA-counterpart skips over the problems faced during implementation

to emphasize that the extension the project asked for was not due to problems faced, but to ensure sustainability. The RTA on the other hand openly admits that problems were faced at the beginning and results had to be adjusted. Later in the interview, the RTA stated that at that point they had only managed to allocate one-third of the budget even though two-thirds of the project had passed.

The reason for diverting answers can be found in the internal sense-making process of the participants of the project. A common understanding was developed from the beginning that the project is rigid. According to the RTA, there was a mismatch between what is demanded in the contract and what is possible. A considerable amount of shifting around was necessary and the project was slowed down by stringent EU procedures. The project's financial allocation rate was lagging behind and an extension was demanded. Nevertheless, project participants had come to terms with those shortcomings and although they were emphasized more by the RTA than the RTA-counterpart, both evaluated the project as successful. Despite the common perception of success, the RTA-counterpart stressed the double role as a manager of the project and the closest link to the beneficiary administration.⁴¹ The direct link to the beneficiary creates an extra demand to legitimize activities, keeping the RTA-counterpart from voicing problems directly. The RTA lacks the immediate connection to the administration and is therefore freer to discuss the project.

Despite differences in openness to talk about problems, there is a common understanding of what the project is, how it is developing, and what it can achieve. The question is how this understanding comes about and what role the relationship between the RTA and the counterpart plays.

⁴¹ "I am involved in the daily implementation with [the RTA] of course, the daily implementation of the project. I am coordinating all the time with the beneficiaries regarding the schedule of the mission. I am coordinating with them in terms of their progress" (Beneficiary#33).

5.3.3. The vital role of deliberation between the RTA and the RTA-counterpart

As argued in chapter 2, deliberation is important for Twinning actors to understand and change their and others' roles in the project.⁴² The RTA and the RTA-counterpart are key actors in all Twinning project as they resemble both the beneficiary and the member-state side. The following examples demonstrate how ongoing deliberation aids sense-making processes for both sides.

At the Moldovan project in which the first RTA had to leave, the new RTA explained how the project was turned around. Instead of focusing on his/her role, the RTA spoke of the importance of the relation with the counterpart and the beneficiary project leader:

You are the co-author [of the Twinning project]. If the product is a failure, of course it is your failure but you are not completely responsible, you have only half of the gears. My asset was on this Twinning that I knew [the RTA-counterpart] from the beginning. Because from the beginning she was there, she had been appointed the counterpart of the RTA by the first project leader, she was there and [the beneficiary project leader] immediately we got on well. At first sight I knew I would like to work with this man and it was obviously reciprocal. (Member_State#13)

The idea of getting on well was stressed by most participants interviewed both in Moldova and Lebanon. This is not surprising considering the close working environment in the same administration, sometimes the same office. Yet Twinning projects have collapsed due to the failure of participants to deliberate and in coming to terms with what the project is and should be. Thus, it is crucial to further engage with the way particularly the RTA and the counterpart deliberate regularly.

Coming back to another project in Lebanon, discussed in the previous section; both RTA and RTA-counterpart stressed the importance not only of their professional relationship but also of getting along personally. Both described their daily communication as follows:

⁴² Particularly: 2.3.2. The process of mutual recursive deliberation

RTA:

The very simple thing is that every day I communicate with [the RTA-counterpart] on what is happening. He/she is involved in the planning. Every email sent out related to the project is copied to her and vice versa. So there is this open-endedness in the way we work. If something goes wrong, we protect each other. If someone made a mistake, we will try, well not to cover it up, but to mitigate any action relating to any result from that that, we will try to mitigate and any fallout on other activities. It is just about building the relationship level of trust through communication, on a daily basis. (Member_State#32)

RTA-counterpart:

We talk all day, me and [the RTA] we are all day talking and coordinating. It is not something official, [it is] informal and natural (...). Whatever I send or he/she sends, we always cc each other. Whenever I send an email, he/she sends an email we all know what happens all the time. We really talk all the time, we talk all day long. Every one hour he comes to my office or I go there, it is not something formal. (...)Yes, when there is a problem he/she will defend us and he/she will be on our side. So we don't have to fear, we don't have to watch our back all the time. (Beneficiary#33)

What is striking is that although both interviews were held independent of each other, both sides stressed similar issues regarding their communication, using nearly the same formulations. The idea that communication is daily, almost hourly, is stressed by both, demonstrating the importance put on the routine of close interaction. Trust is stressed. Both mention the importance of copying each other on all e-mails and maintaining a high level of transparency. The most striking commonality is one of protection and personal security. The counterpart argues that the RTA will “defend” her, whatever happens. The RTA talks about “protecting” each other. The responses indicate that artifacts such as trust, mutual protection, and transparency had developed to become cornerstones of their work relationship.

The project had to make considerable changes at the beginning as resource allocation was not up to schedule and an extension was demanded. Yet instead of giving in to external pressure, the RTA and the counterpart moved closer to deal with the obstacles faced. Mutual and recursive deliberation created an environment in which participants can cooperate. This is

discussed in the following section of this chapter. Before getting to cooperation, it is crucial to emphasize that deliberation does not always come about as smoothly as in the previous example, and so it is necessary to explore the obstacles communicative processes may face in Twinning.

5.3.4. Language and culture: Obstacles to deliberation in Twinning

In various interviews the language barrier was mentioned as problematic, yet it was never portrayed as the main obstacle or framed as something that could not be overcome. Overall, English proficiency was good in Moldova and high in Lebanon. In the Lebanese public administration practically everyone speaks fluently English and French. In Moldova it is mainly the younger generation who possess at least an adequate knowledge of English, whereas older administrators only speak Russian or Moldovan⁴³. In interviews in Lebanon, the language barrier was mainly identified on the member-state side. In Moldova it was generally identified to be on the beneficiary side.

Some interviewees from the Lebanese beneficiary particularly stressed the problem of translating into English, French, or Arabic when it came to technical or sector-specific terminology.

They may have a translator but it will not be a hundred percent translation, especially since we talk about technical words. (...) The translator may not give us the real translation that fits our Arabic (...) procedure. This may be a challenge but it is not a real threat to the Twinning project. (Twinning#38).

In a similar vein, a project leader talked about his/her first experience visiting the counterpart administration in an EU country:

⁴³ Until 2013 the official language in the Republic of Moldova was stated to be Moldovan as in the constitution. In 2013 the constitutional court ruled that the text of the declaration of independence should prevail over the constitution and the official language of the Republic of Moldova is Romanian (Constitutional court of the Republic of Moldova 2013)

There it was a bit shocking. They brought an interpreter. We are talking technical matters, (...) not very difficult but they have to understand insurance and they have to understand our special jargon. (Beneficiary#35)

The finding that in Lebanon the language proficiency of one of the official Twinning languages English and French was often higher on the beneficiary side than that of the member state may seem counterintuitive at first—after all, member states should be formal providers of the project, ensuring that the content is adequately communicated in the project language. Yet this is a simplistic assumption when considering that public administrations in the EU function in their mother tongue and are relatively closed to foreign influences. Due to its colonial history and economic openness, English and French developed as languages spoken equally to Arabic, at least among private and public sector professionals in Lebanon. In Moldova, although a good proficiency of English exists among younger managerial staff in public administration, the demand for improving it was raised in various interviews.

It is a problem, yes. I know that for example in the competition agency they managed to organize some English courses for employees. I asked for that from the very beginning from [the RTA]. She said that it is not possible in the frame of this project, to organize such courses for inspectors. It would be nice but it is not possible. (Beneficiary#8)

The Twinning framework puts little emphasis on language. Besides the demand for producing all documents in English or French and the right of the RTA to have a language assistant, no specific procedures are foreseen. A Twinning support project in Moldova started an initiative to provide English lessons for future Twinning participants to enhance their communication skills at the beginning of implementation. This initiative was not specifically demanded by the EU, even though it was funded by it. It is surprising that so little attention is put on language, particularly as the language barrier is real and the lack of common language knowledge can substantially decrease the possibility of a longer term relationship between the beneficiary and the member state beyond the Twinning experience.

Besides language issues, cultural differences were mentioned to have an effect. Interestingly, administrative practices were described by some interviewees as based on a specific cultural approach which was sometimes difficult to combine with the one of the EU member state. In this sense, a Moldovan beneficiary representative described the administration's relationship with the member-state side as:

There were issues for us to understand their behavior, [EU Nordic countries] people. They are more Nordic, say more calculating. Well, we are more French, more Latin. (Beneficiary#4)

Beneficiary#4 argues that administrative culture directly influences administrative practice. Instead of saying that administrative practices are less predictable, more arbitrary, or more politicized, they are described as “French” or “Latin,” independent of what French administrative practice may actually entail. It is a way of saying that administrative differences persist, surpassing the sphere of straightforward “best practices” solutions. An RTA was more concrete in stating how cultural differences affected the project:

In [EU member state] we have a culture of openness, help each other by pulling together to get the job done. Here there are still some cultural differences. People think in a more compartmentalized way, more about their own department. They did not expect [the practice of naming and shaming] to be possible. It is a new and big idea for them and to see that it is possible is very interesting for beneficiaries. (Member_State#10)

This response shows how a straightforward practice that is standard in a given administrative system in an EU member state (naming and shaming) does not resonate with the Moldovan administrative culture. In Moldova, public administration is far less independent of the private sector, which plays a stronger political role than in a given EU member state. Naming and shaming, to ensure a certain quality standard of products, is an alien concept as it could put ones job on the line. Even when such a practice is formally possible it may still not be used, in fear of the consequences.

In Lebanon, cultural differences were also stressed. A beneficiary hinted at the limited effect of regulation by arguing,

One of the biggest drawbacks I find is when you end up having the mentality of excessive institutions. Us Lebanese, we live in a sub-standard country because it is not well organized, it is not optimal. (...) We do not have a government that protects a lot the citizens. So people grow into that they have to be responsible for themselves. (Beneficiary#35)

According to Beneficiary#35, both Lebanese people and businesses have grown used to expecting little from the government, seeing it more as an obstacle than a protector. Although the beneficiary did not refer directly to the effect of this mentality on Twinning, it was formulated as an answer to a question regarding the relevance of EU practices in his/her sector. The answer transports a certain reservation toward a reliance on external practices and a certain amount of skepticism as to whether EU “best practices” could be transposed into the Lebanese context.

The above responses indicate that it is important for both sides of Twinning to take stock of cultural differences within the project and to come to terms with them. The member-state side is forced to re-evaluate their own practices and recommendations according to the domestic cultural setting, both in term of national and administrative culture. Most RTAs interviewed seemed to take note of this.

You cannot change a culture through one or two Twinning projects. (...) If we can start to change attitudes and some of the practices by the time we end the project I think we have made a success of it. (Member_State#5)

It is important that both sides feel that the other has developed an understanding and an appreciation for one’s administrative culture and the way it affects day-to-day practices. Using the example of the project discussed at the beginning of this section, this means that the Moldovan administration does not only become a bit more “Nordic,” but that

Having the RTA here already one year and a half, [the RTA] also changed a lot, [the RTA] became more Moldovan, [the RTA] is one of us. (Beneficiary#4).

5.4. Cooperation

Deliberation represents the communicative aspects of Twinning and the sense-making process of project participants. Cooperation explores understanding put into practice. It logically follows from deliberation in exploring how new understandings derived affect actions carried out during the project. This section follows the daily interaction of the RTA and the RTA-counterpart. It explores how interaction with the project and the other participants changes understanding of one's own role and the input either side has in the context of the project. The day-to-day cooperation between the RTA and the RTA-counterpart is explored in further depth, outlining how a working relationship is established and how new understandings of each other's role and purpose are put into action. This section then explores how the RTA and RTA-counterpart reach out beyond the frame of the project to seek cooperation with other stakeholders, in order to further what they perceive as the effectiveness and sustainability of their project.

5.4.1. The changing role of the RTA during implementation

A number of respondents stressed that the role of the RTA is built around two basic competences: 1) Managerial: that RTAs can properly organize external experts and prepare them for their task. 2) Technical: referring to knowledge and seniority of an RTA in a specific field. When asking EUD and PAO representatives about the skills an RTA needs, answers included:⁴⁴

I think the managerial skills or project management skills for an RTA are much more important than the content-related skills. (EUD#2)

and

⁴⁴ EUD stands for the EU's delegation in the given country. PAO is the project administrative office which is a government agency, linking the activities of Twinning projects and the EU in the country with the activities of the government.

I am not sure that you really need a technical person to be a RTA. (...) I would more focus on his administration skills, his managerial skills and his language skills. (Twinning#28)

The shared perception is interesting as it portrays the RTA as slightly detached from the content of the project and its domestic applicability. The RTA as a manager is the connecting piece between the contract and the implementation process. Managing a project means to maintain control over it by being compliant with its framework and bringing it to the conclusion as foreseen in mandatory results. “Managing” does not foresee contestation or change, but stability and predictability.

Speaking to RTAs about their own role, management was frequently mentioned. In contrast to responses from the PAO and the EU delegation it was portrayed as one role among many:

That is the job of an RTA. He/she should normally have, they do not need detailed experience in everything but they should have some technical knowledge. However the job is mainly a management job. (Member_State#32)

In a similar vein, an RTA in Moldova argued:

The job of the RTA is difficult and a job that does not exist in the real world, somewhere between an advisor and a team leader. There are two dimensions, one technical on the content and one on the management. (Member_State#13)

The EU and PAO tend to highlight the managerial side of RTAs. RTAs tend to highlight both the technical and managerial side of their work. Beneficiaries tended to stress more the technical role of the RTA, as in this Lebanese project leader’s interview:

Someone that is here and is technically versed can play an excellent intermediate role where he sees reality, understands it and is capable of conveying the overall atmosphere and reality to the experts that come. (Beneficiary#35)

Reflecting on the RTA’s involvement in the project:

He was for the organization of the Twinning and he certainly knew what he had to do for administering the Twinning. But for us he was not of much value,

technically speaking for our ultimate objective of our technical supervision.
(Beneficiary#35)

Similarly, an RTA-counterpart in Moldova described the role of the RTA:

The previous RTA was more technical than I am. We are working together in order to help the experts to make them understand what is the basis of regional development in Moldova. What are our expectations for this project and by their work, what do we expect from them. (Beneficiary#1)

The position of the RTA is torn between two sets of expectations. From the EU and the national political side (PAO), he/she should act as a manager that keeps things stable, produces little disruption and provides results that match initial expectations and are deemed successful. From the beneficiary side, as much as the RTA is supposed to manage, he/she should also be a person that can understand problems at hand, provide direct help and prepare short-term experts in a way that they are useful for the domestic administration.

The position of the RTA is particularly complicated when the domestic demand diverts from the formal framework. Whereas the EU demands the RTA to uphold the contract, the beneficiary would demand the RTA to be more responsive.

5.4.2. Between beneficiary and provider: the role of the RTA-counterpart

The role of the RTA-counterpart is not entirely clear from the Twinning manual. It is not stated what position he or she should have in the administration or how close he or she must be related to the subject matter of the project.⁴⁵ Thus, interpretations of what the role of an RTA-counterpart is vary between projects and countries.

It starts with the conception phase of the project. In Moldova there was no indication that any of the RTA-counterparts were directly connected in the drafting of the fiche or the

⁴⁵ Compare section 5.4.2. Between beneficiary and provider: the role of the RTA-counterpart

project application process. In Lebanon, on the other hand, it was claimed that the RTA-counterpart played an essential role in the drafting process:

In many cases the RTA-counterpart is the person who wrote down the project. In the [beneficiary] the RTA-counterpart was the person who wrote it down. [The same] with the Twinning in the Ministry of Finance. So basically [the RTA-counterpart] is the person that is involved from the beginning. (Twinning#28)

The level of seniority and involvement of Twinning counterparts is an important determinant of their role in the project. In Moldova, RTA-counterparts defined their role mainly as administrative, without much involvement in the project conception, for example:

I arrange meetings between experts and our experts, local experts from the agency. After the termination of a mission, experts usually give a report. I take care that this report is disseminated to the relevant persons in the agency. I give them a time in which they should see or revise this report (Beneficiary#8)

The RTA of that project described the counterpart as:

She is inexperienced (...) She has been involved in the project, she is getting experience as she works for the colleagues. (...) She helps me organize who is going to be at which training session at which meeting. (Member_State#5)

The wider picture in Moldova was the one of relatively junior and inexperienced RTA-counterparts who mainly undertook administrative tasks. Some RTAs sought “de facto” counterparts who were not formally participating in Twinning but were senior and experienced enough to provide the RTA with administrative and political connections. At least one project in Moldova differed, with the RTA-counterpart being relatively senior and involved in the conception and implementation of the project. The RTA-counterpart described his/her role thus:

I was the RTA-counterpart. So, I was involved since the very beginning when we started to think about the project fiche, we started to identify what would be the most important. (Beneficiary#9)

Compared to Moldova, most RTA-counterparts interviewed in Lebanon were more senior and also seemed more deeply involved in implementing the project. One counterpart described his/her role:

We sit down during the steering committee and we discuss where more needs to be done on some activities. Then experts come along and do it. We designed the activities a while ago, so there might be some change. Then we can connect it with the additional resources we have saved. (Beneficiary#37)

In general, the role of the RTA-counterpart in Lebanon is more than just administrative. He/she links the content of activities and the domestic demand to the resources of the project. The counterpart is considerably involved in shaping and adapting the project.

RTAs in both Lebanon and Moldova did not suffer from a lack of seniority, to the contrary, it could be said there was too much at times. To find common ground for active cooperation, the level of seniority and administrative standing between the RTA and the RTA-counterpart should not divert too much. As in the case of Moldova, when the counterpart was too junior, he or she became a mere secretary rather than a directly involved administrator. The RTA is thus incentivized to seek an informal counterpart who is more effective in providing access to the beneficiary structures and political support. In Lebanon, the RTA-counterpart was more involved in both the preparation and implementation of the project and matched more closely the level of seniority and experience of the RTA.

Before exploring the relationship of the RTA and the counterpart in further depth, it is important to flash out the role of the two main intermediary actors in Twinning, the PAO and the EU delegation.

5.4.3. Between helpful and sidelined: The project administration office (PAO) and the EU delegation as intermediaries in Twinning

5.4.3.1. The Project administration office (PAO)⁴⁶

The formal role of the PAO differs between Lebanon and Moldova. Whereas in Moldova the PAO is supposed to take a shared role with the EU delegation in managing Twinning, in Lebanon, the PAO is the main managing body. Also, in practice the PAOs in both countries play different roles, even beyond their formal differences. In Lebanon, the PAO was described as a capable, engaged, and useful link between the domestic government and the project. In Moldova, the PAO was portrayed as either absent from the project's implementation process or incapable of playing its role. An EU official described the Moldovan PAO as:

(...) constantly lacking the capacity. (...)The staff turnover is high. In the PAO there are only three to four people still there, the others already left. (EUD#2)

There was only one official who had worked in the Moldovan PAO who was widely praised:

We have a person, somebody from state chancellery that is responsible for our project. (...) periodically, she is calling me and asks if everything is OK. (Beneficiary#8)

This person was described by various sources as the most experienced and knowledgeable person on Twinning in Moldova. Yet through staff turnover and the reorganization of the state chancellery he/she was sidelined and had to move to a different position in another ministry. At the time of interviewing in Moldova the PAO had been reorganized and staffed with young administrators, often freshly out of university. Most lacked knowledge of basic EU principles.⁴⁷ This observation was confirmed by the head of the EU-

⁴⁶ For a background on the PAO's formal role, see chapter 3; 3.3 "Different actors, different roles: RTA's, their counterparts, and their supporting cast"

⁴⁷ I was given the chance to give a talk about the basics of EU integration law in that very organization which was responsible for the dissemination and organization of all EU funds and funded projects. The lack of interest and response to even the most basic principles indicated a very low level of knowledge of the basic formal and legal background of Twinning.

funded Twinning support project who stated the PAO had never been able to coordinate Twinning projects (Twining#18). It was further confirmed by a high level administrator of the Moldovan state chancellery who described the role of the PAO in Twinning:

We are just represented there to have the same level of understanding and not to create overlaps with other projects or so. So I do not see a big role in coordination after the project is accepted. (Twining#19)

In Lebanon the picture was very different. An RTA-counterpart described his/her work relationship with the PAO:

I worked together with [the PAO representative] from the day we prepared the fiche. That worked very well, (...). She would guide me in terms of what is expected in terms of format of the documents to be produced. This is why the project went so well, because we worked together with the PAO for the preparation of the fiche. (Beneficiary#30)

In Lebanon, the PAO was run by experienced mid-level administrators who had been involved in a number of EU-funded projects. The PAO was actively involved in fiche preparation, alongside the future RTA-counterpart and understood its role as the direct link between the political level and the project.

What may account for those differences? Political instability does not seem to be the main reason. The situation was worse in Lebanon, with a dissolved government and no consensus between parties for an extended period. What seemed to make a difference is that the Lebanese administrative system is more institutionalized and continuous than the Moldovan one. Many administrators in Lebanon praised the French influence in building a professional civil service; most laws are published in French and a considerable amount of higher-level civil servants are trained in France. In Moldova, on the other hand, continuity is lacking. Moldova became independent only twenty-five years ago; ever since there has been little continuity. A longer existing and more institutionalized administration is more resilient to political shocks and can even at times of crisis continue its functioning at an adequate level.

Although the PAO in Lebanon was regarded as functioning and active, it reached its limits at times when dealing with the demands of the formal Twinning framework. One RTA described the role of the PAO in Lebanon:

They were very helpful and very nice really. They were in a bit of a difficult position. It added a kind of layer of bureaucracy. If you ask them for permission to do something they would read the manual and see if they could understand it. If they were not sure, which is usually the case, they would refer it to the delegation. The delegation would tell them what had to be thought and the problem may even have to go to Brussels. (Member_State#39)

When a basic question has to be referred to the delegation, which may refer it further to Brussels, time is wasted, particularly in a tightly packed project such as Twinning. Problems that are supposed to be tackled and solved internally are externalized; adding layers of interpretation, which complicate a problem further rather than solve it.

5.4.3.2. The EU delegation

The EU delegation's role in both countries was describes as rather passive. Direct meetings took place through quarterly steering committees in which delegation officials were hardly active. Interestingly, EU delegations are relatively active in advertising beneficiaries to choose Twinning.

In Lebanon for example, a project leader felt pressured by the EU:

Twinning was selected by the EU delegation. (...) The delegation or the EU believes that it is better to have Twinning projects from government to government. (Beneficiary#24)

The RTA-counterpart of the same project confirmed that statement but argued that within the project the EUD provided little input. Asked about the involvement of the EUD he/she stated:

When we have a steering committee they are with us, in the steering committee [the RTA] is with us, we have [the beneficiary institutions], we have [the PAO contact person] and we have someone from the delegation. (Beneficiary#33)

Whereas the RTA-counterpart was able to refer to all other steering committee participants in person, he/she could not name the EUD representative. As the project was around half way into its implementation phase, several steering committees had already been held. This is another indicator of the EUD's scarce involvement during implementation in Lebanon. The lack of involvement in Lebanon is to a certain extent due to the lack of administrative capacity from the side of the EUD. One person is responsible for all Twinings. Concerning his/her work, the EUD official stated:

Unfortunately I have a huge portfolio, so I don't have too much time to meet people but I am trying to meet them. You should do it at least once a month I would say. You have to see that the Twinning has no problem and that the RTA is working fine with the beneficiary. (EUD#34)

Despite that, the EUD representative described the role of the EUD as important:

They usually consent with us because we are a big part, a big player in that game (...). For instance, if they want to do an activity with which we do not agree and we say it is not so useful than they would not do it. (EUD#34)

The above quotation indicates that the EU perceives itself as having a certain amount of coercive and steering power in Twinning, but in practice this is hardly visible.

As described in the previous section, most changes of the Twinning contract or work plan in Lebanon go primarily through the PAO but are still forwarded to the EUD. What slows this process down is not the direct engagement of the EUD in the content of change, but rather the connection of Twinning projects to funding agreements between the EU and Lebanon—also managed by the PAO—and the complexity and thickness of the Twinning manual. A Lebanese PAO official stated when asked whether he/she keeps contact with the EUD:

Yeah, we have to. We have several financing agreements [with them]. (Twinning#38)

Twinning projects are part of wider financial packages that often include considerable sums of budget support, tied to a certain number of Twinning or TAIEX projects. Thus the PAO has an

incentive to not divert too much from the original contract. This leads to the somehow perplexing situation that although the PAO is well-functioning in Lebanon, is in close contact with all Twinning projects, and understands the concerns of the participants, it still acts in a rather slow and cautious manner.

In Moldova one would expect a considerably stronger role by the EU delegation, since Moldova's European integration aspirations are high and the PAO is unable to fulfill its role.

An RTA described the relationship with the EUD:

I have a good relationship with the delegation. They seem to be incredibly overworked. So again, I try not to contact them unless I absolutely have to. I can contact (...) my contact at the delegation. I see her from time to time. (...) She does answer my queries when I need them. But they are very busy, too busy really, more so here than I have seen in other countries. (Member_State#5)

The lack of capacity argument was reinforced by several other interviewees. They argued that the EUD perceives itself to have a lack of capacity and tends to use it as an excuse for being less involved or even inactive at times. This has considerable consequences for some of the projects, as an EU Twinning support project officer argued:

Sometimes certain things cannot go on just because an addendum is waiting to be signed for three months or something like that. (Twinning#16)

In Moldova, Twinning participants have to cope with a lack of capacity and involvement from both the EU delegation and the PAO. This does not make projects more grounded but slows them down as the rules of Twinning demand an active role of both actors when changes need to be made. In a country like Moldova, where Twinning fiches are drafted more than a year before implementation by external consultants, projects have to be amended nearly by default.

Participants in Twinning in Moldova tend to perceive their role differently depending on the domestic circumstances and the involvement of the PAO and the EU delegation. The following section analyzes how this affects the day-to-day cooperation of the participants, how

they cope with problems and how different understandings through deliberation within the project and continuous sense-making leads to practical change.

5.4.4. Cooperation within and beyond the project

The final section of this chapter explores how understanding through deliberation between Twinning actors becomes translated into practice through cooperation. The material incentives to cooperate in Twinning are small and negligible. In previous sections of this chapter deliberation was established as a key process in Twinning. Actors need to communicate to make sense of their own role, the role of others, the project, and the domestic context. Deliberation creates new understandings through the creation of artifacts, specific meaning attached to events, and things related to the project. As explored in previous sections, artifacts may be regular meetings, specific trust related to the counterpart in terms of one protecting the other, or the practice of always “cc’ing” one another on e-mails. The question to be answered now is how these communicative processes directly influence activities in projects. An answer is sought through two aspects: an analysis of interviewee responses on how they work with other project participants on a daily basis, and how their understanding of the project during implementation changed their attitude of, approach to, and own role in the project.

The first part of this section deals specifically with the nucleus of the Twinning project, that is, the cooperation between the RTA and his or her counterpart. The project affects their day-to-day working life, and it is through the shift in understanding and sense-making during implementation that their mode of cooperation is most affected. The section further explores how cooperation in a Twinning project (in a wider sense, including project leaders and short-term experts) is managed with the beneficiary administration.

5.4.4.1. Close cooperation between the RTA and the RTA-counterpart

The importance of the relationship between the RTA and his or her counterpart and the wider beneficiary is a theme that reoccurs in nearly all interview responses. A Twinning support project administrator, for example, argued:

The relationship with the RTA can play a serious role even in the success of the Twinning project. (...) The RTA found a common level of discussion, they were on one wavelength, things started moving very smoothly and they even achieved the results that were not really expected initially. (...) The RTA-counterpart of course is somebody who can really push things. (Twinning#17)

The RTA and the counterpart were frequently described as the core of the Twinning project although respondents and Twinning documents are often unable to clearly establish their role. The RTA role is generally regarded somewhere between a manager and an expert, between someone who simply administrates and has no impact on the content of the project, and someone who actively shapes the content. The quotation above indicates that the role of the RTA may often go well beyond that of an administrator, depending on the cooperative relationship with the counterpart.

As the nucleus of the project, the RTA and counterpart are at the same time the connecting links to the outside world. The RTA represents the external perspective, coming into a country, transporting a different set of practices and norms. The RTA is formally legitimized as an agent of the EU, paid by the EU, and may under certain circumstances be eligible to gain diplomatic status. He/she therefore possesses a double-legitimacy, as both domestic expert and EU agent. Different perceptions of the RTA, regarded as more a managerial person in Moldova and more a technical advisor in Lebanon, can partly be explained by that double role. In Moldova, the RTA tends to be portrayed as an EU agent, a manager of European integration, implementing the contract. In Lebanon, the technical role tends to be in the forefront. The RTA is perceived as a technical resource to serve the interest of the beneficiary.

The RTA-counterpart is the connector between the domestic level and the Twinning project. The perception and role of the counterpart differs based on the perception of a Twinning project. In Moldova the managerial role is at the forefront, RTA-counterparts tend to be rather inexperienced junior administrators. In Lebanon, where the demand of the beneficiary is more primary, RTA-counterparts tend to be mid- to high-level staff who are experienced and better connected within the administration. The basic nature of the relationship is summarized in Figure 3.

| | | Role of the RTA | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | | More Technical | More Managerial |
| Level of the RTA-counterpart | Junior to Mid-level | - | Moldova |
| | Mid-level to Senior | Lebanon | - |

Figure 3: RTA–RTA-counterpart relationships

The impact of different profile perceptions of participants is reflected in the received responses. An RTA-counterpart in Lebanon described the relationship with the RTA:

We wanted to learn from [the RTA] and he was willing to work with us. (...) I think the fact that [the RTA] has worked in different countries, he is prepared to adapt. He was a hard worker, we were very lucky to have him. (Beneficiary#30)

Another RTA-counterpart in Lebanon described their relationship:

If we notice that the outcome is not exactly what we need then we discuss it with the RTA to ensure that we get what is really needed. (...) This is something you would not be able to do with other projects. For example with the IMF (...) experts come and make assessments and give recommendations. With Twinning we need something more operational. (Beneficiary#37)

The responses demonstrate the instrumental role the RTA plays alongside the RTA-counterpart in Lebanon. The RTA is expected to become a similar level administrator as the RTA-

counterpart during the project and to administer the project and the adjunct change process alongside. On that basis, RTAs interviewed in Lebanon stressed the equal work relationship they enjoyed with their counterpart, working in a collaborative fashion and reflecting the domestic situation.

I have a very easy relationship with my counterpart. We talk on a daily basis. I think that is one of the things that make it successful. It is this style of collaboration. If collaboration is there, the Twinning mechanism works well. (Member_State#32)

Another RTA stated:

We just discussed [project implementation issues] and then we would write some kind of paper about it, maybe two pages, describing the situation and she would agree it and then we would put it to the steering group. That is how it works, we were fine. (Member_State#39)

In all responses from the RTA and RTA-counterpart side in Lebanon, their mutual and equal role is stressed. The RTA-counterpart is as important and involved as the RTA. Above all, the demand of the beneficiary is stressed as the main focal point of collaboration.

In Moldova, participants described their relationship more as one of managing projects in terms of producing appropriate papers and reports, satisfying the formal requirements of Twinning. An RTA-counterpart, for example, described the working relationship with the RTA as follows:

We have been linked in of course only in this Twinning project. I feel that he [RTA] is a very responsible and bureaucratically [minded] person. He wants to have things put on paper. We would like to find an effective working compromise between us, my mode of work with his mode of work and to have good results. (Beneficiary#11)

A relatively junior counterpart, when interviewed on her relationship with the RTA and their day-to-day cooperation stated:

We start, I open my mail and every time I find [Member_State#5]'s mail on different matters. For example, I have to say, are you happy with this, for example terms of reference for one expert, program, agenda or date, or future

seminar. (...) Sometimes I say: For this question I need to discuss with the big boss, yes, or lets involve someone else. (Beneficiary#8)

Beneficiary#8 does not see her role as one of being actively involved in implementation, but rather connecting people to carry out the project. Interestingly, this particular RTA-counterpart was not a specific subject-related administrator. Although his/her level of English allowed for good communication with the RTA, he/she had no experience in the field and was limited in terms of supporting the RTA on a practical level. In a situation with an experienced and senior RTA but an inexperienced and junior RTA-counterpart, the project's core is weak. In such a case an RTA finds it difficult to connect with the domestic demand and the specific domestic problems related to the project's content. In this case the RTA can only play a stronger content-related role if he/she manages to establish close relations with at least one other person in the beneficiary who is senior enough to oversee the functioning of the administration and has the competence to push for change. If that is not the case, the RTA has to retreat to a managerial role as the counterpart can merely provide administrative support.

A functioning cooperative relationship between the RTA and the RTA-counterpart is crucial for Twinning. Depending on the seniority and role of the RTA-counterpart, this relationship can be based just on managing the project, or go beyond such a role and influence the content of project-related domestic reform processes. The following section further assesses the cooperative relationship between the wider beneficiary administration and the Twinning project.

5.4.4.2. Wider cooperation between the project and the beneficiary

Cooperation is not straightforward. What is internal and what is external to Twinning is not defined by who represents the member state and who the beneficiary, but by who works closely with whom within the project, and who is sidelined. Mandatory results are scrutinized throughout implementation, particularly between the RTA and the RTA-counterpart. Through

close and daily cooperation, the RTA and the RTA-counterpart become agents of the project, producing their own understanding. Through that process, mandatory results lose their relevance as connecting pieces between the member state and the beneficiary. What is left is the understanding developed in the Twinning-core as to how sensible and sustainable reform in the beneficiary may be conducted, or as one Lebanese RTA put it:

You need people who are going to understand the situation. With all respect, a bureaucrat sitting in Brussels who has probably never been in Lebanon writes this fiche based on what he/she thinks they need. (...) You need someone who has been here, understands the situation here to interpret that and help to move them toward that direction. It is about moving people into a direction. It is not necessarily about delivering some of these fixed outcomes. (Member_State#32)

Mandatory results may not only be scrutinized through substitution with other results that may seem more appropriate, but be entirely exchanged for the sake of an iterative process of communicating understandings from within the project to the beneficiary. This is aided by the use of numerous short-term experts who are organized by the Twinning-core and visit the beneficiary regularly during a project. As a Lebanese RTA-counterpart noted:

They saw a new country, new approaches and really they learned from us (...) We thought of many processes that we did not think about before, maybe because the situation over there [the member state] is different. (...) So they had many ideas and you know when you have a mixture of cultures, both cultures will benefit. (Beneficiary#25)

Sense-making both within a Twinning project and between Twinning and the beneficiary is an ongoing process throughout implementation. Scrutinizing mandatory results and planned outcomes takes place throughout Twinning. Various respondents noted that the engagement of the beneficiary with the Twinning project increased significantly toward its end.

For example, a Lebanese RTA-counterpart noted:

Actually the production happened only after the Twinning. All the 18 months were to explore data sources and see how we can explore and use them for our purposes. (Beneficiary#30)

As in the above quotation, the full duration of project implementation was used to find relevant data sources that would fit the setup and demand of the beneficiary. The problem that Twinning was originally supposed to address was only defined at the end; solutions could only be sought afterwards. The RTA was an integral part of this process, with the RTA-counterpart being a senior administrator in the beneficiary. Non-EU sources were sought to enable further cooperation with the RTA to continue the process of seeking appropriate solutions and bringing the project to an end.

How does the process of cooperation in a Twinning project take place? One Lebanese RTA-counterpart described it as one of mutual (re-)evaluation:

We were evaluating the expert and the expert was evaluating the government. There was a real synergy between them. (Beneficiary#25)

In a similar vein, an RTA in Moldova argued that simply carrying out training and activities as planned is not an option. Rather, beneficiaries have to be persuaded that there is a need for change.

We don't just want to do loads of professional training and leave. We could do that, I could do it very easily with all the staff, tell them how the EU works, tell them how the directives work. But if the managers do not see the need to change those practices it is not going to go anywhere. (Member_State#5)

The demand to constantly adapt to changes increases, as in many projects the nature of the beneficiary changes during the project. In accordance with clearly defined mandatory results, the beneficiary administration is narrowly defined at the beginning. Only as the project advances and new understandings are developed the beneficiary widens, other branches of public administration and government become relevant and must be incorporated. An RTA-counterpart from Moldova argued:

[The] challenge was communication and the absorption capacity of the European member states experience. We realized that we need to communicate more between us and beneficiary administration representatives. You have to involve lots of ministries, auditors, managers and so on. (Beneficiary#4)

Only when solutions become clearer at the domestic level can one actually define who belongs to the beneficiary and who does not. If the beneficiary is defined too narrowly, proposed solutions may not be sustainable as other administrative branches may counter their reform. Yet if the beneficiary is defined too widely, a Twinning project may not be able to cope with the sheer amount of actors involved considering the limited timeframe and limited resources. As an RTA-counterpart in Lebanon emphasized, coordination between sub-beneficiaries is crucial:

It is really just coordination. We have seventeen beneficiaries and you have to coordinate with all of them. And some of the beneficiaries they are getting support from two to three components. (Beneficiary#33)

Seventeen beneficiaries, spread across nearly the whole domestic public administration of Lebanon is a considerable amount. At this point the RTA–RTA-counterpart core may in any case find it difficult to communicate equally with the various parts of the project. As an employee of the Lebanese PAO stated concerning the very same project:

The response from the Lebanese counterparts may not be as quick as one may expect. They may take for example instead of responding in a weeks' time, they would respond in a month's time. This will encourage delays. [Yet] the delays are not with (...) the primary beneficiary but it is with the other sub-beneficiaries. (Twinning#28)

The lack of control of sub-beneficiaries is one of the major obstacles toward the implementation of external practices. Any public administration has a specific set up and a specific mode of functioning between its units. The larger and more diverse the beneficiary is, the less the RTA and the RTA-counterpart are able to communicate and justify their understanding of the project's purpose. A common understanding is developed through direct and repeated routine deliberation. The more diverse the beneficiary, the more problematic and uncoordinated communication will become, and cooperation will suffer. Furthermore, the more diverse beneficiaries are, the higher is the risk that the understanding of the project, developed and brought forward by the RTA and the RTA-counterpart, will be contested. Cooperation was

strongest in projects where beneficiaries claimed that they felt the RTA had full acceptance in the administration. In projects where the beneficiary is diverse, integration of the RTA is impeded. The RTA may still find acceptance in the sub-beneficiary that is closest to the RTA-counterpart, yet may be ignored by more distant beneficiaries that may still be essential for the conclusion of the project.

The problem of diversity on the side of the beneficiary is one of project design as well as project flexibility, issues covered in the previous and the following chapter. When domestic demand and problems are not thoroughly understood, external practices through mandatory results can both overburden the beneficiary as well as the project. The tendency to design Twinning projects according to the political ambitions of EU integration rather than administrative demand was particularly pronounced in Moldova. In such a case, solutions implemented through the Twinning project should be as visible as possible. The demand for external legitimization by the EU as the project funder and the domestic government as the ultimate head of the beneficiary can overburden project participants to an extent that the project becomes unmanageable. When the demand for external legitimization is weaker as in Lebanon and the beneficiary is better connected to the project, Twinning can have a lasting effect. In Lebanon, projects also seemed at times overburdened with a too-diverse set of beneficiaries. Yet they adapted by defining core beneficiaries and managing expectations through ongoing deliberative cooperation in the project core and beyond.

5.5. Conclusion: From deliberative cooperation to organizational learning

Considering the formal Twinning framework provides little real-world guidance for Twinning participants, contestation is inherent to Twinning projects. The domestic demand and beneficiary capacity are often underestimated and not clear at the start of a project. Often both

beneficiaries and EU member-state participants know little about their own role in the project and the development of the project itself. Although the level of preparedness and adaptation at the beginning of Twinning varies between individual projects and the two countries studied, no project observed for this thesis started without contestation around some of its most basic features. Whereas contestation starts from an individual perspective via defining one's own role in a project, it has a profound effect on communication and practical cooperation during the Twinning process.

Through deliberation, individual perceptions of beneficiary and member-state participants are exchanged, compared, and contrasted. It is in this process that the main cleavages between different perceptions are defined, debated, and eventually internalized by participants. Only through exchanging experience, external practices, and domestic perceptions can a common understanding of the project be developed. In many cases this differs from the original contract. Only through the processes of creating common understanding and implementing project activities (by matching external experts with beneficiaries) can a project be established as an organizational entity. Routine practices are developed that are particularly visible between what has been referred to in this chapter as the core of Twinning—the RTA to RTA-counterpart relationship. Yet as with many other organizational entities, the borders of influence of a Twinning project are fluid as they often include a number of diverse beneficiaries.

As a Twinning project is established internally, through deliberation between the RTA and the RTA-counterpart, a too-large amount of beneficiaries runs the risk of making Twinning unmanageable. The more diverse beneficiaries are, the more difficult it is for the Twinning-core to communicate its own understanding of the project and to get more distant beneficiaries on board. The Twinning instrument is ill-suited for large-scale reforms and works best when the beneficiary is relatively focused.

The previous chapters covered Twinning projects from their establishment and formal framework to their implementation. The following chapter moves further by exploring the outcome of deliberative cooperation. In contrast to the Twinning manual, specific results are not defined as the outcome of Twinning but rather the ongoing process of organizational learning and adaptation.

6. LEARNING THROUGH TWINNING AND ITS CONSTRAINTS

6.1. Introduction

Deliberation and contestation are key processes during Twinning implementation. Participants make sense of a project and slowly adapt to domestic realities, to the possibilities and boundaries of Twinning projects. This process is not perpetual, however. Twinning projects last around two years, beyond which they cannot be continued. The main question this chapter asks is: What happens at the end of and after Twinning? This investigation includes sub-questions such as: How do Twinning projects leave a mark on their beneficiary administrations and the member-state participants? How does the relationship between Twinning participants continue beyond the project? To what extent have external factors had an impact on Twinning?

This chapter takes an analytical perspective of organizational learning. Organizational learning represents both processes and outcomes of Twinning. Twinning is not the end of a controllable reform process; through its inside-looking nature and emphasis on cooperation and deliberation it is rather a disruption to the status quo, in itself an outcome. It cannot provide immediate solutions but changes the perspective of participants. As Weick and Westley (1999, p.441) point out, learning refers to both an outcome and a process. The process can be instrumental toward further reforms on the micro-level through changed understandings and adapted work routines as well as on the meso- and macro-level through policy and legislative change. Processes of change on different levels do not necessarily have to align: legislative change is assumed to follow a logic of external political pressure and the demand to signal legitimacy, whereas practical change is assumed to follow a more hands-on logic of administrative practice and capacity. As outlined in the theoretical chapter, organizational learning is not understood in a rational/instrumental manner where a specific outcome is internalized by a receiving actor. It is rather understood in a sociological manner, where

learning comes about through sense-making and the acquisition of intersubjective meaning (Yanow 2000).

As Weick and Westley argue, the object of most (organizational) learning is intersubjective meaning (1999, p.456). Intersubjective meaning is embodied in common language, common artifacts, and common routines. These factors were discussed in chapter 4 by pointing to the importance of deliberation (language), and the establishment of deepened cooperation through ongoing meetings or working in close proximity with each other (artifacts and routines). Similarly to Yanow's approach to organizational learning, the underlying question is not what needs to be learned, in a kind of "institutional transfer" way, but what is being learned and to what effect (2000, p.255)?

This chapter builds on the foundation of the previous four. It does not situate the nature of learning as an outcome in relation to intuitional benchmarks, such as mandatory results, but follows the insights of organization as a self-referential process. It explores organizational learning through participants of Twinning redefining their roles, redefining the project and reconsidering their own role as public administrators. Redefinition does not come about through blueprint change. It comes about through different cultural and professional backgrounds of Twinning participants acting as irritants to the status quo (Czarniawska 2013, p.14; Seidl & Becker 2005, p.23). Rather than creating a new status quo through changed legislation and administrative behavior, Twinning disrupts previously accepted truths and understandings; routines and beliefs at the administrative level are challenged as well as legislations and other formal structures.

The aim of this chapter is not only to analyze the end of Twinning projects but to further distill implications on the scope and limits of individual and organizational learning in and through Twinning. The previous chapter took a micro-level of analysis, observing Twinning projects from the perspective of their internal day-to-day functioning. This chapter takes a

broader perspective, looking at the effect of Twinning not only within but also beyond the project. This chapter may help shed light on the scope of possible effects of other Twinning projects, and may also indicate potential further applications of Twinning and Twinning-like projects beyond the scope of EU pre-enlargement and the ENP. Those applications are discussed in the concluding chapter.

This chapter is structured so that the first part creates a link to the previous two chapters through analyzing what is learned through cooperation and deliberation in Twinning. It explores how interview respondents define and evaluate the outcomes of their projects. The second part explores what is learned by outlining how respondents dealt with obstacles intrinsic to their project, such as overloading or a lack of flexibility. The third and final part of the chapter connects to the second part as it explores how extrinsic influences affect learning inside a project. It analyzes how respondents dealt with obstacles within the beneficiary administration, such as staff motivation and fluctuation. It goes even further as it looks beyond the realm of the beneficiary and observes how domestic political support—or the lack thereof—and external political shocks impact a given project.

6.2. What is learned through cooperation and deliberation?

6.2.1. Learning as the creation of intersubjective meaning

The creation of intersubjective meaning follows a process of internalizing the formal Twinning framework as well as domestic demands and practices, and is created during project implementation. Practices and expectations of member state and beneficiary participants differ at the start of a project. Since organizational learning is both process and outcome, the first part of this chapter establishes the outcome perspective of organizational learning, whereas the following two focus on process. This section explores what is learned and how intersubjective

meaning created within the framework of a Twinning project is externalized to the wider beneficiary organization and beyond. Although Twinning formally takes place between two states within a broadly defined beneficiary institution, the actual scope of Twinning during implementation is limited.⁴⁸ This is due to the often narrow definition of mandatory results⁴⁹ and a deeper involvement of the Twinning-core, RTA, and RTA-counterpart, compared to others who are formally part of the beneficiary but only participate in a handful of Twinning activities. It is important to note that if intersubjective meaning created through Twinning remains internal to the project and is not translated to the wider beneficiary, its effect will be limited.

Intersubjective meaning created through Twinning is not detached from either views held by member-state participants, subsumed under the term best practices, or understandings held by beneficiary participants. Intersubjective meaning is the common denominator found by participants: it is the creation of ideas that resonate both with beneficiary and member state understandings of domestic problems and solutions. The following two quotations illustrate this. They are from a member-state project leader and an RTA-counterpart from two different Twinning projects in the Republic of Moldova (hereafter Moldova). Both respondents summarized the effect their Twinning had after completion. The RTA-counterpart described the experience as such:

At least we tried to get the best practices. Of course each country has its particular specificities. Anyways, it is better to look at something that has been done already and brought some results, than trying to reinvent the wheel. The project was a good opportunity to get (...) their real expertise and advice on the things that we wanted to change. (Beneficiary#9)

⁴⁸ For example: the Ministry of Interior or the Ministry of Economy.

⁴⁹ Although mandatory results differ considerably in their scope and precision between Twinning projects and between Moldova and Lebanon, they are arguably still in most projects relatively narrow and specific in their aim.

The member-state project leader, when asked how the respective project he/she was involved in Moldova went, said:

We were constantly meeting with people and we were talking to them about what we were trying to do and what we were trying to achieve (...).It took a lot of personal efforts from ourselves. I cannot clearly say what it caused and affected. What I can clearly say is that what we did and during the lifetime of the project, things did improve. So once you create a bit of a connection with people they understand that you faced the same challenges that they had to face, although in a very different country and society. You can then start saying to people, you have got this particular problem, I have that same problem in [EU member state]. I thought about these things, do you want to think about these things as a potential solution. You know it is about encouraging them to think through for themselves what the solution may be. (Member_State#27).

What we can see from the first quotation is that the beneficiary was eager to receive concrete solutions to problems. From the beginning, the project on intellectual property rights was assumed to be relevant. Intellectual property rights infringements were perceived as a domestic problem, and Moldova had already taken over most of the EU's *acquis* on the issue. On the other hand, some of the mandatory results developed were too ambitious, beyond the immediate reach of the project.⁵⁰ The answer of Beneficiary#9 indicates that although best practices was sought through taking on board reforms that had “proven” themselves in an EU country, such practices are specific to their domestic context, as “each country has gotten its particular specificities.” This holds true even in a relatively internationalized field as intellectual property rights protection and enforcement. At the end, what he/she describes as the outcome of the project was not the reception of one model of change or a particular best practice but “their real expertise and advice on the things we wanted to change.” The main outcome produced was the input of external practitioners into the understanding of existing problems toward their policy-based solution. This corresponds to the idea of learning through the creation of intersubjective

⁵⁰ One mandatory result for example stated: “The legal system for a National Registry of Origin (DO), Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG) and Geographical Indications (GI) is implemented.”

meaning. It stands in contrast to the idea of instrumental learning, which follows a means-ends approach (compare: Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier 1993).

The non-finite nature of Twinning outcomes was further stressed by Beneficiary#9 when he/she reflected on his/her own work several years after Twinning:

We are trying to use the Twinning outputs in order to develop in the right way. So, if we can use it, then we will use it. If there is nothing in the Twinning that we did, (...) we try to find other information on how to develop in a particular subject. (Beneficiary#9)

It is interesting to contrast Beneficiary#9's quotation to his/her previous one in this section (p.180). The beneficiary sought to receive concrete best practices from an EU member state. They did not turn out as straightforward as anticipated, since all states follow particular solutions. Several years later, the results of the project are mere inputs among others to the development of the practices of the beneficiary. This is interesting in two ways. First, it indicates that Twinning results are not as finite and clearly scoped as portrayed in the Twinning manual, and second, those results may well continue to be part of the development and day-to-day discourse of the beneficiary well after the project. After several years, Twinning results represent a valuable resource of information and inspiration that can inform beneficiary practices. But they do not have to. Under conditions of sustained political instability, Twinning outputs may become relevant after project conclusion through artifacts produced, providing legitimacy to internal practices over external pressures. Particularly in countries like Moldova, specific domestic problems and institutional environments may have been further changed and rearranged. What is important to note here is that organizational learning does not necessarily entail any direct form of change or error correction (Yanow 2000, p.256). Organizational learning may as well mean preserving the status quo or changing the understanding of a problem and possibly affecting what is deemed an appropriate solution. There does not have to be any direct connection to subsequent change and further reform beyond the sphere of intersubjective

understanding. One must not forget that Twinning projects are of a limited scope, during a limited amount of time, with limited resources, reaching a very limited amount of stakeholders attached to a given policy problem.

The quotation of Member_State#27 stands in contrast to the one of Beneficiary#9. It focuses on defining and understanding the problem rather than providing a solution in the sense of transferring best practices. The interviewee stresses the importance of creating a “connection” with the beneficiary. He/she states that a connection is created with the beneficiary when they “understand that you faced up to the same challenges.” That relates to Yanow’s notion that what we consider organizational learning is closely related to so-called communities of practice (2006, pp.1750–1751). They represent a collection of people who continuously engage in a common endeavor (Eckert 2006). Wenger argues that members of a community of practice are bound together by a collective understanding of what their community is about, mutual engagement, and shared resources (2000, pp.228–229). Collaborative work in this case acts as a medium for transmitting as well as translating knowledge between community participants (Hernes 2007, p.13). Knowledge and understanding come about through social interaction and the creation of intersubjective meaning, not through the hierarchical transmission of established practices (compare: Wenger 2011). In this sense March’s observation should also be noted, in that innovations do not only transform organization but that in the process of innovating, the innovation itself is changed (March 1981). This reflects the finding of the previous chapter that best practices and mandatory results become scrutinized during implementation. They are not internalized into an organizational structure in a linear fashion.

The creation of intersubjective meaning is key to organizational change and to the adaptation of external practices into so-called “generic meaning,” embedded in more general structures as rules, habits, and routines (Hernes 2007, p.122). Whereas intersubjective meaning

is shared only between direct participants, generic meaning is available to all in the form of institutional scripts that act as guidelines for sense-making in an organization (Scott 2008, p.44; DiMaggio & Powell 1991, pp.14–15). The process of change from innovative and highly situated intersubjective meaning to more generalized and universally applied generic understanding has been argued to be at the core of most organizational processes (Hernes 2007, p.122).

Whereas generic meaning is relatively independent of its context, intersubjective meaning is context specific. The specific context in this case is the Twinning project and the exchange of information and understandings between the member state and the beneficiary. The process starts off based on generic meaning: the status quo processes used in the specific policy context by either side. Through “constantly meeting with people” and “talking to them about what we were trying to do,” a “connection” is established, the understandings of problems at hand are aligned and the beneficiary is encouraged to “think through for themselves what the solution may be.” The creation of a common understanding of the problem at hand opens up the possibility to reconsider solutions developed and used in the EU member state and translate them into intersubjective meaning. As Member_State#27 states: “I cannot clearly say what it caused and affected.” This indicates that the further translation of possible reform as intersubjective meaning to actual change through the establishment of shared generic meaning is not necessarily visible to the member-state side. It is rather, stated by Beneficiary#9, that “if we can use it then we will use it.” Thus, intersubjective meaning that is established is further scrutinized after the project and may only slowly and in a piecemeal fashion trickle down and transform into scripts for more widely accepted organizational practices. It has to stand the test of reality and become accepted by the wider organizational environment, which a Twinning project is not able to directly influence.

6.2.2. Learning and sustainability

From the communities of practice literature we do not only know-how meaning is created inside a group by doing, but also that common practices create boundaries which may make such communities insular and minimize their effect on the organizational structure (Wenger 2000, p.233). This notion has important repercussions on the sustainability of learning inside Twinning and the process of translating intersubjective meaning into generic meaning. As Beneficiary#9 argued, understandings created through Twinning may be used or not depending on the situation.

As noted in the theoretical chapter (chapter 2), boundary objects are necessary in Twinning to focus interaction and enable deliberation among participants. Boundaries do not only exist at the beginning of a project through its creation and specific focus, but are then created during implementation through cooperation and deliberation. Activities and expectations are changed and adapted through Twinning. As a beneficiary project leader argued:

Insight each task (...) we played around in order to have this task really relevant and useful. (Beneficiary#29).

As a project is continuously adapted, boundaries are created both toward the EU as the main donor and the beneficiary administration. The creation of boundaries is useful for the creation of intersubjective meaning, giving Twinning projects autopoietic aspects. It can also impede sustainability, when boundaries become too thick or when what is created in the project cannot be externalized. An example of this is a project in Lebanon. The RTA and the counterpart were vividly able to explain how the project progressed. Several trips to the RTA's member state, provided the RTA-counterpart new insights. Even the assistants in the project could clearly distinguish between the long and dragging procedures in Lebanon and the allegedly more advanced procedures in the EU member state. Based on the creation of shared understandings

and meaning through the exchange of Lebanese and EU member state practices, the project seemingly progressed swiftly, producing recommendations on changing processes and several pieces of draft legislation. Yet during implementation, the legislative body in the given policy area in Lebanon was inactive. It could not be foreseen when it would be functional again. There was no scope to formalize what was done during the project and its impact was unclear, in spite of which the project proceeded perfectly well from an internal perspective.

Similar experiences were had in Moldova. Considering the previous observation that projects in Moldova tended to be less well prepared than in Lebanon and beneficiaries have less capacity and be less stable, one can expect that the effect of boundaries created through Twinning is even stronger than in Lebanon. Certainly, Moldova lacks Lebanon's administrative continuity. As a Moldovan beneficiary representative argued:

With the support of the project we created a certification system (...). After the first round of [certification] we saw that we need to adjust, amend the system. This has to be done by us, the central organization unit. (...) We have little experience in this area, but we have little choice. (Beneficiary#4).

An entirely new approach was developed that did not previously exist. Within the Twinning project a solution was agreed upon based on the experience of the member state and the main beneficiary participants. The understanding of the problem was internalized and a solution found internally. The solution created through internal learning processes remained myopic, unable to fully incorporate wider organizational ramifications, so it was based on intersubjective meaning. The implementation of that system into the wider organizational structure of the beneficiary was an attempt to translate it into generic meaning. Yet it did not resonate fully with the existing system and did not function accordingly—the beneficiary had to adjust it after the project. At that time, they were not Twinning participants anymore but public administrators. This notion is underlined by the RTA of the same project:

[Making] sure that we have sustainable results or tangible results (...) is beyond our responsibility as member states. (...) It is easy for us to deliver, but not so easy for the beneficiary to take care of the results. (...) It is just a question of driving the vehicle forward. Until now, it has not really been enforced properly. I don't know why we do not see more progress in this area. (Member_State#7)

This response points to one of the main differences between Twinning as a time limited community of practice or as a longer lasting community of practice. In the short timeframe of Twinning, there is little scope to adapt and experiment, with no time to reconsider a proposed solution when it has become obvious that it will not stand the test of time or would find no acceptance in the beneficiary. Yet organization scholars such as Weick argue that the core of organization lies in the transition between intersubjective and generic meaning (Hernes 2007; Weick 1995), a transition that is interrupted when Twinning ends. In the best case, intersubjective meaning immediately transitions to become generic meaning. More often than not it is much less of a one-to-one translation. In the short timeframe of Twinning, there is no scope to test the transition from intersubjective to generic, the scope to incorporate feedback from the wider organizational as well as political environment is limited. In “normal” organizations, communities of practice would be ongoing and constantly bounce off intersubjective meaning on the inside with generic meaning on the outside: commonly accepted scripts and practices in the organizational environment. Communities of practice can help to observe whether norms and scripts change as an outcome of their practices and if they fail to do so, adapt their internal processes accordingly.

The following sections deals further with the limits of organizational learning through Twinning. It looks at the effects of constraints participants in projects face, particularly the lack of flexibility and the problem of overloading and a lack of control beyond the immediate project core.

6.3. Internal constraints to Twinning: trial and error learning

The purpose of the following two sections is to scope out the limits of organizational learning in Twinning. Learning is often portrayed as a straightforward process where new and better information lead to improved practices. This dissertation does not follow such a rationalist-mechanical understanding of learning, rather it takes a constructivist and intersubjective one. This approach is skeptical of the inherent predictability of learning processes, taking place between the parties directly involved in Twinning. It argues that learning processes develop specifically through the interaction of parties involved in the project. The following sections further investigate where learning is limited, not only in terms of its predictability but in terms of its translation to the wider institutional context. It explores the internal and external constraints on Twinning projects that stand in the way of translating intersubjective meaning created further beyond the initial project frame.

6.3.1. Limits to controlling the project from within

One of the main obstacles to organizational learning within Twinning is the perceived lack of control over the project among Twinning participants. The development of intersubjective meaning through cooperation and deliberation ideally demands a flexible approach to practices within the project frame and the ability to shift expected outcomes according to changed understandings within the project core. Such an approach, where domestic participants have control over processes and produced outcomes, is necessary in order to create results that can be translated to the wider beneficiary and become an inherent and sustained part of domestic practices. Control in this context means controlling the production of outcomes and changing them from within as well as having control over the process of the creation of common understandings and providing project participants the ability to act on new insights that were not part of the original plan.

During the interviews, respondents stated that they were not able to have the influence they wanted within their Twinning projects. Those concerns were raised by beneficiary and member-state participants in both Moldova and Lebanon. In the following section three points relating to limited control over a project are further examined: 1) the inability to employ private consultants, 2) the lack of control over Twinning funding from within the beneficiary, and 3) the problem of domestic capacity in relation to the demands a Twinning project poses to the beneficiary.

6.3.1.1. The inability to contract private consultants

The main difference between mainstream international development and technical assistance projects to Twinning is that Twinning works with public administrators in contrast to private consultants. In most aspects this works in favor of Twinning as public administrators find it easier among each other to establish a definition of what the problem on the ground is, and are better equipped to aid the development of practical solutions compared to private consultants who may have little to no experience in the public sector. Yet in many interviews it was criticized that the public administration principle was used in an orthodox fashion. Whereas most interviewees were in favor of Twinning being primarily based on public administrators, some argued that this was not sufficient and lacks flexibility.

In public administration literature there is a considerable consensus that the machine-like Weberian system of public administration with full-time professional public administrators has converged. The wake of neoliberalism particularly during the Thatcher era in Britain coined the term New Public Management (NPM) (Dunleavy & Hood 1994; Hood & Peters 2004). The creation of ever more hybrid administrations in the face of the dissolution of power from a central fully empowered government led to the creation of the term governance. In Eastern

Europe, the mix of a close-to-Weberian model persistent during Communism⁵¹ with aspects of NPM and governance after transition led to the creation of the Neo-Weberian model (Lynn 2008; Randma-Liiv 2008). Most of those post-Weberian models of public administrations overlap in their observation that certain functions of public administration have been taken over by private actors, and that in some parts of administration, the public–private divide has become nearly indistinguishable. NPM has even been regarded as a model that actively advertises privatization to raise public sector efficiency.

Various interviewees shared this view from the literature and pointed to the importance the private sector had on their project, and the impossibility of the member-state counterpart to provide crucial inputs.

These [the Twinning manual] are the rules. You have to ask them why there are these things you just can't do, like employ a private consultant if that is necessary. For example in the software business, we needed someone who had experience in certain software which had been developed with funding by [an EU agency]. But it was not working in the way we attempted. We tried to find out why it was not working and whether it could be made to work. (Member_State#39)

This interviewee was frustrated with the EU's practice of not allowing private consultants for subcontracting. What particularly confused the interviewee was that the EU itself makes considerable use of private consultants, but does not allow it in Twinning. This is an example where an abstract rule that, in theory, should lead to increased coherence through the persistent use of public administrators, may disrupt a project. The program was indeed developed for [an EU agency] and actively supported by the EU as a best practice. In this particular project, no member-state participant involved had much knowledge or experience with the software. A private software professional should have been contracted in order to provide the necessary

⁵¹ One can debate whether public administration in the Soviet Union and the communist states actually followed a Weberian model. Whereas most fulfilled the criteria of a specialized highly hierarchical form of professional administration, most of them lacked the key principle of the rule of law. Rather, most communist administrations were highly politically instrumental, prone to arbitrary decision making in contrast to the high level of predictability Weber would have ascribed to his model of public administration.

software training, to facilitate the implementation of an improved national accounts system. This example demonstrates one of the main problems of the highly formalized approach of the EU, it does not allow project participants to deal with the contradictions inherent to a project. In the end, the project was able to get a software consultant, yet it was only able to do so after a considerable amount of bargaining with the EU delegation, costing resources both in terms of time and predictability of the implementation process.

Another respondent pointed to the inherent differences between the beneficiary and member-state public administration. Although they are usually twinned on a relatively specific policy sector, there often remains tasks that are different between the two, where only a short-term public consultant would be able to bridge the gap of given practice and knowledge.

Sometimes you need certain expertise, you know, that is not available in the public sector in the EU. But they are not allowed to bring private sector experts from EU countries. (Beneficiary#24).

6.3.1.2. The lack of control over Twinning funding

Besides timing and personnel, funding is an important issue deciding the fate of Twinning projects. Funding is tricky. Twinning is not supposed to serve as a form of domestic budget assistance and should only spend funds on implementation and the income of member-state participants. This creates two problems:

1) The allocation of funds beyond immediately planned outcomes and their respective activities is difficult. When participants come to the conclusion that a different part of the beneficiary has to be reached, reallocating funds or raising additional ones is complicated, and demands considerable administrative efforts in terms of drafting side letters or appendixes to the contract. As an RTA argued:

These funding programs have a deadline after which you cannot spend the money. So you know if the project does not start until the end of the program, you don't have enough time to implement it properly. A lot of this stuff seems

kind of short when what is needed is something a bit longer term actually if you want to achieve the results you want. (Member_State#39)

The strict Twinning timeframe has negative consequences on participants' ability to adapt, capping implementation to generally a maximum of two years with limited possibilities to extend or redistribute funding.

2) The acquisition of hardware or other tangible goods during Twinning is difficult and must often be externally funded or provided by the beneficiary. In cases where such goods are found to be necessary, such as software, computers, or laboratory equipment, but can neither be funded internally nor through a different donor, a project can run into problems. As an administrator of the Moldovan project administration office argued:

The money [Twinning project funding] does not go through our treasury system. We cannot monitor the money, we cannot plan the money. For Twinning we cannot plan how to spend [our resources]. (Twinning#19)

When the beneficiary has no control over funds distributed through Twinning it can impede domestic ownership of the project, argued to be a cornerstone of Twinning and most other development projects (European Commission 2012a). If the beneficiary has the feeling that it has little input or control over distributed funds, political support is likely to suffer. If higher-level administrators and politicians feel as if they are sidelined from decisions over money flows within and toward Twinning projects, they are likely to become disinterested and have little incentive to support the translation of Twinning outcomes to the beneficiary.

The specific nature of Twinning funding can also create an imbalance between the involvement and commitment of different participants. Whereas RTAs and external experts are paid through the Twinning project, beneficiary participants are paid through their own government. Most public sectors in the EU's neighborhood run under considerable public deficits and are restricted by rigorous IMF public spending conditionality. This is the case in Moldova particularly, and to a certain extent also in Lebanon. Therefore, the wage disparity

between an RTA and an RTA-counterpart can be very large, although both should work on a similar level. RTAs are paid the full wage equivalent of their home country plus 6 percent for having been posted to a neighboring country. The average monthly wage in public administration in Moldova is roughly 312 Euros and a senior RTA from the UK or Sweden would easily earn a middle to high four-digit sum (IOM Moldova 2014). It is somewhat normal that an RTA may earn more than twenty times the amount of his or her counterpart. There is a legitimacy problem when the wage disparity within a cooperation project is this high. In Moldova it has been said that Twinning projects are not very desirable because people don't get paid for their extra work, whereas organizations like the World Bank hire local staff and pay them considerably beyond the national average wage.

Considering the above, most RTAs interviewed in Moldova remarked that they were surprised about the low salaries people received who they were working with. RTA-counterparts interviewed chose rather not to speak about their salaries. One RTA remarked:

From the beginning when I came here I was very surprised about the low level of salary of public servants. (...) They are thinking OK, we have this kind of responsibility and we need to be paid better. (Member_State#3).

Member_State#3 argues that when administrators participate in Twinning, comparing themselves with their EU counterparts and taking on board some of their practices and additional tasks, they naturally start reflecting on their salary. Thus, the inability of Twinning projects to distribute funding among participants can potentially undermine their willingness to cooperate and to internalize meaning created during the project.

6.3.1.3. The problem of a lack of domestic capacity

Although Twinning projects are framed as administrative support, they demand a considerable amount of human and institutional capacity during implementation. Twinning activities are additional tasks that beneficiary participants have to carry out on top of their normal job. In

combination with a lack of financial incentives and an overload of tasks, the lack of domestic capacity not only to use Twinning for its own reform process but to first of all participate in it can become apparent. An RTA-counterpart in Moldova argued that he/she struggled to take in and comprehend the myriad activities he/she was involved in:

We had weeks were we had seven to eight experts. It was very difficult to manage them all and to pay attention to each of them, to read and comment on all the reports. (Beneficiary#1).

This is a result of the rudimentary understanding of the domestic context at the beginning of a project and the tight timeframe of up to two years that is put on often very ambitious projects. As external experts from the EU member state are also not always fully available, this can lead to considerable bottlenecks in the implementation of Twinning where too much is attempted in too little time and an effective process of exchange and the creation of intersubjective meaning is nearly impossible. This point was reinforced by an EU support project officer in Moldova:

[Twinning projects] are too ambitious. Sometimes they want to achieve too much with one Twinning project which is not possible. It is not realistic to achieve something in two years that takes at least ten years, to make a serious reform in a sector or in an institution. Of course the levels of ambition were also sometimes higher than necessary. (...) You can expect some changes but you cannot expect that one Twinning project will change totally the approach of the institutional and all the legislation and all the system all together. (Twinning#17)

This respondent, points to problems posed by the one-size-fits-all approach of Twinning. He/she cautions that the magnitude of change expected from Twinning should not be overestimated. This resonates with previous quotations, demanding that Twinning projects should be pushed beyond the two year frame if necessary, as the magnitude of change is often not entirely assessable from the beginning.

6.3.2. The inflexibility of Twinning and adapting the project framework

This section explores how Twinning participants deal with actual and perceived inflexibility. First of all it looks at why Twinning participants see inflexibility as a problem and why they

demand more flexibility. Further, it analyzes examples of how Twinning projects coped with inflexibility. It looks at both the beneficiary and member-state side and points to various examples where both were able to make space within the tight formal system of Twinning to be flexible from within as well as both seeking solutions outside Twinning to compensate for internal inflexibility.

6.3.2.1. The demand for flexibility in Twinning

Respondents from both Lebanon and Moldova demanded more flexibility from the EU for the implementation of Twinning. The main line of reasoning was that more could have been done within the projects if money, time, and focus could have been shifted during implementation. To quote an example from Lebanon, a beneficiary project leader of several Twinning argued:

More flexibility leads to much better results and a much better utilization of resources. We are keen about this money to use it properly (...) Maybe the EU prefers to use Twinning projects as a tool because most of the money will come back to the EU. I mean it is up to them, they are the donors. (Beneficiary#24)

Similarly, an RTA in Moldova stated:

I would wish for more flexibility from the bureaucracy within the EU. (...) Then again it comes back to rules and regulations within the EU system, the Twinning manual. That is also a source of frustration I think, from my perspective. There is no flexibility as such. (...) We are not consultants; we are civil servants from member states. (...) So, I don't know what the problems are in terms of EU regulations, I can perceive that there is a lack of accountability. (Member_State#7)

Both quotations question the lack of flexibility from the perspectives of responsibility and accountability. The question, then, is who is responsible for the project and who is accountable for the results? The first quotation hints that the EU uses its donor-role instrumentally as: “most of the money will come back to the EU.” Beneficiary#24 thus questions the motives of the EU to uphold its aims toward Twinning. This highlights the uneasy relationship between two main goals Twinning shares with many development projects: domestic ownership, and the donor's

control over the project it funds and its outcomes.⁵² Both respondents were experienced Twinning participants. It is likely that this dichotomy is becoming more prominent the more one has been involved in Twinning and it is a concern that is shared in most projects. The interviewees reinforce the notion raised at project level that the control the EU claims over projects has a negative effect on the use of resources. Considering the rigidity of the Twinning manual, this view is not shared by the European Commission. An EU delegation representative in Moldova argued concerning participants stepping outside the scope of the Twinning manual:

Sometimes people are not reading the documents properly. They are not behaving properly according to the guidelines. Basically the guidelines, any rulebook, is there in order to give everybody equality of treatment. (EUD#15)

From the EU's side we see a deep belief in the appropriateness of its own rules, binding everyone, creating predictability and essentially accountability. On the other hand there are project participants who interpret rules as impeding accountability when they do not serve the purpose of domestic ownership. We have an outcome-based understanding of accountability; if what is reached is what was agreed, the project was accountable. But we also have a process understanding of accountability where a project was accountable if it was able to adapt along the way to domestic demands. What we see brings us back to the theoretical framework and the different conceptions of organization from a Weberian, legalistic, and mechanical model of iron rules and clear boundaries to a postmodern, process-based, understanding.

6.3.2.2. Project participants dealing with a lack of flexibility

As project participants reported their struggle with a lack of flexibility during their project, many were creative in finding solutions to steer around it. One can differentiate between two

⁵² Compare the Twinning manual: "Beneficiary Country retains ownership of the project, from the conception of the Twinning fiche until the closure of the Twinning Contract (...)The Twinning partners commit themselves to achieving the mandatory results, and not only to the means to achieve them." (European Commission 2012a). What is argued to be inherently complementary, the agreement of concrete results before implementation and the domestic ownership of the project throughout implementation, is highly problematic in most Twinning projects observed.

ways of coping with inflexibility: it can be dealt with from within the project, trying to keep mandatory results as vague as possible to give leeway for diverging interpretations during implementation; or it can be dealt with outside the project framework through tapping other resources, external to Twinning.

Whereas for most observed Twinning projects mandatory results were specific, some beneficiaries stated that they managed to keep them broad enough to shift their emphasis during implementation. This was particularly the case in Lebanon. A Lebanese project leader reported how the experience with a previous Twinning project enabled him/her to set the mandatory results as wide as possible:

[The first Twinning] allowed us to know a bit more how to adjust the fiche to the actual needs because of the difference, the time difference between when the fiche was set and when the project started to be implemented. (...) Some tasks are rather general. Therefore they are elastic. So when you say for example, enhance the skills of the compliance department or of the taxpayer's services unit. This opens an exhaustive list of things that we can do. (Beneficiary#29).

Knowing the "actual needs" of the administration helped to keep the fiche flexible. Knowing what formulations to use, how to frame a certain issue so it sounds clear but opens up various routes of departure demands a considerable amount of experience in public administration and a self-consciousness of what can be achieved or not. As previously argued, this was more a given in Lebanon than in Moldova.

Besides the ability of the beneficiary to find flexibility within the scope of mandatory results, the ability of RTAs to flexibly interpret their role and to reinterpret mandatory results has been stressed by Lebanese respondents. An RTA-counterpart for example, reflecting on previous Twinning, described the RTA as follows:

[The RTA] was really doing slalom with us, especially in the first Twinning because we were changing a lot in the same module. We were changing our areas of interest in many modules. This was great. (...) Maybe he was even faster than us in telling us we will do this instead of these things for example. (Beneficiary#25)

The above quotation demonstrates that an RTA who has trust in the administration and experience in cooperation has the ability to interpret Twinning rules more flexibly. The closer the cooperative relationship between the participants, the more likely the project is to diverge from the original plan as circumstances change. This stands in contrast to an RTA in Moldova who had to leave the beneficiary because he/she was not able to establish trust within the administration.

A member state representative in Lebanon further emphasized how a common and in-depth understanding of the demands of the field can aid a project to remain flexible within the realm of mandatory results. The project had to develop a quality assurance system for laboratories under ISO/IEC Regulation 17025/2005. During implementation, a laboratory participating in the project needed help with a microbiology task. Yet microbiology was neither explicitly part of the regulation nor the Twinning contract. The member state representative knew a microbiologist whose input would be valuable, and so creatively resolving the issue he/she stated:

So we say, OK we bring an expert, he is a microbiologist and his job is to develop technical procedures. So you can be flexible within the room of the activity.
(Member_State#32)

The member state representative in agreement with the beneficiary simply chose to not specify the microbiologist as a microbiologist but as a technical expert developing “technical procedures” in line with ISO/IEC Regulation 17025/2005. This is a small detail of a project, where a certain expert is relabeled and shifted around without creating too much fuss. Though this was not seen as a solution to the inflexibility of the formal framework, which Member_State#32 criticized too.⁵³

Despite project participants finding ways to cope with inflexibility, many respondents

⁵³ “So that is one of the problems with a Twinning project. There is less flexibility as we said in the very beginning.” (Member_State#32)

criticized the difficulties in formally adapting the contract to the demands of the administration.

An RTA in Lebanon argued as to why he/she shied away from making a change to the Twinning contract through an addendum:

When the modifications are more than 15 percent, we are obliged to do an addendum. It takes time, because you should specify specific details. So, we are always trying to avoid the addendum. So if we would not have the addendum signed, we could not organize the activities. It would be a waste of our time. (Member_State#31)

In a similar vein, smaller changes have to be formally noted through a side letter by the project leadership. Although a side letter seems easy as a formal process, it is still an administrative task that drains time and resources that could be used for implementation. Member_State#7 was particularly frustrated with those demands:

It is just a matter of principle that for every small change we want to do, we still have to write a side letter, going back to daddy, asking can we re-spend the money that has been allocated to us. So in that sense, there is no accountability. If we see the need for a change from that item to that item, it is our responsibility isn't it, it should be our accountability. (Member_State#7).

The problem of drafting side letters was particularly pronounced in Moldova, whereas in Lebanon the creative process of reinterpreting tasks and shifting around resources without creating much noise from the side of the EU delegation was stressed instead. The reasons for that were covered in chapters 3 and 4, from a lack of domestic capacity to have ownership of the project to the increased role of the EU delegation in Moldova which is mainly substituted by the domestic project administration office in Lebanon.

6.4. External constraints to Twinning: the limits of learning and deliberative cooperation

The previous sections explored the various ways Twinning participants dealt creatively with obstacles they faced during their projects. Internal learning processes were argued to be impeded by stringent rules. Updating projects is constrained by bureaucratic obstacles to contract changes, and time and resource constraints often keep participants from pushing projects further. Those obstacles are immanent to the project and have an effect on the overall production of the project and its outputs, including lessons learned and routines reconsidered. Yet as discussed, Twinning projects do not function in a vacuum. A Twinning project takes on board autopoietic elements during its implementation phase. Yet after its conclusion, its outputs are exposed to the wider administrative and political environment of the beneficiary. The following sections examine the obstacles the environment in which Twinning projects operate pose to the sustainability of its results and its ability to create organizational learning processes. The section divides domestic obstacles into two groups: 1) administrative obstacles inherent to the beneficiary administration, and 2) political obstacles relating to political support to the project and political stability in and outside the country.

6.4.1. Domestic administrative obstacles beyond the control of Twinning projects

Domestic and administrative obstacles to organizational learning are directly related to the ways and means by which an administration and its employees manage to internalize lessons learned into day-to-day routines. From the literature and the interviews, two particular aspects can be identified. One issue that was mentioned repeatedly in Moldova and Lebanon as an obstacle to sustaining the results of Twinning is a high level of staff turnover. The other issue that was repeatedly mentioned was the low level of motivation of administrators to participate in Twinning and endorse its outputs due to a lack of incentives to do so.

6.4.1.1. The effect of staff turnover on learning in Twinning beneficiary organizations

Various authors in the realm of organizational studies have stressed the important role individuals play in organizational learning and the detrimental effects human resources turnover can have on lessons learned. Lessons learned in organizations are always transported from those who experienced them to those who did not. It is thus not just written rules but oral transmissions and informal practices that transport lessons learned (Levitt & March 1988, p.328). Twinning projects may be referred to as what Levinthal and March called “exploratory experiments” (1993, p.106). In exploratory experiments, effects and results relating to the wider administration are not visible at the start and demand time to take effect. Levinthal and March argue that particularly when the turnover rate of decision makers involved in exploratory experiments is high, they are unlikely to have an effect in the long run. It is not only reforms and lessons learned created through Twinning that are at stake in the case of high staff turnover but the wider realm of organizational knowledge in which Twinning projects are embedded within the beneficiary. The higher the rate of staff turnover in a public administration, the more arbitrary and fluctuating the whole body of organizational knowledge is (Kay & Cecez-Kecmanovic 2003, p.8). Thus, the more difficult it is to link lessons learned in Twinning to the overall body of organization knowledge in a meaningful and sustainable way. An RTA-counterpart in Moldova stressed the role of organizational knowledge, by referring to it as “administrative memory” and the detrimental effects of high staff turnover on the Twinning he/she was involved in and the wider administration:

It is important to have people continuity, administrative memory. (...) People leave, it often happens here because of the salaries of public servants. When someone makes a demand for a project or some activity, there must be continuity. (...) Lack of administrative memory is the biggest problem. Today I am formulating the demands, tomorrow it could be someone else. (Beneficiary#11)

Similarly to the above response, staff turnover was mentioned by various Moldovan respondents as one of the main obstacles to Twinning projects. On the other hand, respondents from Lebanon referred to staff turnovers less, and framed it less as an essential problem to their project. Only one respondent stated staff movements to be problematic:

[In the beneficiary] they have the problem of turnover and people leaving. They have better opportunities elsewhere so they will just simply leave because here in Lebanon the public sector, the salaries are not ‘wow’. (Beneficiary#33)

Despite this, the respondent did not regard staff flows as an essential constraint, more as a given problem that could be dealt with during the project. Another project ran under the precondition that:

(...) some people would be recruited but that never happened.
(Member_State#39)

Although staff were not recruited during the project, they were recruited about two years after its conclusion. In the meantime, the RTA managed to stay in contact with the beneficiary. This project also found it difficult to change the contract under the new situation of less staff to fulfill planned activities. Yet, creatively, the project managed to pass on at least some of the lessons learned and simply discarded some mandatory results that were not feasible.⁵⁴

Staffs moving in and out of jobs and a lack of required staff were less of a problem in Lebanon and could be compensated for in creative ways. They represented a considerable constraint on practically all Twinning observed. Some RTAs questioned outright the sustainability of their Twinning project if staff movements would persist:

We assumed that the sustainability of the project would not be satisfied with so many people leaving and new ones coming. So you invest expertise and suddenly they are not there anymore. (Member_State#3)

⁵⁴ “Yes, mandatory results. Those could not be changed, although there were some that were not actually feasible.” (Member_State#39)

The implications of staff movements on Moldovan beneficiaries are reflected in a number of previous observations made. The lack of experience and seniority of RTA-counterparts in comparison to Lebanon is particularly striking. It seems to be precisely due to the constant coming and going within public administrations that Twinning projects are unable to get a senior official to take on an RTA-counterpart role. As an RTA-counterpart, if one counts the time between fiche preparation and project conclusion, one must take on board responsibilities toward the projects for around three years.⁵⁵ In the case of high staff fluctuation, particularly among mid-level and senior staff, it seems difficult to commit for such a period. Junior staff are delegated to fill the role of an RTA-counterpart, although they cannot operate on an equal footing with the RTA.

Staff movements are in some cases not entirely voluntary and come about as a result of institutional instability and ongoing reform in a beneficiary. This happened in one Twinning project, where the RTA argued:

[Staff movement] has been a problem. There were lots of changes. When the institutional structure was being radically changed, it became clear that some staff were not going to transfer to the new institution, which was not ideal. So, during the transition phase we worked in certain activities that we knew would be continued. (Member_State#10).

According to various interviewees, restructuring was a constant in many beneficiaries and often hit the Twinning project unprepared. According to two consultants interviewed, the public sector in Moldova is at the same time oversized and inflexible, as a very rigid labor law makes the specific hiring and firing of administrators quite difficult (Twinning#21). Due to ongoing public administration reforms, due to shifting government interests and international pressure, people are moved around from one position to the other. Experienced administrators tend to move out of the public sector toward private jobs or taking on contracts with international

⁵⁵ Considering a project duration of two years and an application period of one year (often considerably longer). The RTA-counterpart has to already be defined in the fiche.

organizations although formally those should not compete with public administration over employees.

What we can see is that staff movements are an issue in both Lebanon and Moldova, but is a much more severe problem in Moldova. The reasons and nature of staff movements are highly specific to the domestic environment. This stands in contrast to the one-size-fits-all solution that Twinning represents. Closely related to the issue of staff movements is the one of staff motivation.

6.4.1.2. The role of diverging levels of staff motivation in Twinning beneficiaries on learning

Public service motivation is regarded as an essential prerequisite for sustained public administration and for changes and reforms to be enacted and implemented (compare: Frederickson 1997; Vandenabeele 2007; Le Grand 2003). In previous chapters, the motivation of participants at the Twinning-core was discussed closely in relation to their level of deliberation and cooperation. Motivation beyond the Twinning project is not the same as it relates to the way administrators are willing to take on lessons learned during Twinning and change their own routines not in relation to an organizational counterpart but in terms of their own relation to their occupation and their role as civil servants. The role of public service motivation on administrative performance and reform has been at the core of numerous studies. Le Grand for example distinguished between knights and knaves (2003). Both represent certain sets of motivation to perform. Knights stand for a certain level of intrinsic motivation, which compares to the relationship between most RTAs and RTA-counterparts where no extra pay was needed on the counterpart's side despite extra work demanded. Knaves, on the other hand, represent service officials' extrinsic motivation, often in the form of material incentives to perform. LeGrand stresses the role of external incentives for public service delivery, whereas

Kim and Vandenabeele argue that a certain level of self-sacrifice and altruism is necessary for effective public service performance, strongly differentiating the role of the public from private sectors (Kim & Vandenabeele 2010).

The interview responses point to the conclusion that civil service motivation is important when it comes to the sustainability of Twinning outputs in the beneficiary. Different patterns of motivation can be observed between Moldovan and Lebanese beneficiaries. The case of Moldova demonstrates that as much as one may believe in the importance of altruism in public service delivery, a certain amount of payment is indispensable. Considering the incredibly low level of salaries in the beneficiary administration, one RTA stated:

I think salary is the only issue. Their salary is 100/150 Euro. (...) They are thinking OK, we have this kind of responsibility and we need to be paid better. The other thing is they are young, they are enthusiastic, and they work because they like this field. (Member_State#3)

As the RTA argues, there is a given potential for altruistic motivation as the employees “like” their field of work and agreed to work for a low salary. Yet the salary is so low and the administration provides no prospect of a higher salary that motivation remains problematic. Various other respondents from the RTA and the beneficiary side stated how problematic the low level of pay was for their Twinning project. An RTA-counterpart argued two years after the Twinning project came to an end:

It is not an easy task to implement a Twinning projects in a country as Moldova. People have miserable salaries. When you give resources to somebody in Moldova, you give them double responsibility and sometimes that is difficult. (Beneficiary#9)

Another RTA argued:

I think the civil servants are paid poorly to put it straightforward. It is the same for each civil servant. They are here to do a job, they have applied for a job so they are supposed to deliver over 8 hours. Sometimes it is questionable whether they actually deliver during those 8 hours or just spend those 8 hours at work. That is the difference. (Member_State#7).

The low level of salaries is regarded as a considerable obstacle to the impact and sustainability of Twinning projects in Moldova. The low level of motivation due to low salaries is directly related to the high amount of staff turnover in most Moldovan beneficiaries as low salaries incentivize better skilled personal to leave the administration and make it difficult to find adequate substitutes on the labor market. This leads to a continuous drain of administrative memory. The rigid framework of Twinning is not equipped to handle this situation. The approach that mandatory results can be implemented and learned in a mechanical manner depends on predictable levels of staff and administrative continuity on which Twinning-based reforms can build. In Moldova this is not the case and it is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

The situation in Lebanon is different. Civil service pay was hardly mentioned as a problem. Although at the time of interview, several civil service union protests were demanding better salaries, respondents described their salaries as not as high as the private sector, yet compensated by a more competitive package of social services and job securities (Holmes & Liffey 2014). The levels of public service training and seniority in Twinning projects was considerably higher in Lebanon than in Moldova. Various respondents said they were specifically trained in France for their position. One beneficiary representative described the level of pay in the administration as follows:

People here get paid like in the private sector and they have an interest to do a good job. They are not cashiers in a super market. If you have an MBA you can be happy here. (Beneficiary#35)

An aspect stressed more by respondents in Lebanon was that beneficiary administrators who were not part of the core project often regarded their participation in the project and the activities they were involved in as an extra burden to their daily tasks.

You often get the feeling that some people might see the project as an additional burden which is impinging on their time and their normal rather than something that would make their work better, there is a mindset there. (Member_State#27).

An RTA-counterpart reported that some participants did not take the project as seriously as they should have but most participants were committed:

They are really committed. You cannot oblige all of them but most of them are committed. (Beneficiary#26).

These responses show that the commitment for the projects in Lebanon was mixed and quite a large number of participants shared the view that Twinning was a burden on their work. It may certainly be the case for Lebanon that Twinning projects are not regarded as very important, particularly for participants who are based more around the periphery of the project. As Lebanon has no aspirations for EU integration, an EU-funded project may not have the same standing as it would in Moldova—of course highly depending on the actual content and relevance of the project domestically.

What we can see is that motivation is an issue in Moldova and can be an issue in Lebanon but manifests itself differently based on different pay regimes, political aspirations and administrative structures. In Moldova the sustainability of Twinning can be arbitrary as staff movements are a given and the motivational gap through low salaries cannot be compensated by other motivational measures. In Lebanon, motivation can be better controlled yet depends on the relevance the project has to the daily work of participants, who are often well trained already. Both countries demand different forms of flexibility. In Moldova, Twinning could profit from being more flexible in timing and funding to bridge the gap in the problems of staff fluctuation and low staff payments. Lebanon demands more flexibility in terms of project content as professional staff in Lebanon demand that the project is directly relevant to their daily work.

This section scoped out the limits domestic administrative issues pose to Twinning projects. The following section looks at the other side of the state apparatus and explores how the political situation, in particular political support and the level of political stability, affect the impact and sustainability of Twinning.

6.4.2. The influence of domestic and foreign politics on learning in Twinning projects

Political support and political instability were continuously mentioned in the interviews as key factors toward the impact of Twinning projects. In the previous sections and chapters, Twinning was mainly observed from an administrative and cooperative angle. Despite that, the wider political framework surrounding Twinning projects cannot be ignored in terms of the impact a project can have as well as the conditions project participants have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. A lack of political support may keep a vital law or regulation developed from passing through the executive. Political instability and sudden political changes may make previously developed goals irrelevant and may threaten the feasibility of a project. Both Moldova and Lebanon went through considerable political turmoil prior to and during the Twinning projects covered here. It is important to broadly outline political developments in the recent history of these countries to contextualize the interview responses.

6.4.2.1. Political developments in Moldova

Ever since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 Moldova has struggled between its Moldovan and Russian heritage. At the time of fieldwork in June 2013 around 240,000 Moldovans still used their former Soviet passports, many of whom did not yet speak the official language Romanian⁵⁶ (Moldova.org 2013). More than 225,000 Moldovans already held Romanian passports at the time, with hundreds of thousands of applications pending (Mogos &

⁵⁶ See footnote 44.

Calugareanu 2012). Several respondents held Romanian passports at the time of interview. These cleavages have found their manifestation in the political representation within Moldova and have led to an ongoing crisis over the political path Moldova should take: closer to the EU or closer to Russia. Since 2009, neither the pro-Russian Communist party nor the loose coalition of pro-European parties in the Moldovan parliament managed to gain a stable majority. Several internal political crises further hardened those cleavages. The parliamentary elections of 2009, of which the Communist party had initially been declared the winner, had to be repeated after accusations of voter fraud and following large-scale protests and riots in front of the Moldovan parliament (BBC 2009). Re-elections strengthened the pro-European coalition, which installed Vlad Filat, one of Moldova's most influential and controversial businessmen, as prime minister. The coalition fell apart early 2013 over a no confidence vote against the government and the allegation of fraud and corruption against several of its members (Aljazeera 2013). In July that year, after three months of political deadlock, Iurie Leancă, the former foreign minister, replaced Filat as prime minister. New elections only a year later in December 2014 saw again the pro-European coalition grabbing a slight majority.

After Moldova's independence, Russia played a considerable role in the political developments of Moldova. To the Ukrainian boarder in the East, Transnistria declared independence from Moldova after a brief war in 1992. Informally supported by Russian military and economic aid, Transnistria formally belongs to Moldova without the Moldovan government having any influence over its territory. It remains a frozen conflict to date. The unresolved border issue between Transnistria, Moldova, and Ukraine in connection to the ongoing internal political crisis and the widespread phenomenon of corruption has made Moldova a major hub of organized crime in terms of tobacco or alcohol smuggling as well as human trafficking and the illegal arms trade (European Parliament 2012).

Politically as well as economically, Moldova stands between the EU and Russia. Being a mainly agriculture-exporting country, both blocks have a nearly equal market share in Moldovan exports and imports and are equally important for its economy. Both have different interests in terms of the direction the country is supposed to be developing. Russia in particular has not been shy in using painful sanctions against Moldova. To make its dissatisfaction with Moldova's pro-EU aspirations felt, Russia implemented a ban on Moldova's most important agricultural good wine in 2013, officially due to health concerns. Further painful measures include the sending back of thousands of Moldovan immigrant labor from Russia, whose remittances are a major economic factor (Dunlop 2013).

With increasing economic sanctions from Russia on Moldova, the EU failing to offer clearer integration perspectives, and Moldovan pro-EU politicians perceived as failing to push the country forward, involved in fraud and corruption, the support for EU integration is diminishing and was as low as 32 percent in early 2015 (Higgins 2015). Moldova, previously hailed as the success story of pro-EU reforms, is slowly retreating from its path to the EU.

6.4.2.2. Political developments in Lebanon

As in Moldova, Lebanon's domestic politics are highly influenced by its neighbors. But this is where the similarities end. Ever since its independence from France in 1943, Lebanon has been an instable country, both constrained by a complex and vulnerable political compromise between Maronites, Sunnis, Shiites, and Greek Orthodox, and the instability and aggression from and toward its neighboring countries Syria and Israel. In 1948, Lebanon supported neighboring Arab states in a war against Israel. The war led to the displacement of around 700,000 Palestinians, the majority of whom found refuge in Lebanon (Margolick 2008). The presence of a critical mass of Palestinian refugees and the creation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 further increased political tensions in Lebanon, leading to an

outright civil war in 1975, lasting until 1990. The war is estimated to have caused more than 150,000 deaths and led to the Syrian occupation of Lebanon from 1976 onwards. The occupation has repercussions into today's politics with former militia groups turned into political parties whose ideological and religious cleavages still dominate and stall Lebanese politics (Wood 2012).

By the early 2000s, the Syrian occupation of Lebanon was increasingly scrutinized. Tensions reached their peak with the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in early 2005. This led to a series of further assassinations and the withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon two months after Hariri's death.

Whereas most Lebanese militias were disarmed after the civil war, Hezbollah, which had surged its influence in the Lebanese civil war from a weakened PLO, remained armed. In mid-2006 it intensified its attacks into Israel from southern Lebanon through air strikes over the border, killing several Israeli soldiers (Tristram 2007). This triggered the 2006 war, with Israel launching various air strikes on Lebanon, destroying a considerable amount of infrastructure, including in Beirut, and among others having a decisive impact on the first Twinning project in Lebanon. The war killed around 1,000 civilians and weakened the Lebanese economy and politics, yet strengthened Hezbollah as a destructive political and paramilitary force. Between 2007 and 2011 clashes between Hezbollah and other political forces destabilized the political landscape, several ones of which were fought out between militias in the streets of Beirut.

The Syrian civil war, which begun in 2012, presented another enormous political and civilian challenge to Lebanon. By the beginning of 2015 an estimated 1.3 million refugees had fled into Lebanon, nearly 30 percent of Lebanon's own population. Hezbollah has been in wide support of Syria's government forces, whereas various other Lebanese militias supported the Syrian opposition, a result of Syria's long-term occupation of Lebanon (Ghattas 2014). The

Syrian war keeps its hold on the political situation of Lebanon. Between April 2013 and February 2014, the parties in parliament were unable to overcome their strict divides and form a government. Even after a government was formed, a president could not be decided. In the meantime, fears are growing that the Islamic State, rapidly gaining power in Syria, could expand its influence into Lebanon.

Although the political challenges Lebanon has faced over the past fifty years seem considerably more daunting than Moldova's, it retains a higher level of public administrative functionality and remains more receptive to Twinning projects. The most convincing explanation is that despite turmoil and various wars, Lebanon was able to uphold its administrative structure and tradition introduced by France in the mid-nineteenth century. As a beneficiary representative put it:

You know, since 1850 or so, the French were here so almost all Lebanese people talk French. (...) Our law, all our laws technically are from French laws.
(Beneficiary#25)

6.4.2.3. The influence of political support on Twinning projects

In countries like Moldova and Lebanon where governing majorities are often weak and interests change swiftly, political support for Twinning can be an elusive good which may be there at fiche preparation but may have vanished at implementation. Support does not only incorporate personal support by high-level ministers and ministerial staff but also the conduciveness of the wider political situation. It includes whether the executive is functioning and operative and whether important legal changes that are a vital ground for the sustainability of Twinning projects can pass or not. As outlined in the previous section, political instability and sudden political change and crisis have been the rule rather than the exception in Lebanon and Moldova in the recent past. In both countries this has led to sudden interest changes among high-level administrators and ministry-level politicians, often leaving Twinning projects exposed.

An EU delegation official put his/her experience with the Lebanese government and its support of Twinning projects as follows:

We were a bit blocked because you know it is ‘interne de Liban’. When you have huge political problems, what do you want to do? (...) When you don’t have a government you can imagine that sometimes getting all the laws adapted is very difficult. Then we have to adapt. (EUD#34)

Although he/she left open specifically how the EU delegation adapts and as demonstrated, the delegation often fails to do so, she recognizes the demand for adaptation in the ongoing state crisis where a stable government is not in reach and political support may quickly change. Thus, Twinning projects have to adapt. A good example that has previously been mentioned is the problems faced by a project in the Ministry of Economy in Lebanon that was unable to formalize any of its outputs as the relevant executive body was not in operation for an indefinite period of time. Furthermore, the executive often functions on different levels, making the passing of a degree relatively long in duration, going beyond the implementation framework of a Twinning project. As a beneficiary representative explained:

If our minister is interested he can propose it to the council of ministers and get something done. But it is not straightforward and it is not easy to do. It has to pass through many steps. But nothing is impossible in the end. (Beneficiary#33)

Projects in Moldova face similar issues:

Our government is one month and a half in existence. It was changed and now there is another government. The political situation in Moldova is also a risk. Probably that is why there are not so many of these kinds of projects. (Beneficiary#11)

Although creating a government majority is not as difficult in Moldova as in Lebanon, as basically two blocks of parties exist, yet due to various votes of mistrust and cases of alleged corruption, governments often fail in Moldova. What is promised and supported one day may be refuted the next. Even more so than in Lebanon, this has seemingly led to a sense of political apathy among respondents in Moldova. After one interview, a respondent explained that no one

in his/her unit at that point was sure whether they would get paid in the coming months due to political gridlock. In this sense, most interviewees did not seem to have much hope that the political situation would stabilize and become more predictable in the near future.

Beyond the government's inability to support Twinning, a number of respondents from Moldova and Lebanon argued that policy makers simply have no interest in supporting the beneficiary administration and the project. An RTA in Lebanon argued:

The problem was more to do with the government in Lebanon. (...) Each person is interested in keeping their own faction happy at the expense of Lebanon as a whole. That is something which did not affect us within the office but affected the way the statistics office was able to operate or not. (Member_State#39)

Twinning projects tend to be a low priority for decisions makers as they provide no budget support and have no immediate effect on the ministry itself. This can make it difficult or simply irrelevant for a minister or ministerial level politician to support a project among his or her fraction and the wider political elites. Yet Twinning is often dependent on political support and on the assurance that degrees created as outcomes pass through the executive level.

In Moldova, several administrators argued similarly, such as:

[The problem] of the training is mainly the low involvement of decision makers. We have many issues with this. We have many complaints from the Europe delegation, the team leaders or the main beneficiary, that the main stakeholders are not involved in the steering committees, they are not coming there and so on. (Twinning#19)

Interestingly, yet not entirely surprising, a vice minister involved in a Twinning argued to the contrary:

We pushed a lot. We had pretty much support in the government on this reform. The resistance is still on the working level. People are reluctant to change and it is difficult. But on the higher level it is overall approved. (Beneficiary#14)

The statements above embody the political blame game that is not only played in Moldova. It is highly disruptive to the functioning of public administration and Twinning projects as it portrays a high amount of distrust between administrative and political levels.

A third problem related to political support is the lack of often-needed horizontal cooperation between ministries and ministerial agencies involved in Twinning. In many cases, support or direct cooperation from units that are not directly part of the beneficiary is needed in a Twinning project. A project in the statistical agency of Moldova had such a problem with the Ministry of Finance. To create a business registry, one of the main mandatory results, it needed access to data from the Ministry. A member state representative described the situation as follows:

For a long time they did not respond and eventually after a year or more they said no you cannot have this information. (Member_State#39)

This is a problem that independent government agencies are likely to face as they are, although public, less dependent on political orders than ministries. In this case, a ministry that held back vital information had a direct impact on the project as a mandatory result could not be implemented the way it was planned.

6.4.2.4. The influence of political stability and foreign actors on learning in Twinning projects

Beyond domestic political instability due to governmental changes and political neglect, Twinning projects can also be deeply affected by regional crises and hegemonic actors, factors that rival the EU's influence in the country. Whereas Lebanon has been stuck in turmoil for most of its recent history, Moldova has had to deal with the influence of Russia and its own indecision whether to move closer to the Russian or European economic and political space.

When asked about the influence on their Twinning project, a Lebanese beneficiary representative simply stated:

Since we were born, you know, the political situation has been unstable. We are used to this (Beneficiary#36)

His/her colleague similarly argued:

During the past twenty years, we have been up and down through a lot of problems, particularly security issues. So sometimes we need to stop because we don't have the resources and we are not able to move freely. (Beneficiary#26)

Instability and a lack of future planning capacity has been the rule rather than the exception in Lebanon, which all beneficiaries interviewed seemed to accept, as they were born and had lived through long periods of civil war and armed conflict. Core norms and standards of the French administrative system may have stuck and become fully institutionalized, yet present political reforms may at any time become corrupted through the repeated outbreak of violent conflict or terrorism.

Whereas Lebanese participants accepted living with insecurity and conflict, most EU member-state representatives do not follow this mindset. For any Western European country, armed conflict on one's own territory is a matter of the past and goes back several generations. In Eastern European member states, it is only Croatia and Slovenia that have experienced violent conflicts within the past forty years. This lack of immediate memory of violence can make RTAs extremely cautious to take on a position in Lebanon. Once a conflict breaks out, as non-threatening as it may seem from the domestic perspective, an RTA and other member-state experts may demand to leave the country. This was the situation in the first Twinning in Lebanon which was ended prematurely because the member-state side refused to continue due to the outbreak of the war with Israel. A beneficiary representative did not believe the reasoning of the member state was sincere, as he/she regarded the conflict that led to the destruction of

key infrastructure and more than thousand deaths as not necessarily affecting the Twinning project. He/she argued:

The security reason was a god given excuse [for the RTA to leave]. (...) With the security issue, we have experience in Lebanon. Once the emotional mindset sets in, you cannot argue with logic. (...) During that two months war, or one month and a half, I came every day to work. Most of my team came. (Beneficiary#35).

Whereas in Lebanon armed conflict can have a key impact on the implementation of Twinning, in Moldova it's the role of Russia as a regional hegemon. The pressure of Russia on Moldova particularly in the realm of Twinning is less of a military nature, although it is said that Russia also supports the breakaway region of Transnistria militarily. It is rather of a political and economic nature. Politically, Russia is closely tied to the Communist party of Moldova that represents by far the biggest single party, and is opposed to closer relations with the EU. An beneficiary representative described the influence of Russia as follows:

It is pressure from Russia all the time. We had a very tricky history. Until we are not in any other community, not part of the EU, we will see what the Eurasian community will do. The pressure will be really strong. (Beneficiary#9).

As the interviewee mentioned, Russia had created a Eurasian Union that offered cheaper energy deals and closer Russian market ties to former Soviet states such as Moldova. As Russia is one of the main importers of Moldovan products, Moldova has been flipping between the Eurasian and the European Union in the recent past. This is an economically viable decision for Moldova as both areas follow different trade and product standards. Following one standard may lead to the suspension of trade of a product in another market. As a beneficiary project leader stated:

We have the Russian Federation who are the biggest importer of our products. Economically we are very sensible to their position. When we have accreditation, we also have Russian Federation accreditation because we need to export products into Russia. (Beneficiary#14)

Which standards to follow is thus a sensible issue and Moldovan administrations can be cautious in following and implementing EU standards outright as this may lead to sanctions

from the side of Russia. The ban on the import of Moldovan wine into Russia, officially due to non-compliance with Russian product and health standards, is a telling example.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter argued that the often very complex and specific intersubjective meaning created with a project through deliberation and cooperation can be translated into wider generic meaning that is shared within public administration, although it does not have to. As the planned activities and mandatory results to be implemented through Twinning are often already outdated at the beginning of the project, adaptation during implementation is crucial and is often very much focused on the project core. Once the project comes to an end, lessons learned within the project may serve as viable resources for the wider beneficiary and essentially through repetition and communication may become more deeply institutionalized, although they don't necessarily have to. This dissertation follows the approach that organizational learning and adaptation is individual to each project. Whether lessons learned are sustained or not is entirely dependent on the domestic context. Consequently, it is important to point to the obstacles given in certain organizational environments that may impede organizational learning. Organizational learning in this context is defined as the translation of intersubjective meaning, established through Twinning, into generic meaning, shared among the wider domestic beneficiary organization. Such a translation process from understandings specific to a Twinning project toward the wider beneficiary and organizational environment demands a continuous communication process. This process may be hampered by the interaction of several of the constraints outlined. This chapter did not attempt to provide a set of specific scope conditions under which organizational learning would take place. As the set of constraints faced was different in each project and had different effects, any scope conditions would fall short. Yet if

we accept the premise that essentially all organizations learn and try to find ways to adapt to what they perceive as their environment, such scope conditions may not be necessary.

This chapter roughly differentiated between the internal and external constraints of Twinning, although they overlap to a considerable extent. Internal constraints were identified to be the inability of Twinning participants to exert control over the project and coping with the inflexibility of Twinning. Both of these stem from an often rigorous and thick formal framework surrounding Twinning, as analyzed in the third chapter. The inability to contract private consultants is an example where a rule, which from the outside was created to enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of Twinning, may be regarded from the inside as creating the opposite. For many tasks interviewees stated that private consultants are needed yet not allowed to be contracted. This is connected to the often stringent financial framework of Twinning projects that does not allow participants to shift funds around as needed. Furthermore, the aims and assumptions on which Twinning fiches are built often reflect little of the existing domestic capacity and project participants are given little leeway to react to this. As demonstrated, most project participants interviewed called for more flexibility of Twinning to answer to the demands of the beneficiary. Many projects creatively managed to overcome certain obstacles internally through, for example, relabeling the position of external experts, or reinterpreting mandatory results without actually having to change their wording. Still, many of these solutions could only answer to small parts of the projects.

Beyond internal constraints, this chapter pointed to the importance of external constraints that are beyond the immediate frame of project implementation. Those include constraints within the beneficiary administrations and those based on the political situation in and outside the beneficiary country. Within the administration, high levels of staff turnover and low levels of staff motivation were frequently mentioned by interviewees. Both aspects seemed to be more problematic in Moldova compared to Lebanon, pointing to a higher level of

administrative capacity in the latter. Both countries have been subject to political turmoil in their recent history that has directly and indirectly affected nearly all Twinning projects and their sustainability. Due to constant government changes, political support has been shaky for many Twinning projects in both countries and could often change very rapidly. Regional conflicts, as the war with Israel in the case of Lebanon and regional hegemonic powers, as Russia in the case of Moldova, were shown to play a distracting role, adding a further level of insecurity to Twinning projects in both countries.

7. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND THEIR PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS ON THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF TWINNING

7.1. Introduction to the conclusion

The purpose of the concluding chapter is threefold: 1) to round up and summarize the findings of the dissertation, both theoretically and empirically, 2) to discuss the practical implications those findings have for Twinning projects, and 3) to outline the extent to which the findings are relevant for other development projects in the EU neighborhood and beyond, and the questions this opens up for further research.

One of the main messages of this dissertation is that Twinning projects can and should be understood as autonomous organizational systems in their own right. This stands in contrast to the formal and generally intuitive perception of Twinning and development projects in general. The name Twinning implies that two or more entities (in this case beneficiary and member state[s]) come together for a given period of time and directly communicate and cooperate to reach certain goals. Concepts such as best practices and mandatory results suggest the direct transferability of lessons and experiences from one entity to another through the functional bridge of a Twinning project.

The dissertation argues that during Twinning the beneficiary and the member-state organization remain operationally closed, yet communicatively open. Every project develops its own logic through day-to-day internal cooperation and deliberation. Any plan made prior to this interaction may remain alien as it may not correspond to internal sense-making processes of the participants. The value of Twinning does therefore not lie in the transfer of given practices but in the ability of core project participants to regard the practices of the beneficiary from a distance, through the operationally closed system of Twinning. During a project, participants develop their own activities, routines and practices that relate primarily to the project and are

thus closed off to the outside beneficiary. It is through this specific lens that project participants observe the outside and communicate with it, through trying to share what has been produced within the project and why this may be valuable for the wider beneficiary. This stands in contrast to a straightforward project planning process where the project's aim and its impact are clear from the beginning. Yet it enables participants to creatively interact and develop original and grounded solutions, precisely due to the operational closure of the Twinning project.

This creativity resembles the principle of the “hiding hand” famously observed by Hirschman (1967, pp.13–15), where rational project planning has the effect that problems during implementation come as a surprise and must be tackled creatively in a project as they occur. Once we accept Twinning projects as operationally closed the question becomes how can we design their formal framework and their operational approach in a way that it may positively impact the beneficiary system? How can formal obstacles be overcome?

7.2. Main findings and outlook

The main findings of the dissertation are summarized in the following table:

| Key Finding | Sub-Findings |
|---|--|
| Twinning can have an impact on domestic administrative practices but is restricted by its own formal limitations and domestic constraints. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory results are often chosen too rigidly. • Procedures to change mandatory results are bureaucratically demanding and drain viable resources from projects. |
| Twinning can be understood as an organization with autopoietic characteristics. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twinning projects are operatively closed and function largely independent of the beneficiary. • Twinning projects are communicatively open, observing and directly deliberating with their environment. |
| Twinning projects in the ENP evolved from several institutional transfers with little adaptation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twinning in EU enlargement was directly inspired by the process of German reunification. • Twinning in the ENP was copied nearly step-by-step from the enlargement process. |
| Twinning projects are often used to signal legitimacy rather than to actually change practices. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twinning projects can take the form of the garbage can model: solutions-seeking problems. • Twinning participants tend to contest the formal narrative of the project and develop their own. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twinning projects in Lebanon with less demand for legitimization were seemingly more influential than in Moldova. |
| Deliberation and cooperation can be regarded as the two main processes that constitute Twinning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-project deliberation helps contesting the formal framework of the project and making sense of the beneficiary, the Twinning project and the participants' roles. • Cooperation is contestation and deliberation put into practice. • The results of cooperation can substantially differ from formal goals agree pre-implementation. |
| The impact of Twinning can be conceptualized as organizational learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is an ongoing process of scrutinizing existing structures and practices through deliberation and cooperation. • It is not only the beneficiary that learns but also the member-state participants. • There are both internal as well as external project obstacles that impede the learning process and may reduce or fully diminish the impact of a Twinning project. |

Figure 4: Summary of main findings of the dissertation

Following the process of several projects from their conception to their end, the dissertation argues that Twinning can make an impact on domestic administrative practices but is restricted by its own formal limitations and external constraints to change. Taking an explicitly process-based perspective in contrast to one focusing on outputs and outcomes, the dissertation looked at various projects in the Republic of Moldova (hereafter Moldova) and Lebanon as they unfolded, as they were implemented and as they came to an end. Each phase played its specific role in enabling as well as restricting the impact of Twinning on the beneficiary administration. Therefore, the dissertation is structured in a way that it accounts for each phase separately. Furthermore, although the basic level of analysis is one of the project level, each phase demands different linkages to other levels of analysis for the sake of contextualization. Thus the start of Twinning projects, based on the formal Twinning framework, demands a further look at the diffusion of Twinning from German reunification over EU enlargement and the EU's wider approach to its neighborhood. The following chapter on the level of implementation, on the other hand, suggests a closer look at the micro-level of peer-to-peer interaction. The section on the conclusion of a Twinning project and its impact connects the project to its wider political and administrative context. By keeping the level of the project as the prime focus yet linking it to a different one in each empirical chapter, this dissertation has established the imminent importance of the context in which Twinning projects function. It is at the core of the argument of the dissertation that no output produced by

Twinning and no outcome we may perceive can be understood solely as mechanically planned and implemented. Anything a Twinning project does and produces is influenced by its internal functioning as well as by the way it communicates and interacts with its environment.

The “environment” as discussed in this dissertation is an ambiguous concept as it diverts from the perception generally taken in political sciences. Whether the assumption is that an actor is rational or bounded rational, the environment is often seen to have an almost instrumental impact on an actor’s behavior. Thus the environment either helps establish what is in an actor’s interest, or dictates norms of appropriate behavior. This dissertation conceptualizes Twinning as an organization with autopoietic characteristics. First of all this means that we can regard a Twinning project as an organizational entity in itself. This is not because it necessarily resembles the features of many other organizations, such as their permanence, but is engaged in the same process, that of organizing. Organizing in this dissertation is conceptualized as sense-making. Twinning projects try to make sense of their environment, the signals they receive from the different actors affiliated to it and the demands and interests they represent. Compared to other approaches, the dissertation does not treat the environment as a coherent space. Actors involved in a project may never fully make sense of its environment. It can never fully comprehend the demands of the EU nor the ones of the wider beneficiary organization. Thus, Twinning projects are operationally closed.

The sense-making process—the essence of organizing—takes place entirely within the project, particularly between the RTA and the RTA-counterpart. Although Twinning is operationally closed in its sense-making process, it is communicatively open. The idea that project participants can never fully comprehend the demands of their environment because they make sense of it within the project does not mean they cannot interact with it. Twinning projects utterly depend on their environment as they draw human and financial resources from it and only exists due to the interaction of actors that form its environment in the first place: namely

the EU, the beneficiary, and the EU member-state organization. Yet it is precisely the complexity of its environment, the often opposed nature of the demands it signals that push Twinning to internalize its sense-making processes. According to Luhman's systems theory this is nothing that is unique to Twinning or any other development project, but rather a law-like principle for all systems from humans to whole state systems to international organizations.

A closer look at the formal framework surrounding Twinning already lays bare a considerable discrepancy between what Twinning is supposed to stand for and what it actually is. The dissertation argues that the large-scale institutional transfer during German reunification was a key inspiration of Twinning. Reunification, particularly at the level of state administration, has been understood as a success story of rational planning and goal-driven reform. The general perception portrays East German administrations at the time of change as receptive open systems that incorporated West German standards and practices swiftly through a considerable scale of institutional, human, and fiscal transfers. In contrast to this, a closer look at the literature on administrative change produced within Germany from a meso rather than a macro perspective revealed the many idiosyncrasies and countless failures that were inherent to a supposed rational process of change (Reulen 2004; Mäding et al. 1993). As a result, most administrations in the different East German states developed their distinct way of operating that incorporated certain practices from other states but often remained distinct. In a similar vein, a lot of the literature on EU enlargement and Twinning during enlargement described how despite often large-scale formal changes, administrations continued to work as before.

Despite the problems faced by Twinning during enlargement and by institutional transfer during German reunification, the Twinning manual as the main formal framework portrays Twinning as a functional approach, based on the clear definition of output measures to create deep-routed change and sustainable outcomes. The reasoning behind this has been well captured in the institutionalist literature concerning the demand for legitimacy, the process of

institutional isomorphism and the prominence of the garbage can model in organizational decision making. Essentially these approaches argue that despite the lack of clear rational underpinnings in organizational and institutional change processes, organizations demand to be regarded as rational, effective, and progressive. The formal appearance of rationality can thus be entirely delinked from organizational practice. Rules become organizational myths rather than clear guidance for behavior. The demand for rationality does not emerge from an internal demand for change but from the need to legitimize an organization's existence, its practices and appearance to the environment or the organizational field as referred to by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). There is a demand for approaches such as Twinning that provide the idea of mechanical reform through the transfer of proven external practices. Yet as the fit of a given formal model to an organization cannot be established in a rationalistic manner, approaches as Twinning take the form of a garbage can model, solutions-seeking problems rather than vice versa.

When the demand from both the side of the beneficiary as well as the provider—the EU and the member state—is primarily based on signaling legitimacy rather than actual problems, incoherencies, and idiosyncrasies in the practices of the beneficiary, the core participants of a Twinning project are put into a conundrum. What they aim to do is to change the behavior of the beneficiary, yet the problems of the beneficiary are unclear and not well defined. It is right at the beginning of the implementation phase, when the RTA arrives in the beneficiary country, that Twinning participants start to contest the formal narrative of the project and develop one of their own. It is here that Twinning becomes operationally closed. The way this process manifests itself depends on the domestic context. In Moldova, the legitimizing function of the project is omnipresent and RTAs often spend a whole project making sense of what the real problem of the administration is. In Lebanon, the push for legitimacy is not as strong due to the lack of a membership perspective. Thus the outputs agreed are often kept vague so that they

can mean many things yet still signal the right message to the EU. Still, in both contexts the actual demand and actual problems of the beneficiary are generally unclear for the people involved in the project, spending considerable time during the implementation phase making sense of them. As the organization of a Twinning project includes people from different national backgrounds coming together and trying to make sense of how they can interact with each other and the environment in a meaningful way, sense-making is conceptualized as the two closely interlinked processes of deliberation and cooperation. The interview data presented demonstrates how RTAs and RTA-counterparts communicate on a daily basis to make sense of the project and what it may achieve. Deliberation takes the form of contestation of the signals received from the outside, the problematic Twinning fiche, the often changing demands of the beneficiary and the generally instable political environment. It furthermore takes the form of understanding and defining one's own role and the role of others within the project. Understandings developed through deliberation are enacted through cooperation. The RTA and the RTA-counterpart take different roles and develop mechanisms that constitute their roles and their relationship to each other. Practices such as constant CCing on email or holding routine meetings both formally and informally are set in a recurring fashion to continuously make sense of the project and provide meaning. Those practices and deliberation processes are essentially internal. It is in those processes not guided by preset external goals that original solutions and new perspectives on the problems of the beneficiary are developed that can potentially have an impact.

Whether a given understanding, problem definition, or solution developed within Twinning actually has an impact on the beneficiary cannot be established simply based on the observation of a project. As the beneficiary is regarded as an operationally closed system, it is impossible to establish the exact impact of a given external measure. Yet the beneficiary communicates with a Twinning project through close communicative channels such as

workshops and meetings. The closer this communication and the more receptive the beneficiary is to the feedback provided by Twinning, the stronger an impact a project can have. The difference to a functional model is that there is no underlying mechanism that can be uncovered but rather that every project resonates with a beneficiary in a specific way. The dissertation follows the view that we can conceptualize this impact as organizational learning or the creation of intersubjective meaning.

Although no clear mechanism for organizational learning can be defined, the empirical data collected in Lebanon and Moldova points to several obstacles within their environment that can impede learning. The dissertation establishes that it is the interaction of participants, the way they make sense of the project and internal and external constraints that determine the impact of Twinning. One particular constraint is the formal framework of Twinning. Existing rules and predefined results require participants to engage in activities that are often detached from their perception of what the project is about. They only engage in them to signal legitimacy to their superiors or the EU. Further into the environment, constraints include the receptiveness of the beneficiary that are particularly determined by the motivation and turnover of staff in the beneficiary. Many projects had to face motivational issues with participants, as Twinning is often regarded as an extra burden, making participants less receptive to communicate actively with the project. Furthermore, staff turnover is a particular problem in Moldova where established communication channels are cut and processes of learning are undermined through key staff changing positions or leaving the organization. Further out in the environment, domestic and regional political issues and conflicts can have a substantial impact on Twinning. Political decisions and shocks can directly influence the resources Twinning have and the receptiveness on either side to deliberate. As seen in a project in Lebanon, communicative ties cannot be established when the member-state side sees its own security and personal integrity in danger.

The picture the dissertation draws of Twinning is one of complex deliberative and cooperative processes within a given project that can have a substantial impact on the beneficiary, but do not necessarily do. We thus have to ask how we can deal with all this apparent complexity, operational closure, and restriction of direct communication. A first step would be to overcome the myth of rational planning and the idea of externally steered functional reform of a given administrative system. Behavioral and practical change always happens internally and is based on the very specific sense-making system and closed operation of the organization. The core question should thus be changed from: how we can change an administration to how we can influence and connect with a given administration so it changes itself. Approaches relating to this question are not yet fashionable in the political sciences. Yet they have found increasing resonance in managerial literature, particularly through new consultancy approaches that depart from the well-beaten path of knowledge transfer to develop new practices based on insights from systems- and process-based organizational theory. Such perspectives, sometimes labeled “critical,” have been accused of “overdoing it,” strongly reducing the possible impact of consultancy (Armbrüster 2006, p.x). It is true that a process-based perspective would question many standard appraisal and evaluation mechanisms, mainly based on project outcome. Nevertheless, the literature hints at alternative mechanisms that will be outlined.

In the following final sections, insights from relevant literature on consultancy are briefly discussed with reference to their implications for Twinning.

7.3. Rethinking Twinning

7.3.1. Insights from the management consultancy literature relevant to Twinning

The analysis undertaken in this dissertation was instrumental in uncovering some of the design paradoxes and inherent problems of Twinning. How can those design paradoxes be addressed? What kind of changes may address the problems faced by Twinning participants? To answer those questions, it is necessary to provide practical comparison to alternative project approaches in order to identify sensible solutions. Various points discussed, such as the limited role of experts or the conception of the project as a separate, operationally closed system, reflect current debates in management consultancy literature. This literature is a sub-field of wider organizational literature, gaining attention in the past thirty years through the rapid growth in influence of management consulting firms on organizational reform in the private as well as public sector.

Management consultancy lends itself as a comparison to Twinning as it exhibits many parallels. Both management consultancy and Twinning portray themselves as tools toward the dissemination of knowledge and best practices. Both depend on the recognition that information offered is superior to the status quo and will enhance the functioning of that organization in one way or another. Management consultancy is an approach that, at least theoretically, can be used in pretty much any policy field or issue area. The goals of both Twinning and consultancy are supposed to be defined by a client or beneficiary. Their duration is limited and their impact often unclear. The main difference between both approaches is that Twinning is expressly and solely based within the public sector and only draws on public administrators. Management consultancy on the other hand comes from the private sector through a consultancy firm and can take place in the private, public, or non-profit sector. Twinning consultants, consisting of EU member-state administrators, provide their advice based on their own practice. Consultants

have to draw from a wider pool of external practice knowledge as they generally have little experience in the organizational field of their client. Despite that, management consultancy literature provides a relevant comparison. Some of the most important questions this dissertation raises as to how the beneficiary deals with external inputs, what kind of organization a Twinning project is, and whether knowledge can be transferred, resonate with some of the approaches and insights developed in management consultancy.

The literature on management consultancy may be divided into functionalist and critical approaches (Armbrüster 2006, pp.1–8). As such, it draws considerably on organizational theory as presented in the theoretical chapter, yet applies it to the specific field of management consultancy. The functionalist view establishes consultancy firms and the projects they engage in as direct transmitters of management knowledge and business techniques. The approach usually follows a rational economic argument based on the principle of transaction costs. Solutions provided externally by a consultancy firm are assumed to be more effective than clients finding solutions internally (compare: Canback 1998, p.8). The approach assumes a given market and a demand for consultancy solutions to which management consultants and their often standardized approaches represent a tradeable supply. A functional approach assumes a machine-like organization controlled on the basis of knowledge (Scott 2003, p.48), reflecting a Weberian bureaucracy style of organization. Organizational knowledge or expertise is assumed to be at the center of organizational control.

New institutionalism challenges the view of consultancy initiatives providing direct technical and functional input to client organizations. It stipulates that consultancies operate based on a belief in the efficiency of their practices and solutions, rather than actual efficiency (Armbrüster 2006, p.7). From a new institutionalist perspective, consultancies are neither able to predict the effect of their advice on the client, nor does the client perfectly understand the advice provided by the consultant. The functionalist and technical role of consultancy is

replaced by its legitimizing function. The legitimizing function of consultancies may be exercised internally and externally with regard to the client (Engwall & Kipping 2002, p.1).

Internally, consultancy advice may help resolve intra-organizational conflicts by providing new norms or processes that are regarded as better and superior to previous ones. Externally, however, the involvement of consultants may provide a sense of progressiveness to competitor organizations, funders, or political superiors. This resonates with the argument that in today's world efficiency is not the overriding factor for organizational change (DiMaggio & Powell 1983, p.147). It is rather the structuring power of organizational fields through the introduction of professional norms, the influence of powerful competitors, and internal uncertainty about best practices. As argued by Meyer and Rowan, external pressure and internal uncertainty encourages the adaptation of institutional norms and standards as myths that provide legitimacy to the organization's practice, despite a lack of clarity in their effect and actual fit (Meyer & Rowan 1977). Monitoring and imitating other, similar organizational entities is thus a coping mechanism to deal with internal and external uncertainties (Ernst & Kieser 1999, p.4).

Given the problem of external and internal complexity and an organization's inability to clearly oversee organizational alternatives and their effects, consultancies are called in to provide appropriate knowledge to reduce complexity. Czarniawska refers to external consultants as "merchants of meaning" whose primary role is to provide the client with predefined scripts for internal and external sense-making (2013, p.12). Kipping and Armbrüster relate the impact of consultancies to their otherness, the notion that they are outsiders to the client (2002, p.203). The notion of consultancies as outsiders implies that solutions that are presented as rational and legitimate rest on a subjective and rudimentary assessment of the organizational status quo. Similarly to Twinning, an external management consultant may be able to oversee the formal structures of the client but can only get a limited grasp of what lies below the surface, namely organizational routines and tacit knowledge immanent to the client

organization (Kipping & Armbrüster 2002, p.207). There is a considerable discrepancy between what consultancies are expected to do and what they are able to deliver. Although a client hires consultants to limit uncertainty and complexity in an organization, consultants are never able to remove uncertainty. They cannot grasp the entire organizational spectrum and may increase complexity by proposing further external solutions (Ernst & Kieser 1999, p.7; Czarniawska 2013, p.17). As the outcomes of most consultancy interventions are unmeasurable, representing one performance factor among many, the impact of most mainstream consulting initiatives has been argued to be rather shallow (Engwall & Kipping 2002, p.4; Ernst & Kieser 1999, p.16).

The critical view questions the extent to which consultancy interventions are measurable, functional, and purposive. It assumes that consultancy advice is presented in a rationalized fashion to appear legitimate, independent of its actual impact (Fincham 1999, p.349). Whereas the functionalist literature emphasizes the outcomes of consulting, the critical literature focuses on the process, particularly the client–consultant relationship and the way solutions come about and are made appropriate (Mohe & Seidl 2011; Mohe 2008; e.g.: Armbrüster 2006; Fincham 1999). The express focus on internal mechanisms of consultancy projects, the client–consultant relationship and the process of consultancy itself are relevant points of comparison for the approach of this dissertation.

The critical perspective on management consultancy has been increasingly applied in practice in recent years. Particularly in the German-speaking world, alternative models have been created and applied, challenging the expert-based approach of many mainstream consultancies. As a result, the literature has been able to draw on comparisons between various forms of consultancy, the insights of which are instrumental for developing an alternative approach to Twinning. Approaches that have found their manifestation mainly in the German-speaking world have been referred to as “systemic consulting” (Königswieser & Hillebrand 2005).

7.3.2. Systems theory in practice: the development of systemic consulting

On the basis of the criticism functional consulting approaches received, the consulting literature as well as several practicing consulting firms in Germany and Austria sought alternative approaches, based on a more complex and realistic picture of consulting processes, aiming for deeper and more sustained impact. A systemic consultancy approach was developed based on systems theory and the critical management consultancy literature.

According to the systemic consultant model, consultants and clients operate on different logics, representing two different systems (Mohe & Seidl 2011, p.3). Drawing on Luhmann's theory of social systems, consultancies as well as the client are understood as operationally closed. Meaning is produced within each organizational system through relating future decisions and operations to previous ones, with any communication from the outside of a given system becoming something else when it is internally processed (Czarniawska 2013, p.13). It is important to recognize the paradigm shift this approach represents to the functional approach. From a functional perspective, consultancy advice can be directly transferred to a client. Communication is straightforward; the problem on which a consultancy project is based is understood, as well as the solution provided. From a critical perspective, such direct communication is impossible. Therefore, the direct transfer of solutions is also impossible. A consultancy project is rather regarded as an irritant to the client system that disturbs existing routines and established truths. Clients can never fully incorporate presented alternatives as they are unable to make sense of them in the way the consultant does. They can only be made aware of the existence of alternative approaches and compare them to their own (Czarniawska 2013, p.15).

The systemic perspective does not regard a consultancy project as directly connected to the consultancy and the client but rather as a separate, operationally closed system. The

consultancy firm is a separate system and the client is a separate system. Consultancy action constitutes a separate system too, called the “contact system”(Mohe & Seidl 2011, pp.10–11). The contact system is conceptualized as an interactive system which couples the closed sense-making structures of the consultancy and the client system, yet functions on the basis of its very own logic (Seidl & Mohe 2007, p.13). The contact system structurally couples the consultancy and the client system (Seidl & Becker 2005, p.29). Practically, the contact system is the entirety of the consulting project, incorporating all forms of communication and cooperation during its implementation and under its heading. The client and consultancy systems are operatively closed, but perturb and stimulate each other through the contact system. Both systems thus take note of and observe each other through the contact system. Through being closed itself but influenced by the client and the consultancy, the contact system is able to make sense of the client, the role of the consultancy and the role of the project in an entirely unique way. That in itself can act as stimulation to the client organization and may help trigger internal reflection processes. Such processes may help in questioning the status quo, established practices, and routines. This may be a starting point to a process of internal reform. It is important to note that any kind of reform and change within the client system cannot be regarded as a direct effect of the contact system but as the client observing and noting the contact system and reflecting on its own practices. Through this, the client is made aware of problems that may have previously been overlooked as they are part of its routines and day-to-day practices rather than its more accessible, but often misleading, formal structure. Neither the consultancy nor the contact system can provide any straightforward solution to the client. It is the client itself that is forced to reflect on own practices through the presence and otherness of the consultancy and the contact system.

The systemic approach to management consulting briefly outlined above resonates with several ideas developed in this dissertation. It supports the observation that a Twinning project

may in fact not be regarded as entirely internal to the beneficiary but represents an organizational structure in itself. Deliberation and cooperation have also been portrayed as internal to the Twinning project, with limited reference to the outside. Furthermore, it resonates with the idea that understandings and solutions developed within Twinning are up to how the beneficiary and the political environment accommodate them and make sense of them in the light of the various constraints presented.

7.4. Sketching an adapted Twinning approach

From the perspective of systemic consulting, the role of the expert is shifted. The consultants, or in Twinning the member-state participants (specifically the RTA), are not experts who steer the project. The RTA becomes an external stimulant within the Twinning project and the beneficiary becomes the expert of itself. The RTA's role is no longer to provide specific advice but to identify perceived incoherencies in the beneficiary, based on own experiences. The Twinning project as a separate contact system acts as an arena for exchange of observations between the beneficiary and the member state (compare: Königswieser & Hillebrand 2005, pp.27–38). The purpose of the RTA becomes to engage the beneficiary in an intensive and recurring reflection process over the course of the Twinning project. The point of a systemic approach of Twinning is that the beneficiary decides on how to change and what that change may constitute (compare: Seidl & Mohe 2007, p.23). The source of change in Twinning would become the irritation the project provides through creating a contact system between an EU member-state administration and the beneficiary. In such an approach, the idea of mandatory results would become obsolete. Yet when mandatory results are not an option anymore, what else provides structure to a project?

For Twinning based on a systemic approach, structure would also be important. When there is nothing in Twinning that seems of relevance to the beneficiary, it has no interest to pay attention or allocate resources to it. Thus a systemic Twinning approach should not be less structured than a functionalist one, but rather represent a “carefully chosen intervention” (Königswieser & Hillebrand 2005, p.19). The focus is not to provide solutions but to make the client systematically aware of its own problems. As argued in previous chapters, problem definition was a considerable issue in most Twinning projects, with a lot of time spent making sense of the situation and defining the needs of the beneficiary.

The existence of the RTA and her team is a strong symbol for the existence of an alternative approach to administrative practice. Even when we accept that the beneficiary will at no point fully grasp the magnitude of the alternative the RTA presents, the presence of the RTA should still encourage reflection and the internal creation of alternative solutions. The role of the RTA is to provide food for thought to encourage the beneficiary to understand her problems better, to pay attention to details that may have been overlooked and to see established practices in a new light. The development of appropriate solutions would only be the next step. This demands not only ongoing deliberative and cooperation processes, as described in the analysis, but it demands those processes to be specifically targeted to further the recognition and understanding of problems at hand.

A systemic approach would change the role of the EU in Twinning and the role of Twinning within the EU’s neighborhood policy. Twinning could provide a unique source of information on the actual magnitude of problems administrations in neighboring countries are facing. It would enable the EU to calibrate its political recommendations and normative demands in a much more targeted and realistic fashion. Budget support, already one of the major EU financial support tools, could be spent in a more targeted and informed manner (European Commission 2010b).

In the following sections, the implications of a systemic approach to Twinning on each of the project participants are outlined in further detail.

7.4.1. Toward mandatory results as flexible hypotheses

In the current system of Twinning, the RTA's role is to help transfer "hands-on public sector expertise" (European Commission 2012a). Yet in a systemic approach, "the advisory system cannot solve the problems of the client system" (Markus et al. 2000, p.20). The first step toward changing the role of an RTA is to change the nature of mandatory results. This can be done without necessarily changing the basic idea that the project should produce outputs during implementation that are tangible and communicable to the outside.

Before implementation, mandatory results are the main hypotheses of a project. Through an analysis of the status quo in the beneficiary and the neighboring country's agreements with the EU, mandatory results represent the expectations of what change is both possible and desirable for the beneficiary and the EU. Having such assumptions and making them explicit is important at the start of the project as they provide important points of reference. They are the basis on which member-state administrations apply because they believe they can contribute to their accomplishment. Furthermore, they provide the neighboring country a yardstick on which to choose a suitable Twinning partner.

Despite their importance at the selection phase, the initial mandatory results are not more than rudimentary and stylized assumptions. As argued in previous chapters, as soon as the project starts and the RTA becomes operational, these assumptions will be questioned and scrutinized. Ongoing deliberation will create new perspectives on mandatory results and challenge taken for granted assumptions. Further discussion and feedback loops within a given project will increase the pressure to change initial hypotheses. At the moment, the hurdles set by the Twinning manual and the administrative costs toward changing mandatory results are

high. In a systemic approach, hypotheses as mandatory results are described as “bridging constructs”: providing a link with what has been to what is and what will be (Königswieser & Hillebrand 2005, p.48). The current approach to mandatory results emphasizes stability. A systemic approach emphasizes the flexibility and active change of initial hypotheses whenever new insights arise. Constant deliberation and cooperation within the Twinning project should lead to a constant redrafting and the continued refinement of initial hypotheses. The hypotheses as they stand at the end of the project would represent an in-depth analysis of the problems the beneficiary is facing and provide a basis for future domestic reform as well as EU support through tools such as budget support or further technical assistance.

7.4.2. Adapting the roles of the RTA and EU member-state experts

The RTA would not be internal to the beneficiary but internal to the Twinning project. Even beyond the systemic approach, it cannot be desirable that the RTA becomes entirely internalized into a beneficiary. Her function is limited to the duration of a project. The function of the beneficiary is ongoing. It is not desirable to create dependencies within the two years of implementation. The RTA should not be a quick institutional fix for a lack of capacity. What is more important to consider is how to make the RTA an integral part of Twinning, a project which acts as connecting piece between an EU member state and a beneficiary.

The RTA should follow the role of a facilitator of contestation and interaction. Neither the RTA nor the beneficiary are assumed to have a clear understanding of the underlying problems to be addressed during the project. Through the RTA-counterpart, the RTA must define a core group of stakeholders, willing to meet with the RTA on a regular basis. The RTA should use her own professional knowledge and deliberate with the RTA-counterpart to question the relationship and interactions of key actors in the beneficiary. The RTA should build an understanding of the discrepancy between what an administration in her understanding

should be doing and what he/she perceives it as doing. The outline of discrepancies and problems perceived could be a first deliverable for the beneficiary. Based on that first deliverable, the initial hypotheses should be revisited collectively by the Twinning participants and amended accordingly.

As a next step, it would be the beneficiary's turn to scrutinize the observations made by the RTA, argue where they make sense or not and propose how to address them. This should result in the drafting of a work plan on the basis of which the RTA would start to schedule activities of member state experts in the specific divisions identified. Within these specific subdivisions and tasks, member-state experts should take a similar role as the RTA. They should present their own practices as well as encourage reflection on beneficiary practices. They should provide constant feedback on where they perceive discrepancies. Member-state experts should remain in contact with the beneficiary throughout the project. Their role should not be limited to one-off interventions but rather imply continuous guidance. As online voice streaming services are available practically everywhere these days, this should be possible without much physical presence. The member-state expert would draft development reports reflecting on the interaction with the beneficiary, problems faced, and changed understandings that would become a basis for the RTA in collaboration with the RTA-counterpart for further adopting and refining the hypotheses of the project.

Toward the middle and the end of the project, it should become a process of continuous feedback loops on a horizontal (e.g., between RTA and RTA-counterpart) and a vertical level (e.g., between RTA and MS expert).

7.4.3. The changed role of the RTA-counterpart and the beneficiary

The RTA-counterpart takes on the role of the expert that in the current Twinning approach is attributed to the RTA and her team. As Yanow notes, organizations generally possess the

knowledge they are after within their own sphere. Often it is marginalized and only to be found at the periphery, wherefore managers often prefer to employ external experts to provide better practice (Yanow 2004). Julian Orr, drawing on an argument made by Yanow, emphasizes the essential importance of putting practitioners at the center of attention when analyzing organizational structures as “ignorance of those people and their practice has compromised many corporate programs to date” (Orr 2006, p.1812). In a similar vein, Königswieser and Hillebrand define their approach to management consulting as: “We don’t provide solutions. Instead it’s the employees who are the experts.” (2005, p.19).

Any information channeled between the project and the beneficiary would be channeled through the RTA-counterpart. He/she should expressly not play an administrative role in a project. Their profiles must be similar to the ones of the RTA in terms of seniority, domestic experience, and training. A Twinning may never take off when the RTA decides the RTA-counterpart is of little importance to the beneficiary. Similarly, the beneficiary may choose to ignore the project when it deems its representative, the RTA-counterpart, is of little importance. The Twinning project would just be another source of noise in the beneficiary’s environment that is not worth paying attention to.

The Twinning fiche, representing the immediate assumptions and hypothesis of the Twinning and the domestic problems to be tackled, must be designed with active involvement of the RTA-counterpart who ideally has a certain level of authority and seniority in the future beneficiary. Beyond a first set of hypotheses of what domestic problems may exist, it should further justify why Twinning is needed. Justifying why an EU member-state administrator may help in better defining domestic problems and subsequently creating solutions would help to both legitimize the project toward the EU as well as toward the beneficiary. Framing the initial fiche as a basis of mutual cooperation toward the definition of domestic problems would further help to reinforce the idea of the ENP as a framework of horizontal and equal cooperation.

7.4.4. The changed role of the EU and the EU delegation

Although the EU's influence on the outcomes of Twinning would be considerably reduced, it does not mean that its role would be entirely diminished. It should still advocate its basic principles such as standards of good governance, rule of law, or public accountability. Yet it must take note that the way these principles are understood and incorporated at the domestic level are beyond its control. The focus of the EU's engagement would thus change from one of upholding agreed outcomes to one of upholding the process of reviewing and restating the project's core hypotheses.

The rate of adaptation and the manner in which the project manages or not to create and step-by-step adopt an institutional narrative would become the new benchmarks for success. Within that process the EU through its delegation should in fact actively point out where it sees incoherencies between the initial findings of the project and its own norms and agreements with the neighboring country. As there is no such thing as an EU administrative model, those inputs should be communicated through the RTA as a matter of wider observations rather than straightforward recommendations.

In its project appraisal, the EU delegation would not use preset mandatory results as its benchmarks anymore. Project rating and evaluation mechanisms should, rather, entail the extent to which projects have shed new light on domestic problems (problem definition) and to which extent first solutions were developed during implementation cooperatively between the member state and beneficiary side.

7.4.5. The changed role of the PAO

In the current Twinning framework, the PAO's role differs between domestic contexts. The PAO can be an important actor within Twinning as it represents the domestic political context to both the beneficiary and the Twinning project, and is an essential part of the beneficiary's

organizational environment. The close incorporation of the PAO into the communicative system of a Twinning project is thus essential not only to uphold the legitimacy of Twinning but also to guarantee financial, human, and other resources that are needed on the side of the beneficiary to follow up on the project. It should take an active role in commenting on and questioning activities, hypotheses, and assumptions of the project continuously throughout implementation. Whereas the EU would base its inputs on EU norms, the PAO should base its inputs on domestic demands, deemed appropriate by the government.

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Appendix 1: List of interviews

| Interview code | Country | Project/organization affiliation | Interview date | Recorded | Length (minutes) |
|--------------------------|---------|----------------------------------|----------------|----------|------------------|
| Beneficiary side | | | | | |
| Beneficiary #9 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#10 | 06/2013 | Yes | 90 |
| Beneficiary #12 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#3 | 06/2013 | Yes | 32 |
| Beneficiary#11 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#8 | 06/2013 | Yes | 48 |
| Beneficiary#8 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#4 | 06/2013 | Yes | 48 |
| Beneficiary#1 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#18 | 06/2013 | Yes | 32 |
| Beneficiary#25 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#14 | 05/2014 | Yes | 26 |
| Beneneficiary#26 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#5 | 05/2014 | Yes | 51 |
| Beneficiary#30 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#2 | 05/2014 | Yes | 45 |
| Beneficiary#33 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#12 | 05/2014 | Yes | 49 |
| Beneficiary#36 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#5 | 05/2014 | Yes | 15 |
| Beneficiary#37 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#13 | 05/2014 | No | - |
| Beneficiary#4 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#16 | 05/2013 | Yes | 45 |
| Beneficiary#14 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#19 | 05/2013 | Yes | 32 |
| Beneficiary#24 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#12 | 05/2014 | Yes | 29 |
| Beneficiary#29 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#13 | 05/2014 | Yes | 43 |
| Beneficiary#35 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#11 | 05/2014 | Yes | 66 |
| Twinning#19 | Moldova | Government_MOL#9 | 06/2013 | Yes | 22 |
| Twinning#20 | Moldova | Government_MOL#9 | 06/2013 | Yes | 53 |
| Twinning#28 | Lebanon | PAO_LEB#15 | 05/2014 | Yes | 35 |
| Twinning#38 | Lebanon | PAO_LEB#15 | 05/2014 | Yes | 58 |
| Member-state side | | | | | |
| Member_State#3 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#3 | 06/2013 | Yes | 33 |
| Member_State#7 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#16 | 06/2013 | Yes | 43 |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|---------|-----|----|
| Member_State#10 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#19 | 05/2013 | No | - |
| Member_State#6 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#1 | 06/2013 | Yes | 37 |
| Member_State#5 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#4 | 05/2013 | Yes | 50 |
| Member_State#13 | Moldova | Twinning_MOL#18 | 06/2013 | Yes | 77 |
| Member_State#23 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#14 | 05/2014 | No | - |
| Member_State#31 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#5 | 05/2014 | Yes | 55 |
| Member_State#32 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#12 | 05/2014 | Yes | 66 |
| Member_State#39 | Lebanon | Twinning_LEB#2 | 08/2014 | Yes | 60 |
| Member_State#27 | Moldova/Lebanon | Twinning_MOL#4 | 05/2014 | Yes | 45 |
| EU officials | | | | | |
| EUD#2 | Moldova | EU_MOL#7 | 05/2013 | Yes | 55 |
| EUD#15 | Moldova | EU_MOL#7 | 06/2013 | Yes | 34 |
| EUD#34 | Lebanon | EU_LEB#6 | 05/2014 | Yes | 28 |
| Others | | | | | |
| Twinning#16 | Moldova | Twinning-support_MOL#20 | 06/2013 | Yes | 41 |
| Twinning#17 | Moldova | Twinning-support_MOL#20 | 06/2013 | Yes | 40 |
| Twinning#18 | Moldova | Twinning-support_MOL#20 | 06/2013 | No | - |
| Twinning#21 | Moldova | Consultancy_MOL#17 | 06/2013 | Yes | 53 |
| Twinning#22 | Moldova | UNDP_MOL#21 | 06/2013 | Yes | 66 |
| Twinning#40 | Moldova | Twinning-support_MOL#20 | 02/2016 | Yes | 51 |
| Twinning#41 | Moldova | Government_MOL#9 | 03/2016 | Yes | 36 |

Appendix 2: List of projects studied

| Full Name | Dissertation Code | Country Of Implementation And Beneficiary | EU Member-State Counterpart | Time Of Implementation | Project Objectives (As In The Fiche) | Number of Interviewees* |
|--|---|--|------------------------------|------------------------|--|---|
| Strengthening the Capacity of the Accreditation Center in the Field of Conformity Assessment of Products of the Republic of Moldova | Accreditation and conformity assessment | Moldova, Ministry of Economy | Netherlands and Sweden | 05/2012-05/2014 | To improve the trade competitiveness of the Republic of Moldova (further – Moldova) and to harmonize the quality infrastructure with international and European standards. | 1 (Member state side) |
| Support to the implementation of Intellectual Property Rights in Moldova | Intellectual property rights | Moldova, Intellectual property rights agency | Romania and Denmark | 01/2010-04/2012 | To improve the implementation and the enforcement of intellectual property rights in the Republic of Moldova, in line with the provisions in the EU-Moldova Action Plan chapter 39. | 1 (Beneficiary side) |
| Support to Implementation and Enforcement of Competition and State Aid Policy | Public Procurement | Moldova, Competition Council | Romania | 02/2010-10/2012 | To improve the market economy in the Republic of Moldova by supporting implementation and enforcement of Competition and State Aid policies in line with the commitments of the Republic of Moldova in the EU-Moldova Action Plan. | 2 (1 Member state side, 1 beneficiary side) |
| Strengthening Public Financial Management in the Republic of Moldova | Public financial management | Moldova, Ministry of Finance | Sweden and Netherlands | 02/2012-02/2014 | To improve the management of public financial control in the Republic of Moldova in line with internationally recognized standards and European best practices. | 2 (1 Member state side, 1 beneficiary side) |
| Support to Moldova in the field of norms and standards in food safety for plant origin products | Support in the field of food standards | Moldova, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry | United Kingdom and Lithuania | 04/2012-10/2013 | To support the development of agricultural and food sectors related to products of plant origin of Moldova in compliance with EU and international rules and to support the ability of these sectors to participate in international trade. | 2 (1 Member state side, 1 beneficiary side) |
| Support to the Consumer Protection Agency | Consumer protection | Moldova, Ministry of Economy, Customer protection agency | United Kingdom and Lithuania | 06/2012-03/2014 | To contribute to the implementation of the requirements for market surveillance in line with the requirements of EU regulatory instruments. | 3 (2 Member state side, 1 beneficiary side) |
| Capacity building in regional development policy implementation including regional development agencies | Regional development | Moldova, Ministry of Regional Development and Construction | France and Romania | 05/2012-05/2014 | To strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, the National Coordination Council for Regional Development and the National Fund for Regional Development. | 2 (1 Member state side, 1 beneficiary side) |
| Institutional Strengthening of the Consumer Protection Directorate | Consumer protection | Lebanon, Ministry of Finance | United Kingdom | 04/2006-04/2008 | Institutional strengthening and capacity building of the Consumer Protection Directorate to become an efficient and effective public authority able to provide Lebanese citizens with high level of consumer protection covering their health, safety and economic interest. | 1 (Member state side) |
| Modernizing the Administration & Operational Capacity of the Tax Administration | Ministry of Finance | Lebanon, Ministry of Finance | France | 2007-2008 | The main objective of this project is to improve fiscal balance by increasing revenue collection. | 4 (2 Member state side, 2 beneficiary side) |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|-----------------|---|---|
| Modernized Clearance Process | Customs Authority | Lebanon, Ministry of Economy and Trade, Customs Authority | Italy | 12/2012-12/2014 | To provide better conditions for economic growth through trade facilitation and expedite the process toward WTO accession by further harmonizing and simplifying customs legislation and procedures in accordance with WTO rules and the Palermo recommendations, including computerization with further upgrading and rolling out of the NAJM and NOOR systems to the whole customs territory. | 2 (1 Member state side, 1 beneficiary side) |
| Strengthening of Quality Management Capabilities & Infrastructure in Lebanon | Ministry of Economy Quality Unit | Lebanon, Ministry of Economy and Trade | United Kingdom, Czech Republic | 04/2013-04/2015 | To increase the competitiveness of Lebanese products on international markets, through better conformance to national and international technical regulations and standards and to improve the level of health and safety protection of Lebanese consumers, as well as the protection of the environment. | 2 (1 Member state side, 1 beneficiary side) |
| Support to the Central Administration for Statistics | Central Administration for Statistics | Central administration for statistics | United Kingdom | 10/2010-06/2012 | To improve statistical information for public and private decision makers. | 2 (1 Member state side, 1 beneficiary side) |
| Institutional Building of the Insurance Supervisory Authority | Ministry of Economy Insurance agency | Lebanon, Ministry of Economy and Trade, Insurance supervisory agency | Spain | 04/2006-10/2006 | Institutional strengthening and capacity building of the Insurance Control Commission in order to enhance organizational competencies and capacities, and benefit from the experience of European institutions in terms of methods of control and on-field inspection. | 1 (Member state side) |
| Modernizing the Administrative and Operational Capacity of The Tax Administration | Ministry of Finance II | Lebanon, Ministry of Finance | France | 03/2012-08/2014 | To increase tax revenue and improve tax governance and citizen satisfaction by improving the performance and security of the Tax Administration and enhancing collection, both quantitatively and qualitatively, through administrative reform, greater transparency and efficient communication with citizens. | 2 (1 Member state side, 1 beneficiary side) |

Appendix 3: Definitions of key Twinning-related terms

| Terms | Definitions (2012 Twinning manual and own conception) |
|---|--|
| Beneficiary project leader | Acts as the counterpart of the MS project leader and ensures in close cooperation the overall steering and coordination of the project. He/she is likewise expected to be a high-ranking official in the BC administration, who is in a position to operate at the appropriate political level. |
| Eastern Partnership (EaP) | A sub-program of ENP directly related to the EU's policies toward its Eastern neighbors. |
| EU delegation (EUD) | The EU External Action Service's representative in both Lebanon and Moldova. In Lebanon it supports the PAO with guidance on Twinning. In Moldova it is the main contracting authority of Twinning. |
| European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) | The EU's main policy and funding tool for interaction with its Southern and Eastern neighbors, except for Russia and the countries under the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA). |
| Mandatory results | Concrete operational results to which Twinning participants have to commit before the start of a project. |
| Member-state project leader (MS project leader) | The MS project leader should be a high-ranking civil servant or equivalent staff commensurate with the requirement for an operational dialog and backing at political level, therefore he/she cannot come from an ad hoc mandated body. The MS project leader is not an advisor, he/she directs the implementation of the project. |
| Project administration office (PAO) | In Lebanon, it is the contracting authority and project management office for the implementation of Twinning. In the Moldova, it is a body within the administration of the beneficiary country which has been designated to assist the EU delegation with the overall management of Twinning projects. |
| Residence Twinning advisor (RTA) | A civil servant from a member-state administration who works in the BC on a full-time basis for at least one year in the framework of a Twinning project to coordinate the day-to-day activities of the project. He/she works on a day-to-day basis with the beneficiary administration to accompany project implementation. |
| Residence Twinning advisor counterpart (RTA-counterpart) | The direct and closest contact of the RTA in the beneficiary administration. |
| Twinning contract | Contractual agreement between the PAO (Lebanon) or the EUD (Moldova) and the member state on the Twinning project. It includes the special conditions, the work plan, and standard annexes. In most cases, the contract largely mirrors the Twinning fiche in its project outlook. |
| Twinning fiche | The fiche is the original project conception. The manual states: "beneficiary country identifies needs within European Commission policy orientations and draft Twinning fiches (...)" (European Commission 2012a). The fiche is a preliminary project plan which includes all the foreseen steps in a future project, from the overall outcome to individual activities and a meticulous plan of resource allocation. |
| Twinning manual | A document drafted by the EU Commission to guide the creation and implementation of Twinning projects. It is the main formal yardstick for the establishment process and outcome measures in Twinning. |
| Union for the Mediterranean (EUROMED) | A sub-program of ENP directly related to the EU's policies toward its Southern (Mediterranean) neighbors. |

Appendix 4: Content of fiches versus contracts in Moldova

| Project | Mandatory results in the Twinning fiche | Fiche/Contract resemblance (approximately) in percent | Comments |
|---|--|---|--|
| Strengthening the Capacity of the Accreditation Center in the Field of Conformity Assessment of Products | The legal framework enables the Accreditation Body to fulfill its roles with respect to ISO/IEC 17011 and the relevant provisions of EU regulation 765/2008/EC. The Accreditation Center Quality Management System, Governance framework and assessment competences allow initiation of the process of peer assessment for a Multilateral Agreement with European Cooperation for Accreditation. New skills and accreditation schemes are introduced enabling the Accreditation Center to optimize its support to key areas of Conformity Assessment Accreditation use is improved through greater understanding of the obligations and opportunities of ensuring the parity of Conformity Assessment. | 100 | |
| Support to Implementation and Enforcement of Competition and State Aid Policy | Component 1: Institutional Capacity Building: More efficient internal organization and operations of the NAPC is introduced, so that NAPC handles cases in a more efficient manner and gets in a position to respond effectively to the needs of implementation of the competition and state aid rules. Component 2: Competition: Effective implementation of the legislative framework (main and secondary legislation, guidelines, notices etc.) in the field of competition (including merger control). Strengthened capacity of the NAPC in handling competition cases (including merger cases, as well as cases in specific sectors) and improved enforcement record. Strengthened judiciary in order to effectively handle competition cases. Raised awareness and understanding of stakeholders (lawyers, businesses, government officials etc.) of the rules of competition and merger control. Component 3: State Aid: Effective implementation of the legislative framework (main and secondary legislation, guidelines, notices etc.) in the field of State aid. A draft state aid inventory, including a complete list of state aid grantors, and a draft state aid report are prepared by NAPC. An effective mechanism of state aid monitoring is established with effective reporting and information flows from state aid institutions to NAPC. Raised awareness on state aid issues among the state aid granting authorities and the business community. | 90 | Mandatory results from the fiche specified - more EU mention |
| Support to the implementation of Intellectual Property Rights in Moldova | Cooperation/coordination/enforcement mechanism among the bodies responsible for implementing the IPR protection measures strengthened; Further development of the relevant institutional structures and well-functioning, similar to EU standards of the existing or newly established collective management organizations; Cooperation with third country authorities and industry associations extended; Improved administrative capacity of the enforcement bodies responsible for implementing the IPR protection measures; resources dedicated to enforcement increased; seizures and actions against counterfeit/pirated goods in specifically targeted sectors increased; EU-MD agreement on Geographical Indications concluded and/or implemented; Support to monitoring concrete enforcement of IPR law in Moldova and identifying possible bottlenecks. An assessment of the current IPR system aiming at identifying where problems lie and recommend concrete solutions performed; Effective dialog with rights holders enhanced. Improved administrative capacity of AGEPI staff dealing with public awareness of IPR issues. | 90 | Same results but specified |
| Strengthening Public Financial Management in the Republic of Moldova | Enhanced capacity of the Central Harmonization Unit to oversee the implementation of PIFC in Moldova. Legislative and normative framework updated. Financial and Managerial (FMC) control strengthened. Internal Audit Strengthened. | 100 | |

| | | |
|--|--|-----|
| Capacity building in regional development policy implementation including regional development agencies | Improved institutional structure, legislative and regulatory framework for regional development. 2. Territorial Planning and Regional Development Integrated into one planning framework 3. Strengthened capacity of the MCRD, NCCRD to address regional development planning. | 100 |
| Support to Moldova in the field of norms and standards in food safety for plant origin products | The precise role and remit and on that basis the strategic objectives of the GIPSSC in the food safety and plant health are defined and approved. The legislative framework and institutional structure of the GIPSSC (including the channels of communication) is optimized for efficient and effective functioning. The effectiveness of the national pesticide MRL monitoring programme is improved through an appropriate prioritized and fact-(data) and risk based regulatory and enforcement programme. Responsible and safe pesticide use is improved through a proactive and preventive regulatory and enforcement approach. | 100 |
| Support to the Consumer Protection Agency | The legal framework enables the Main State Inspectorate for Market Surveillance, Metrology and Consumer Protection to fulfill its role with respect to general product safety and consumer product safety (toys, electrical goods) in line with the relevant provisions of EU regulation 765/2008/EC The equipment necessary to implement market surveillance activities “in the field” is defined and specified. Staff of the Main State Inspectorate has the appropriate skills and knowledge to implement their tasks related to product safety for consumer protection in accordance with EU practice. | 100 |

Appendix 5: Minimum experience demanded of an RTA versus an MS project leader

| Project title | Minimum experience demanded of an MS project leader (years) | Minimum experience demanded of an RTA (years) |
|--|---|---|
| Moldova: Capacity building in regional development policy implementation including regional development agencies | 10 | 7 |
| Moldova: Support to Moldova in the field of norms and standards in food safety for plant origin products | 10 | 7 |
| Moldova: Strengthening Public Financial Management | 10 | 3 |
| Moldova: Support to the implementation of Intellectual Property Rights in Moldova | 10 | 10 |
| Moldova: Support to the Consumer Protection Agency | 10 | 3 |
| Moldova: Strengthening the Capacity of the Accreditation Center in the Field of Conformity Assessment of Products | 10 | 3 |
| Moldova: Support to Implementation and Enforcement of Competition and State Aid Policy | 10 | 10 |
| Lebanon: Support to the Central Administration for Statistics | 15 | 12 |
| Lebanon: Strengthening of Quality Management capabilities & Infrastructure | 12 | 10 |
| Lebanon: Modernized Clearance Process | 15 | 10 |
| Lebanon: Modernizing the Administration & Operational Capacity of the Tax Administration | 15 | 10 |
| Lebanon: TAX: Compliance and Risk management | 15 | 15 |
| Lebanon: Modernizing the administrative and operational capacity of the tax administration | 15 | 10 |
| Average years of experience demanded | 12 | 8,5 |